Terry Monaghan interviewed by Ruth Sheldon on 5 June 2009 for

Britain at Work 1945-1995 Oral History Project

RS: OK, just to start with, could you tell me a bit about where you grew up?

TM: In Paddington. In West London. I was born there, in Paddington General Hospital. I lived in South Paddington for approximately my first ten years, and then North Paddington, in Maida Vale, in my second ten years and then after that I moved around a bit.

RS: And where did you go to school?

TM: I went to school in ... first real school was Queen's Park Primary School, which is in North Paddington. And then I went to Marylebone Grammar, you know, which is nearby.

RS: And what were they like, those schools?

TM: I liked Queen's Park Primary School. I mean it was ... I suppose the area had a very sort of cohesive working class feel to it. It was very much traditional in the old sense, you know. Yeah, there were some negative things to it but by and large it was all right. I wasn't so keen on Marylebone Grammar. But I mean, I got stuck there. It was a bit ... I just didn't really get on with the school. I mean, it was a battle the whole way. I mean, actually I stayed there all the way through to the upper sixth and I got 3 A levels and then the rest of it, so I wasn't a failure, but you know, on the other hand, it was very much a ... This was the end of the fifties, beginning of the sixties, so it was getting on it was a real ... It was a very ... It was in the balance but it hadn't quite made the change yet. Things hadn't really turned radical, you know. It was really still the old days, you know. So my beliefs clashed a lot with the school hierarchies, you know.

RS: Can you say a bit more about ...

TM: Well, I mean, things like I campaigned for nuclear disarmament and the anti-Apartheid movement were getting very big and involved with all of those things. But I, you know, little things as well. Always seemed to be in trouble, getting the cane, getting detention, you know, for this and that. And after awhile you became known as a troublemaker and you seemed to attract it! So I more or less didn't fit in too well. It was all-male grammar school, you know, that used to prevail then, you know. And a lot of the boys had been to preparatory school, so obviously they were prepared, you know. But those of us that had come up the other way, you know, passed the eleven plus, you know, we weren't really prepared for it, so they had ... and they didn't ... the school didn't really make adjustments. So you either were ... had the right backing from your parents or whoever to adjust to that or else, you know, or it was tough, you know.

RS: So there were kind of divisions within the school then?

TM: Oh yeah. Yeah.

RS: And was that mainly between the people who'd gone to the prep schools and other ...

TM: It was quite ... Yeah. It was quite ... There were always sort of ... I mean, there were kids I'd say who were having it even tougher than me, you know what I mean. I had some backing because my parents were teachers. But you know ... But there were other kids from what you might call straight working class homes. They had it really tough, you know. But it was a real ... I don't know if you know all that stuff, but I mean, it was all ... It was that peculiar layer of boys that ... The working class guys who passed the eleven plus and went to grammar schools ... they tended to all become the ... they were the sub-strata for the whole rock industry, you know. That's where they all came from because they were sort of ... Partly educated but not adjusted so they finished up with a fairly sort of radical if not rebellious frame of mind. And you find an awful lot of them were like that. I mean, just in my school ... If you've heard of Andrew Oldham, he was the first manager of the Rolling Stones. He was in the year below me. And ... A friend of mine, he ... In fact I taught him to play "Boogie Woogie" on the piano, and he became a professional keyboard player with Van Morrison and toured and all that stuff, you know. You know, there were other connections, you know, rock industry stuff, you know.

RS: Yeah. So did you get involved with ...

TM: Yeah, people were ... 'Cause I used to play. I mean, in fact, we had a band at the school and we used to perform and stuff. Not that it was approved of! It was ... We did play around West London and stuff but ... I don't think anyone really quite saw it like that. And either you either had someone with an entrepreneurial spirit who got behind you and pulled it all together ... And we were all very talented. I mean, it was a good band. I mean, we had never had a failure, you know. Wrote our own numbers and stuff like that, but nobody was really focused up on the success of the band. Everybody had their own ... you know. And we had such different careers in mind, you know, that ... no. We had a great guitarist who got killed in a car crash actually, shortly after leaving. It was weird. But yeah, some guy turned up, a sort of teddy boy character, and he wanted us to be his backing band, but ... I don't know. Everybody was just very casual and said all right, you know. Whatever. And didn't use that expression then, of course. And it never really happened, you know.

RS: So how old were you when you were involved in the band?

TM: I'd be about sixteen, seventeen. Because I was trained on the piano. You know, classically trained, you know. But I took to Boogie Woogie, you know, and I liked that stuff, you know. You know, and then of course you know the ... you know, the sort of blues artists started turning up in England so we used to go and hear them and copy them and get their records and play the music and stuff like that, you know. But I don't know ... I just ... I didn't really ... To be honest, I didn't really like the idea of just pirating other people's culture. I mean, to me, that was a sticking point for me. So I could play it, but I didn't, you know ... It just seemed wrong, somehow or other, you know, and all these people ... you know ... I don't know, it's a hard thing to describe. For some reason it just didn't quite appeal to me. I mean, I used to go and play and then I used to go back and listen to the records and sort of think I'm never gonna play like that! You know. Because in one sense you didn't have to, because you had a younger audiences coming along and they didn't care whether you couldn't play like that, you know. They didn't have the same standards, you know. Anyway. I'm mean I've got no regrets, you know, I did what I did, you know. Funny enough, the guy who I ... The friend who I told you about, I used to meet him off and on throughout life because he got involved in the ... he formed the Steam Packet, which if you know your rock

history, it's with Long John Baldry and Rod Stewart, and Mick Fleetwood from Fleetwood Mac, you know. In fact, Mick Fleetwood used to live just next door to him, you know. That's how they got together, that was their first band that he played in, you know, with my friend Peter Bardens. Anyway, so he knew everybody, you know, and he worked all the way through the industry. But he never really made it, you know, in the sense. And I knew him ... In fact, doing the research on jazz, you know, I used to go and stay with him at Malibu where he had a place ... and you know, he seemed all right and then he just suddenly died, you know. Massive tumour in the brain, you know. And I think it was marijuana, you know, because you smoke the wrong sort of marijuana, you know. Like Bob Marley and Bill Haley, they all went the same way, you know. So I thought that was very sad, you know. 'Cause you know, he was virtually the same age as me, you know, and it always hits you a bit harder ... In fact, slightly younger than me, actually, he was slightly younger than me, yeah. So yeah, it hits you a bit hard, that, you know. You know, he'd done ... He'd been everywhere, he'd toured everything, but you know ... It didn't really seem to add up to an awful lot, you know.

RS: And you mentioned that your parents were teachers.

TM: Yeah.

RS: Can you tell me a bit more about them?

TM: Well, yeah, I mean, basically, they both were in the Communist Party. My dad, actually, was trained as a sheet metal worker. He did his apprenticeship at Joe Lyons. Does that mean anything to you?

RS: Vaguely.

TM: A big ... It used to be a huge, big catering firm. You know, and massive, they were. There used to be Lyons Tea Shops everywhere, you know. Everyone used to meet up at Lyons Tea Shops. In fact, there's a huge one that used to be in Marble Arch, and that's ... I think there's a big Kentucky Fried Chicken place there now. You know, and everybody did ... It was weird, you know, that way that could all go. And they got into property speculation or something like that and they lost most of their money. Anyway, they had a huge big place down in Hammersmith, Cadby Hall, and he worked in the maintenance department and did his ... 'Cause he was born and brought up in North Kensington, so ... He did his apprenticeship there. But then he was in the war, and you know, it was pretty rough what he did, you know. And when he got out, he managed to get emergency trained as a schoolteacher, because they were looking for people, you know, because there was the whole baby boom, you know, towards the end of the war and they realised they were going to need a hell of a lot of teachers quickly, so they trained people. And then my mum, she trained as a ... Well, she trained several years as a sort of teacher, but really with special needs. Severely sub-normal as I think they called them then, but I think they call them mentally disabled or something, you know. And she did all that. So they both finished up as teachers, although my mum started out training to be a nurse, you know.

RS: And did they enjoy their work?

TM: Up to a point but they both had in a sense similar problems to me, I suppose. I said I had similar problems to them. They both tended to run up against the hierarchy, you know,

if you know anything about education, very dominated by people from, you know, higher up in the social strata. And people who are quite incompetent get important positions and neither of them took to working for fools easily. You know, so I mean it was a ... I don't know. It's just hard to say. I think they were both glad to get out of it, you know. And then it was a big, you know, education was on the way down, you know, because they really ... I mean, it's like for instance, my mother ... always found that quite interesting. My mother for instance always used to use English country dance because it really works with kids, especially the mentally disabled kids. They loved doing it. And at a certain point, the so-called new radicals of the 1960s started saying you've got to do all contemporary dance instead. It's all ... they say ... calling the English country dance reactionary, and you don't do that anymore, you do the new stuff. And of course, it doesn't mean anything to the kids, I mean, it's just a load of nonsense, you know. Pretend you're a tree, or something like that, you know what I mean? But I still can't see it. Most of it. I mean, I liked some ... the original American versions, the American modern dance. You see some fantastic stuff there, but the stuff in England ... modern, a load of rubbish, most of it, you know. They get heavily subsidised, you know. I don't think anyone would do it if they didn't get government money for doing it, you know. So I mean there were lots of ... lots of .... My dad suffered deafness from his wartime experiences because he was in the paras, you know, and dropping supplies, you know, before anybody understand very much about, you know, working in open air, you know, aircraft, you know, just pushing stuff out in parachutes. And so he come back sort not in too good shape and his hearing got progressively worse, you know. So he actually got out, eventually, because of that, you know.

RS: And did you say they were both Communists?

TM: Yeah.

RS: Was that from kind of an early age that they ...

TM: No, well, -ish, you know. They're early nineteen, twenties, you know. I think my dad joined a bit earlier. In fact, maybe seventeen or eighteen in North Kensington. Yeah, it was ... 'cause it was an active part of the local community. And there were Communist Party branches everywhere. I mean, Paddington alone, they had seven branches of the Communist Party, just in Paddington.

RS: Really?

TM: Yeah, it was huge, you know. Yeah, it was, you know ... Yeah, people don't realise that, how big the Communist Party was, you know. Still ... Not in absolute numbers, but it had such a high proportion of active members that the ... you know, it always seemed much larger than it was. And also the ... you know ... My dad's connection with engineering from past ... We always knew a lot of the shop stewards, trade union organisers and stuff like that used to come around the house, you know. It was all part of that world, you know. You weren't ... Just because you were a schoolteacher didn't mean you didn't know all these other guys, you know. So, yeah. Used to go on ... Again, it's funny, you know, because in our world, everybody ... It was always assumed you never talked in front of the telephone. Everyone always assumed it was normal. Everyone always assumed ... the police were listening to every telephone call, they intercepted mail, they read all your mail and all the rest of it. But no one ... It's not like now. No one ever really got excited about it. They just all ...

That's what they do, you know. What's the big deal? I mean, you expected it, you know. There were one or two well-known cases where leading members of the Communist Party got sent each other's letters. The police had read their letters and they put them back in the wrong envelopes! Said hang on a sec! This is not ... And then they phoned up and said oh, of course the police have just put them back in the wrong envelopes, you know. Silly stuff like that, you know. Then they used to go on the marches. Some of the banned ones, when the Labour Party banned the May Day March in 1951 was a big one. They wouldn't let me go on that one, I mean, and you know, it was a massive fight, you know. A lot of people in the family all got attacked and beaten up by the police. But again, you just accepted it. It wasn't until the 1960s when you got new, young, middle class radicals getting in and they started getting beaten up, then people became an issue. But up to that point, you know, it was just accepted, you know. I mean, my Uncle Dan, that's who married my ... Dan Cohen married my mum's older sister, and he was the Communist Party candidate for North Paddington, and he had some Fascist threw a brick at his ... when he was loudspeakering at his van, so Dan jumped out and thumped him and he got arrested for it, you know, for breach of the peace. You know, and so they ... it went to court and one of the Fascists called my aunt ... What did they call him? Jew-loving prostitute, or something like that. It was a big mistake because she had such a ferocious temper, this woman. I mean, everybody was scared of her because she was volcanic, you know. And without even thinking, she just sort of swung around and hit him right in the side of the head with her handbag and knocked him out flat, you know, cold, you know, really, you know. I mean again, it was just now I suppose it would be sort of different, but then that was our world, you know. Of course, it all came to end in '56, when they ... I don't know if you history of the Communist Party when ... And then '56 happened and basically, that's when Khrushchev denounced Stalin, you know, said he was a tyrant then there were Hungarian workers' revolt in '56 and, you know, the Red Army invaded Budapest, you know, and crushed the revolt, you know, and a lot of people died and it was a very dreadful event. And so a big fall-out from the ... a lot of people left the ... you know. And even people who didn't leave, like my parents, it was never the same again. It was a sort of like reality coming in, you know. But even after that I joined the Young Communist League and I became involved myself, you know, because the Communist Party tried to pull it round, you know, so they went and up all the Party members' kids and I got involved in it then. But then eventually I got thrown out for talking to the Trotskyists and really that's how I finished up working in factories because you know, I became a member and they used to send you in ... It was very Maoist-like, be a Maoist, and I went to ... you know, 'cause I was at college doing a ... I was at Regent Street Poly doing a degree and I failed it really, initially, I failed it initially because I was just spent too much time doing other things. Although I re-took it back in the '70s and passed. So, you know, that's how I came to be working in the factories, you see.

RS: When were you doing, the first time, when were you doing the degree?

TM: I think it was like ... the finals were '65.

RS: OK. I realise I didn't actually ask you when you were born.

TM: '43.

RS: OK.

TM: 1943.

RS: And how old were you when you joined the Young Communists?

TM: That was ... I think it was '59 when I joined, which would be ... makes me sixteen or something? Yeah. It's funny, actually, you know, you don't think of ... You always think of the World War II as long time ago, but back then ... I suppose it was ... World War II was on your mind the whole time, you know. Especially growing up. It was always World War II this, World War II that, you know. You know, in a way that sort of fell away afterwards, you know. 'Cause it changed ... I mean, it was affecting generations even after it finished, you know, that's the thing, because every aspect of life was you know ... was, you know.

RS: How did it affect you growing up then?

TM: Well, I mean it was just the austerity, I mean, it was very real, you know. You know, food was rationed, you know, it was really quite limited, you know, we occasionally got something from my mum's relatives down in the countryside, you know, but not that often. It was quite tight. But it was, well it was ... I suppose in a way, I suppose the most obvious way it was ... People were trying to adjust after the war and there was a lot of confusion really, I think, looking back on it now, the government was trying to re-establish the British Empire, you know, and they were doing dreadful things. Like it's funny, I don't know if you've seen this court case being mounted by the victims, the Kenyan, the Mao Mao victims of the British Government, which was terrible. Hundreds of people were murdered, tortured, you know, dreadful things were done to people and it was all accepted. Racism was out in the open, you know what I mean, you know. My mum was ... I don't actually remember it myself, but where we lived in St Stephen's Gardens, people had notices up openly: No blacks, Irish or dogs, you know. You look at ... There was no Race Relations Act or anything like that, you could do those sorts of things. The Fascists actually had opened headquarters. There were street fights between them and us and that sort of thing, you know. There was all sorts of things going on then, you know. It was very different. And of course, it all kept on going back to the war, you know. There was ... Sir Oswald Mosley was the big guy, you know. And he was ... He had his headquarters in Kensington Park Road. Funny enough, there's a friend of our family, a guy called John McCorden, and he was a convenor of Pall Mall Aerotyres in Marylebone, and he actually used to live in the flat above the Mosleyites, you know. And they knew who he was, and we obviously knew who they were and they all just sort of kept wary of each other. It's a funny world the way that ... I mean, it was all mixed up together in a way that ... BNP talk about the BNP, but if you ask well, where's the BNP? Most people wouldn't know, you know. I dare say there's some areas out in Essex that would be like that, I mean ... in fact they had to move, the Fascists had to leave West London in the end because they got so many people attacking them. I mean, Colin Jordan, he broke away from Mosley's thing and set up his own British Nazi Party and had headquarters in Princedale Road in North Kensington. And some guy went and got a big dumper truck and tried to reverse it into his shop, you know, unfortunately he got the wrong shop and he hit the one next door to it! I'd love to have known what happened to him after that! But I mean, people would do things like that, you know, and in the end he packed it in and decided to ... left the area because people ... was growing tired of hostility. But you know, when you saw Mosley speaking, as he did on street corners there, it was quite intimidating, you know. You know, he did it sort of Nazi-style off the back of a truck

with searchlights and all guards standing around him, you know. There was ... yeah. Lots went on, you know. Different ... you know.

RS: And so going back to kind of you personally ... You did A levels ...

TM: Yeah.

RS: What subjects did you do?

TM: Well, again, my school ... As I say, it was very uneven, my schooling, but I was doing ... First of all, I didn't do very well in the O levels. And then I seemed to do quite well in Art, so I did A Level Art and History and English and so ... When it came time to do my A Levels, I did them and I got ... I did all these paintings about nuclear disarmament and stuff like that and they failed me completely. They never even gave me a single mark. And funny enough, the head teacher, who detested me, even he was outraged and he actually complained. He said look, you only ever do that to someone who you believe is cheating. As there's no question of this ... me cheating, this is just not right, you know. He deserves some mark, even if you're gonna fail him. Anyway, they wouldn't budge. That was it. They said no, you're not getting a single mark. I don't know what that was about. So I gave up art and did Geography instead and I got just ... You had to have three A Levels to get into Polytechnic then. So that's what I got.

RS: And did you have particular plans at that point?

TM: Not really, no.

RS: And did your parents have any expectations?

TM: Not really, no. Vaguely. They said you should go and get a job in local government or something like that. Never really ... no. It wasn't really ... Because we weren't really ... Although they had what you might call middles class jobs, we weren't really a middle class family, you know, because none of them came from that background. I mean, you know, it was from ... Irish parents on my dad's side and sort of bit of a weird mixture of English and Gypsy on my mum's side, you know. So everybody, I mean, you know, I have some sort of extraordinary range of cousins, you know. I mean they're quietened down a bit now, but some ... Yeah, there's some quite characters there, you know. You'd accept it all when you were young, but then when you grow up you realise that these people are not ... I only noticed it recently. I went down to Herefordshire where they basically centred on. I went round the houses, three or four houses to visit people and I just suddenly noticed every one ... the only pictures they had on the wall were horses. There wasn't a single picture of a human being, doesn't matter whether it was family or the Pope or, you know, whoever, you know, and everyone was ... they're still, they're just all horse crazy, you know. So I mean, I ... you know, I like horses but it doesn't ... Not betting or anything like that, you know.

RS: Yeah. So then did you go straight after doing A Levels to college?

TM: Yeah. Regent Street Poly.

RS: OK. And how did you find it?

TM: Again, it was difficult because I had no preparation for it ... I had to work ... Basically, under the influence of someone at school, another school friend, I did Political Thought. Political Philosophy. And which I liked. But then the problem is filling up the other subject areas, you know, and somebody told me to do Sociology, and that was awful. I couldn't stand it. So I did Medieval Economic History instead. Because some other friend was doing that, you know. I used to just go along to the ... My college didn't offer it as an option, so I just used to go and sit in on the lectures at the LSE, 'cause he was doing it there. Which you could do then, you know. And you know, that was great, I loved it. I did my first part fine, but then I failed the finals, you know. You had to do eight papers and I think only got five of them. Some of them, I didn't do any work at all ... Which I was quite surprised I did that well! And it stayed with me, you know, good stuff, you know. And to this day, you know, anything medieval and I can ... Because medieval history in general, you know, I love the stuff, you know.

RS: So then what happened next?

TM: Well, then I sort of got thrown out of the Communist Part in '64, so there was a big ruction, a big split in the family about that, you know 'cause everyone was still in. So then I was a real pariah and then things didn't do very well when I was ... when I failed, you know, so basically, I just went out and worked. Started on the building sites and moved into factories, you know. And I went to work in the Post Office, actually, funny enough, here in Acton for awhile. So I know a lot of these streets, from being a postman! And then I got a job in ... I'm trying to think, where did I go first? I think I went to work in ... Yeah, I think I went to work in ... Wall's first, I think it was. You know, Wall's are the huge big meat factory, up in North Acton. And it's where Macro's is now, not that that probably doesn't mean anything to you, but it's a big factory, yeah, and they used to slaughter two thousand pigs a day there, six days a week. So it was twelve thousand pigs. It was big, you know. It was ... But it was a fantastic place to work. The spirit there was amazing. Everybody there was either from Ireland or the Caribbean. And everyone got on together so well, it was amazing place, you know. I mean, you know, you had to not be worried about blood and guts, obviously! 'Cause that was the reality of the place. Anyway, I had to go and do something for the organisation I was in and they said I had to take my holidays and they said I couldn't, so I took my holidays and I got the sack. Then I think I worked at CAV then, which was down Acton Vale here. The factory's still there, but it's been taken over by the Lucas Group now. And they made alternators. They made alternators and dynamos for ... a lot of it for military vehicles. But you know, cars in general. CAV was sort of quite highly ... really commercial vehicles, you know. And I just became an inspector there, you know, because they're always looking for inspectors because inspectors doesn't ... nothing very fancy. In fact, funny enough, I was always an inspector at Wall's. That was a bit different, because if you work in the food industry, you've actually got authority to stop the production. Because you've got the backing of the law. In engineering you don't have that, because there's no Health and Safety... There was no Health and Safety in terms of hygiene, you know, so you don't have that. So you were just overridden, you know. Obviously that happened to me. Several times, but I mean you basically, you know, you just have a big steel workbench, you know what I mean, and you had loads of stuff and you've got to check everything's the right size. It was made to the right specifications, and so on, you know. And you'd just, you know, big trolleys of them would come in and you'd check them. I can't even remember if we ... I think we checked them all. I'm not quite sure. I can't really remember that, you

know. Because everything had to fit. Especially the military stuff. It has to be all water-tight, you know, and so on, so ...

RS: So Wall's was your first job, was it?

TM: No, I worked on the buildings, I think I worked in the Post Office and then I think I worked ... and then it was Wall's, you know. I can actually get my work record out, I've got it somewhere. But I worked ... but then I really stayed with ... I tried to stay within engineering. I'm trying to think what happened ... why did I leave CAV? I can't remember now. Because I ... there was a problem there. I can't remember if it was a huge one, but ... you know, there was no ... there was no major issue, other than ... The most interesting fact for me was the fact that CAV was down Acton Vale and I was just interested in the history down there as well, because I knew the factory opposite was British Light Steel Pressings and that was part of the Roots Group, which was one of the major motor car, motor industries in Britain, you know, and they would have been about five major motor industries. And they made the old Humber cars there and ... They were renowned, you know, for what they'd won and all the rest of it – [Shouts at pet] – real craftsmen and so on. It was one of the first things that where Wilson was persuading people to take redundancy, to accept these redundancies and try to close down industry and move it out. So they moved the factory to Coventry.

RS: When was that?

TM: That would be about '66 or something like that. And it was just a dreadful shame because the craftsmanship at that factory was legendary. I mean, these cars were beautiful. They were used mainly by the diplomatic service, but there was a spin-off to public purchasing as well, but most of it went for the government, you know. Anyway, for whatever reason, a very good financial offer was made and a lot of workers just took it and that was the end of it, you know. And when they tried to start production up again in the Richton Works in Liverpool, and Coventry, of course they didn't have the same craftsmen. It was a joke. It didn't last very long and that was the end of the Humber, you know. And was a constant story, that was . The dreadful ... really abandoning of a whole ... 'Cause you see, the thing is, you have to remember, really, British working class took a hell of a pounding in between the wars, especially after the slump. I mean, wages ... the General Strike, 1926, they lost ... the miners lost it ... but then everybody lost in a sense because it was a orgy of wage cutting. Literal wage cutting followed it, you know. People had a very tough time. Even if they worked, they had a tough time. And some people have pointed out, it was the worst thing that could have happened because in a way, it stopped mechanisation, an improvement of production technology because you could restore profits just by cutting wages. Whereas if you had to restore profits by bringing in better machinery and making the work force more productive and all the rest of it, everyone would have been better off. And, you know, it was a real own goal, you know. And so of course, when you get to World War II, there was ... suddenly everybody was needed, you know. And it was massive. I mean, I don't think nobody, no other country was so tightly conscripted as the British working force was. Not even Nazi Germany, funny enough. The women, for instance, were never conscripted in Nazi Germany, whereas they were here. And so of course, that put the, you know, labour industry in a position to demand better wages and conditions, which they did, and they ... And the ball really started rolling from there, you know. And so they got the whole militancy and that really lasted, off and on, it came and went. It really lasted, it really ended with Thatcher, you know. And that was the whole point of it, you know. And she

closed ... I mean, I think people ... I think in the first ... I think ... the first four years or something, she closed forty percent of British industry down. In order to defeat the unions. 'Cause you realise, that's the only way you could do it. You had to put them all out of work. All that money from the North Sea oil, that was flowing at that time, that was all spent to keep people unemployed to beat the unions! It was completely stupid and wasted ... But it's just all the skill and the technology, you know, that went with it, you know, and you know, it's those, you know ... I mean, you know, I went from there ... Something happened and I can't remember what it was. Some reason ... I can't remember why I had to leave. I don't think I was sacked. I can't quite get ... there must have been some ... It's got me worried now --

RS: Was this CAV?

TM: CAV in Acton, yeah. Charles Antony Vandervell, that's what it stood for. In fact, he ... typical English firm. They always seemed to have dynastic rivalries, and his son, Tony Vandervell, broke away and set up his own factory, up on the A40, you know. And he set up Vanwall Racing Cars, which then became the first racing car, British racing car, for a long, long time. That started the whole run of British Championships in racing, you know. Vanwall's, you know. Didn't last long ... they were the last of the cars with the driver sat at the back, the engine was in front. But they certainly broke the mould.

RS: What were the working conditions like there?

TM: Well, they'd actually sort of ... they more or less improved. They weren't too bad. I mean, it depends what you mean. You just basically had a metal locker, you had basically two breaks, the canteens were OK. I mean, yeah.

RS: What kind of hours did you work?

TM: Well, that was, yeah, well, then 'round here of course ... Where was I living at the time? Yeah, I was living in Acton by then. And yeah, because we ... I never quite understood that because ... Up 'til fairly recently, I say fairly recently, but it would be about probably five or ten years ago, they still had the 7:30 whistle. You could hear it everywhere, all over the area. Why 7:30 I don't know, because you had to be at work at 7:30, so I mean ... 7:20 would have made sense! That I never got, you know. But yeah, I think I always went to work about ... I never got used to it. It was awful, you know. You know, that early in the morning, you know. But then you finished about ... it was still about an eight hour day, wasn't it, you know, so you finished about four o'clock or whenever it was, you know. There was sort of weird idiosyncracies, you know, like ... you know 'cause tea breaks were always a little bit sort of... ambiguous. So for instance, when I worked up at AEC in Southall, that's the firm, the big truck manufacturers where they used to make the engines and the chassis for the Routemaster buses. You weren't allowed to read newspapers in your tea break. Because they said, no, that's company time. We're letting you have a tea break, you're not allowed to read the newspaper. And the foreman would come around and tell you, so there wasn't any point trying, you know. You'd have to sneak off to the toilet or something to read it if you wanted to, you know. But you couldn't do that there. And of course, some of ... coming around with a tea trolley and all that. Still that sort of thing that used to work, you know. But then again, there was another factory that just sort of you know, technology going down right in front of you, you know. They were trying to produce a V-8 engine, a diesel engine to go in the trucks, you know, to ... and they couldn't do it for one reason or another.

They couldn't understand why they couldn't do it, you know. And they more or less gave up and left it all to Mercedes and Volvos and that, you know. And they --

RS: When were you working there?

TM: Well, from ... CAV, you see, I went to ... I'm pretty certain I went to Associated Automation in Harlesden. That's where they made the old pay-and-answer telephone. You know, like in telephone boxes, you know. In fact, they ... I don't know if you've ever seen the original one, but Standard Telephones, they invented the old black box that we all used, even as a kid. We used to put four pennies in them, you know. And they were so primitive that all you had to do was tap the receiver [bangs on table] and you could do the telephone call that way and not pay any money! Everyone did that. But then they ... This was the next one up from that. That was ... And we used to make them. I was there for about ... I think two or three years, but that's the one where I go the sack. And it became a major issue. For some reason, and I never quite knew what the thing was, management decided to set me up and people I knew, they knew I was a member of this Trotskyists, because they made it their business and they used to know that stuff, and so people were out selling papers outside the factory. But it was nothing to do with me. I'd always made sure that I'd keep well clear of them when they was doing anything like that. Anyway, the management suddenly accused me of selling provocative newspapers, and it was interesting because Associated Automation was owned by GEC, no AEI. Yes. Associated Electrical Industries, which was one of the biggest electrical industries in the country, you know. So this dispute escalated because my shop steward was a member of the Moscow-orientated Communist Party, so he had no time for me at all because as far as he was concerned I was a Trotskyist, you know. But the local committee of the engineering union, the AEU, was dominated by pro-Maoist Communist members and they hated this Moscow. So they took my case up because they didn't like him. So it was weird, you have this ideological conflict, you know, concerning Asia, you know, having an impact on an engineering factory! Anyway, yeah, we took it all the way up to some headquarters just by St James's Park Tube station, you know. And they ... There's this famous guy, trade unionist, come to negotiate it called William McLaughlin who fought the case for me and they had to give me my job back. You know, he had them ... 'cause they had accused me of things I hadn't done and they had no evidence at all. And they took me ... I went to court ... It didn't even get to that, we went to negotiation and I got my job back. And after that, it was funny, I was so ... I don't know, fed up with the whole thing and I used to turn up for work in the middle of the afternoon and I was like ... I couldn't be touched. They couldn't make another move on me. They daren't! I'd beaten them. It's a strange position to be in! In the end I got fed up and I left, you know. I was there about three years. I did used to sell papers of course, and give leaflets out and get people to come to meetings. It wasn't very successful, you know.

RS: What was it about this kind of Trotskyist thing that appealed to you?

TM: Well, because I'd always been a part of an organisation, you know. You know, I was born and brought up into that world, you know, and it's ... It's hard. It's like a ... well, it's really sort of like a church, you know, something like that, you know. A very strong belief system, you know. It's what you do. You don't even think of questioning it until something comes up, you know. I mean the thing is, I was always interested in other points of view. And that's how I came to question the Communist Party and got thrown out of that. Because you know, I started hearing about, you know, reading stuff about Stalin's crimes and you

know, and I questioned them. And once you start questioning, then you're marked. You're a troublemaker. And I got ... you know ... then when I was caught talking to these people, you know, I was thrown out for it, you know. So then eventually, you know, there were things wrong with the Trotskyist movement, so I eventually got thrown out of that more or less for the same reasons, you know. It wasn't on the same par as the problems with the, you know ... Not the same things as the problems with the Communist Party, but I mean, on the other hand ... They run a tight ship, you know. So they didn't like dissident people, you know. But, you know, it was good, you know ... funny enough, when I was ... got the sack from associated Automation, I went to work in ... I actually worked for the main newspaper for the Trotskyist movement. And that was, you know, that was really great, you know, because I became a journalist for awhile.

RS: What newspaper was that?

TM: It's called The Newsletter. And it was, you know. I can't remember if it was weekly or daily then. I think it was only weekly then. But it was really good, interesting to write for a newspaper and I like writing, you know. But then I got my job back and I left that and went back to the factory, you know.

RS: Why did you decide to go back?

TM: Well, you didn't really have much of a choice. It was a victory, wasn't it? You don't really walk away from ... I suppose you don't really ... You saw it as a battle, you know. But to me ... You see you've got to ... It was all part ... You weren't aware of it at the time, but it was all part of that historical epoch, almost. The thing that ... You see, the thing is that people don't understand about World War II is that ... And that's a big issue for me, in this ... You know, I was listening to Barack Obama's speech, you know, and I was just appalled by his lack of history, you know. You know, like he, you know, he talks about Buchenwald, you know, he says he's going to go apparently he was going to go to this place today or yesterday, and he says he's going to go to this place where all the Jews were gassed. Nobody was gassed at Buchenwald. They didn't have gas chambers there. It was a concentration camp. Now, if you take World War II seriously, you know the difference between a concentration camp and an extermination camp. I mean, the British invented the concentration camp in the Boer War, that's what they did to the Boers, you know, and they were dreadful, you know, and people died in huge numbers in these things, men, women and children. And it was more similar to the Nazis. But they never invented exter – but the Nazis took ... And invented that. And the important thing about that was, you know, we always hear about the Battle of Britain and they're all going on about D-Day and all the rest of it today and all the rest of it ... You know, it was all secondary to the Eastern Front because the whole point of it was it was a war of extermination. An incredible number of people were being killed. Jewish people, obviously, but Slavs in general, you know, right across the ... so when that was defeated, I mean that really changed an awful lot of things in the world. And we never talk about that. Because it was the sub-humans, because obviously the Red Army were all Slavs, and they were the people the Germans were out to exterminate, and suddenly these people got it together for various reasons and they fought back and defeated the Nazis. But we never talk about that because it was a big change in the whole tide of history. I'd say the victory they did, was on behalf of everybody who suffers and is oppressed all around the world, and they never get acknowledged for it. And that spirit entered, even in a sort of piecemeal like way, entered the British working class. This is

why it entered the British colonial empire and different people who wanted to reverse the tide and had a tough time and they all started talking about their rights and freedom, you know, and African-Americans, you know, really got going on the Civil Rights struggle, you know. All over the world it was like that, you know. And this surge in the trade unions and the shop floor, I mean you had loads of guys who were committed. They just wanted to get out there and fight for the rights of their fellow workers in a way that's almost ... that's lost now. Thatcher destroyed all that, you know.

RS: So were you a member of a particular union?

TM: Yeah, I was in the Transport and General Workers' when I was at CAV and also at Wall's factory. That was Transport and General Workers' Union. Then I joined the AEU. That's the Amalgamated Engineering Union. When I was at Elliot's, or Associated Automation. And also when I worked at AEC, so ... Acton number five branch I was in. Used to have loads of branches. They have to struggle now to have one branch going, to keep one branch going, because all the industry's gone but we used to have loads of them, you know. And... yeah, so I mean ... I mean, really, the end for me came ... for awhile, yeah ... 'cause I got fed up working with ... yeah, 'cause I worked for Elliot's, I then got a job at AEC. I think that ... 'cause they have employee associations so they found out who I was so I got the sack before my probationary period was up, you know. Wasn't there too long. I can't remember ... three months, four months, something like that. So then I just said the hell with that and I just ... it was quite clear I wasn't going to get a job in engineering again so I went as a driver and started driving freight at Heathrow.

RS: When was that?

TM: That was about '69. Yeah. End of the 60s, '69, yeah. I was doing that, you know. It's like a whole new world, you know. New industry, you know, 'cause Heathrow was opening up so... Yeah I did that and sort of got thrown out of the Trotskyist movement and that whole side and I just decided I had enough. I was just told I wasn't wanted anymore 'cause I was just a troublemaker! Story of my life!

RS: What do you think you'd been doing that made them think that?

TM: Well, I suppose I would ... I always tried to take the organisation seriously. And figure them out and all the rest of it and most of the time ... you find most of these organisations want people who worship, you know, almost like cults, you know. You know, you have to ... I could never be a member of a cult, you know. You know, you're supposed to ... they're all very similar. They really strike me ... you know, Jehovah's Witness, Scientologists, you know, all those sort of people, you know. They're looking for a messiah figure, you know, someone who's going to save them. And they all ... And really, I think it's all to do with deep-rooted English sensibilities about non-conformism. Basically, they all want to be a group of select people who are all guaranteed to go to heaven and they define themselves really by all those other people who are not members and they're all going to hell. Which is really good old-fashioned Presbyterianism, you know. I mean, you know, it's still there. I mean, it's still there and you can see it at work. But I suppose my dad being a ... well, he was a Catholic 'til he broke from the church, and my mum really ... my mum's side of the family weren't really into religion formally, but they never really took it seriously. I think that's got a lot to do with the Gypsy side of things because you know, Gypsies don't take ... they just go

along with whatever religion's around, trying to keep themselves out of trouble! Doesn't work very much, but they try, you know. So, yeah, I could never have really fitted into a cult, you know, although I did come back and re-join for awhile. There was a change and I re-joined the Trotskyists for about four years in about '72, and I stayed until '76, and then ... even then I never went back to work in factories again, but I was sort of involved with other people who did, you know, and I helped organise them and we carried on working with stuff and then I got thrown out a second time in '76 and that was definitely the end. They just said no way, we don't want anything to do with you, stay away from us, you know. [Laughs] So that's when I got ... I got involved at ... I got a couple of qualifications, I got a job in a college and started the dance company, and I did that, really, ever since.

RS: Just going back, we talked about kind of working, driving freight at Heathrow when it was ...

TM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RS: What was that like?

TM: It was good, you know. Because basically, you were just collecting freight, you know, collecting freight and delivering it ... Funny enough, it took me back to a whole load of the old engineering industries, you know. And even to the non-unions ones. There was a famous one up in Edgware, you know ... 'Cause I don't know if you know, the engineering, the major industrial thing's ... they're sort of like ... it's like a sort of triangle that goes out from Marble Arch. And it goes ... Edgware Road goes that way and the Uxbridge Road goes that way and it sort of fans out and there's a whole swathe of engineering industries that run right across there, so ... Funny though, whatever I did, I keep revisiting this area. It's almost like I couldn't get away from it. Like I mentioned to you, there's this guy who ... John McCorden, who worked in the Palmer Aeros factory ... He actually fought in the Spanish Civil War as a volunteer, you know ... But that's in Marylebone. So that's sort of like ... There's a whole engineering bit there and just dotted all up the North End ... In fact, my mother's sister, elder sister, she worked there, the one who was married to Dan Cohen, she worked there. So there was always these sort of connections, but then factories right up to Suter Brothers, I remember going to them, but I felt a bit funny with them because they were notoriously anti-union. Anyone who even mentioned the word used to get the sack there. It was different for me because I was just a driver, visiting it and collecting freight for Heathrow. I wasn't around. Oh, yeah, and in between, what did I do? I had a job at DeHavilland ... Not DeHavilland's, Ferry Aviation, you know, making helicopters out in Hayes. I can't remember where that fitted in that was another job I had as well, yeah. That was quite interesting because we used to work with Sudi Aviation in Marseilles, and then all the big trucks used to bring ... I think most of the stuff was made there, and then brought over to be assembled, you know. And that was an interesting thing, you know, a whole different set of, you know, safety standards and inspection. It was very critical there. Everything had to be exactly right, you know, because obviously as things fly, you know. It's like this terrible business, you know, with this plane that's just gone down, you know, the one from Brazil. I don't know if you've seen that.

RS: Yeah.

TM: It's been in the papers. It looks awfully as if they were flying too slow to save money, that's what I suspect happened there, you know. Because a lot of that's going on. Planes ... Pilots are complaining about it, the planes are having to land with virtually no petrol, or fuel, left in their tanks, you know. And there being all sorts of rules brought in. Once they discovered they could save an awful lot of money by stopping people smoking ... Because I don't know if you know that, once they stop people smoking in the planes, they could run the air conditioning at much lower levels and they discovered ... they started saving a huge ... that's why they stopped smoking. They didn't give a shit about people's health, you know ... the profits were just went right up. But then they started looking at everything else. But the trouble is when you start telling the planes to go a bit slower, and that works ninety-nine percent of the time, but then you hit a storm, bad news, you know. I mean, it's just dreadful, isn't it, you know. But anyway, yes, I worked in that. I can't quite ... And again, always sorts of ... There was another factory next door. I can't remember. Because we ... loads of ... we worked in different factories. I knew guys that worked at EMI ... Because you know in Hayes, there's another whole area. The BEA, EMI factory which was massive and --

RS: So was that ... quite of a lot of meeting between people --

TM: Oh, yeah. Especially the people who were a bit politically active or union active, you know. There was quite ... a lot of mutual support, going out and giving out leaflets outside each other's factories ... It was never a particularly militant area. I mean, most of the militant factories ... there was one just up here, ENV, which was on the borders of Harlesden and Acton, they got equal wages for women in World War II, so of course, their card was marked! And the bosses made sure they closed that one down in about ... when would that have been? 'Cause I remember it was when I was working at Wall's ... I remember trying to go across there and join the picket but I couldn't get across the canal. Silly story, but that was about '66, you know. '65, '66, you know. Sad story because it was, you know ... People were fighting, you know for sort of ... I mean, they were just trying to ... And it's funny really, because they were trying to ... in a way, you can see what they were trying to do, was to create the basis for the prosperity boom that occurred. But obviously, to have that you need decent wages. You can't go out buying stuff and all the rest of it, you know. And it had to beat the ... employers had to be fought for that, you know. And of course at the same time, you see, there was this whole sliding back, because really, there was a lack of interest in manufacturing. So there was, you know, like for instance, when I was working at AEC, I was part of British Leyland, you know, because that's became part of the whole industry. So again, you met with the shop stewards and from the different in Birmingham and Oxford, you know, the big car plants and that, you know. And they were just telling you all sorts of stories about just the craziness of what happened in these industries, you know. You know, the dreadful ways things were being run, the slipshod standards, you know. I mean, really, they just lost the whole industry. I mean, that's why it went, you know. Because they finished up producing ... the brilliant car, the Mini, and they would ... it's still a big seller, but of course now BMW own it because they developed a new model. They wouldn't develop a new model! And it was just wouldn't make the necessary technical improvements, you know, there was no ongoing things ... They really lagged behind in just obvious things like fitting radio cassette players and the little gizmos that made all the difference between people buying a car or not. I mean, everything was just, you know, I mean, we had a ... I mean, when I was working in Elliot Automation, they gave us a ... they said this is an order for ... I'm gonna say SNCF, but I think that's the name of the French railway system ... It was

SAFRA or something like that. It was the French Telecoms system anyway. So they said inspect all these because they'd been sent off as a sample batch for the French. And so, me ... it was actually my friend, you know, we inspected them all and we threw them all out. We said they're all ... none of them meet the specification. So they ... the production manager said don't worry about it. I'm ordering you stamp them OK. It's only the French. They got back ten sheets of foolscap detailing every fault. They lost the order of course. The French threw the whole lot back at them, you know. It was just a common ... There was an arrogance about it, you know. We won the war, you know, etc, etc. And, you know, not on our own, we didn't! There was everyone else, you know. You really had to work with people and they had no concept of that. The whole of British industry thrown away. And you know, that's why you finish up with the economic crisis that we had with all the banks just thieving, just swindling people and all the rest of it. They've lost ... There's no interest in production. And there is just such a ... the camaraderie of the factories, you know, working with them, I mean, it was just ... tremendous places. And they were very sort ... I always remember thinking about that. Like when I was working at Wall's, we had this guy ... He was mentally sub-normal, or something like that. He worked on the line. They had some simple job for him, stacking crates or picking stuff up or whatever it was. He loved it. He was there ... I used to see him ... 'cause he lived somewhere in Acton ... I used to see him walking around with his mother almost like a little schoolboy. He used to come to work, he earned money and all the rest of it, there was a place for him working there. And people used to crack jokes with him and laugh with him and tease him a little bit. Not too much, but just ... he felt part of it all. And similarly, at Elliot's Associated Automation, they had all sorts of disabled people working there and all the rest of it. You know, you never thought anything of it, and you don't see that anymore.

RS: How did people go about getting a job?

TM: Oh, there was ... it was ridiculous. You could just go from one factory to another. I mean, for instance, I met a ... he was in the Trotskyists but he was working as an apprentice at GEC, which is next door to Harlesden, where the big court is now. I said to him ... I met him. For some reason I had to meet him and I said oh, I've got a job interview for a job and he said I tell you what, he said, they're gonna ask you can you use a micrometer. I said what's that? He got out an envelope and he drew me a picture of a micrometer, and said this is what you do, basically it measures a very precise ... it takes a ... 'cause it's all on a spindle, you know, so the amount of change is very small, so you can get very precise measurements if you know how to read it. Anyway, so he drew it and I got the whole idea. I went for the interview and the guy said, oh, yeah, you sound quite promising. Can you read a mic? I said, oh, yeah, I said. He got one out of his pocket and gave it to me and I sort of fiddled with it, and oh, he said, you're not too good on it, but you've got the idea. I got the job, you know.

RS: And were jobs like ... how were they advertised?

TM: They used to have a sign outside. Vacancies. And everyone was looking for work, you know. I mean, it was huge. 'Cause it was still a lot of people coming over, you know. I mean, the first immigration bill had passed in '62, but still a lot of people were coming in the country. A lot of people coming over from Ireland. 'Cause nothing had really changed in Ireland at that point, so a lot of Irish labour. Yeah. It was ... you know, you literally could go from factory to factory, you know. It was only when you finished up on one of the blacklists,

as an organiser, you know, or a troublemaker, you know, then you suddenly ... When I got the ... I forget when I got blacklisted ... Yeah, when I got the sack from Associated Automation on this false charge, I think I did try looking for another job and everywhere: no, no, no, no. They knew who I was straightaway. I mean, in a way that's now illegal. I think now they have to be very cautious about that now because you're actually breaking the law by doing that now. But back then they could do it with impunity.

RS: And so were there actually enough jobs for ...

TM: Oh, yeah! Yeah, yeah. I mean, the first big unemployment was in the winter of '62-'63. Actually when I was still at college. And that was the first time the employment, since World War II went over a million. And that was partly to do with economic circumstances but partly to do with the weather. I mean, there was a terrible winter. I mean, snow was everywhere. Inches, foot ... It even froze up all the brand new diesel locomotives that British Rail had brought in and they had to bring all the old steam engines out because they could cope with the snow. But diesels couldn't. They hadn't worked all the ... you know. You know, stop the fuel freezing and all that sort of stuff by then. And everyone remembered that winter, you know, because it was stuck in people's memories for a long time. And it stayed pretty good like that. You see ... I mean, coal mining industry for instance, I think they had ... they were employing something like seven hundred thousand people up to the ... up to the ... I'm trying to think when ... Up to about the 1970s. And then they started cutting back on the coal mines. And it was industry after industry had massive numbers of people, the car industry had huge numbers of people, you know. Then they started automating and started bringing in new, so-called new production methods. I mean, but they really didn't know what they were doing, you know. They couldn't keep up the technical standards, you know. Because most of the employers were just not interested, I mean ... they started switching to, you know, investments and financial manipulation of one sort or another, you know, just the whole thing sort of fell away.

RS: Do you remember there being strikes?

TM: Oh, yeah. I was only involved in some various small ones, but I mean, there was ... myself, but nothing very significant, but obviously I went up to places like Grunwicks, you went up to support the strike. Engineering industry, we had several major strikes, like national ones about pay rates and stuff like that. There was sort of no big deal, but of course then the big thing came with ... Things really started changing with the ... It really came to a crunch with the ... in the 70s, you know. Things were catching up then. I mean, you know there was a real change in the world economic situation. Britain was beginning to feel the pressure. The employers were wanting to strike back. And then they didn't know how to do it at first, you know, so for instance, there was this major strike at Saltly coke depot when they were starting to get rid of the miners. And the miners were trying to defend themselves. So they were trying to picket the coke depots to stop people getting the coal, you know. And all the engineering workers turned out to support them, you know, and closed the whole thing down. And that was ... then there was a big change and difference then. And then of course, following that of course, there was the struggle over the containerisation. You know, in the docks, you know. Because before that everything used to be packed item by item, you know, and then suddenly it's going to switch over to containerisation. And everything was done in a confrontational way in England, whereas for instance in France, the government would actually take responsibility for it and go to the workers and employers and

negotiate an agreement. So for instance, when the French decided to modernise their railways, they went to the unions and they said look, we need to tear up all the agreements, rewrite everything, but if you agree to that, no one will be sacked. We can absolutely guarantee no one will be sacked at all. Everyone who wants a job will have one. And the unions went for it. And of course the French finished up with the most modern railway system, you know, they haven't lost a single passenger now in thirty years, or something like that. It's an amazing record. And god knows how many people have died in England, you know, dreadful accidents, you know.

RS: So why do you think things were so much more confrontational in England?

TM: I think the thing is that ... Personally, I think it's historical. I mean, you're dealing with a sort of set of people who own things and run things here, who've really been in charge more or less since the Norman Invasion, 1066. I mean, there's been changes, obviously. I mean, like the English Revolution with Cromwell and the Williamite thing and so on. Nearly all of it's been done with the agreement of the people, the major people who've got money and power. And if it was necessary at one time to cut the king's head off, though they did it, they'd say oh, OK, he needs to be taught a lesson, so that was it, they did it, you know. And fair enough, sometimes people have to be chased off the throne and all the rest of it, because they've been around an awful long time. And I think, you know, it's without parallel in modern times, you know, and they've got old memories and unfortunately, they ... you know, their deeply rooted beliefs that they own and control everything. I mean, it's like in the middle of World War II, the railways were privately owned and they were screwing up the whole thing, the war effort, because they couldn't organise themselves to move stuff here and there. And the question of nationalisation came up and the railway bosses actually said we'd rather have Hitler here than agree to nationalisation. I mean, you've got it a little bit wrong, you know! I mean, it was that sort of mentality, you know, that ... how ... you know, it's hard to describe, you know, the way that they would see things. They would literally wreck things, you know, in order to do it, you know. I mean, wreck things in order to – [shouts at pet] rather than agree to any change. I mean, factories that I worked in, people ... I remember many guys on the floor would actually say but this is wrong, you know. You don't do things this way. This is much simpler ... and they would just ... mind your own business. You're a worker. We're the managers, we do ... you know. I mean, I had ... I was doing a driving job for awhile, I was between jobs or something ... No, I think it was after I left, actually. After I was doing a driving job, that's right, it was after I left Trotskyist movement. But they ... But it was still going on. I was working for an oil company, you know, delivering building materials that were derived from ... They'd give me this load to deliver and they said it was like a hundred miles there, a hundred miles back. I said ... the cost of what I ... the value of what I'm doing doesn't even pay the petrol, let alone my wages and the depreciation on the vehicle. I was told shut up. Do your job. I just deliver or collect what's put on my wagon and that's it. Because I didn't load the wagon, other people loaded it. So I said all right then. So I went out and did the job and that was it. And then about three or four days later, I was sent to some factory to get a return load, and I was just looking and I saw this about a whole line of forklift trucks were coming out. This was only a little wagon that would hold about two tonnes. It wasn't big. And they just started loading stuff on. I could feel the whole vehicle went down, down, down. They must have put on about four tonnes. So I drove it back and ... by the time ... I'd just about got it back ... the suspension had gone, the clutch had gone, the brakes had gone ... they were pretty amazed

I'd got it ... A, that I hadn't been stopped by the police and that I'd got it back in without crashing into anything. It was in a bad way. It took them a week, two weeks off the road, fixing it, to get it ... But they never said anything to me because they knew! I'd been told. I'd been given a specific instruction to deliver or collect what was put on my wagon. But it's that sort of mentality, you know.

RS: Was that mentality common in all the places you worked?

TM: Well, yeah, I was talking to guys who worked at Morris Motors in Oxford, you know, and they brought this ... British Leyland had this crazy idea, for instance, they were going to do a car called the Morris Princess R. And the R stood for Rolls Royce. They wanted to put Rolls on it but Rolls Royce stopped them because it was actually a military engine that they made and they had the copyright for and it was designed by Rolls Royce. Anyway, they ... But these guys said look, we warned them, we told them you put that in engine in the car it's going to fall out. The chassis won't be able ... it's too heavy... it's a military engine. Wouldn't take no notice. Car was a disaster! The engine kept falling out, you know. There were loads of cases like that, you know, where these crazy things were produced and it became ... British motoring industry became a laughing stock. And they always put the blame on the production side. I'm not saying ... Maybe some guys called strikes that weren't necessary, I wouldn't really know 'cause I wasn't working in it, but it was a familiar story over and over again, you know.

RS: So who were these managers then? Like, where did ... How did they get into those jobs?

TM: Often they were recruited off the shop floor and stuff like that. You know, there were production managers and all the rest of it ... but guys higher up never saw them, you know. It wasn't like Japanese car factories, where the managing director's actually known to the workforce ... you never saw these guys at all. When I was at Elliot's for instance, the production manager, for instance, who ordered me to pass this consignment for the French and all the rest of it ... I was talking to one of the security guards awhile later on it and I said oh, what happened ... Oh, no, he said to me did you hear about what happened to so-and-so? I can't even remember his name now. And I said no, and he said oh, apparently he got the sack. And he was hiding ... And there was a carload of guys waiting for him outside. And he kept looking at them out of a back window or something like that. Anyway, he eventually got into his car and he just shot off into the middle of the Dutton Hill Road, which runs around the back of it, and he just rocketed off up the road and this carload of guys saw him and chased after him. And that's the last anybody ever saw of him. Who knows what he was up to and all the rest of it. But for instance, another ... we used to make that ... they used to make there these alternators for the ... that used to go into military aircraft, called the Buccaneer, the Royal Navy used to operate it. Anyway, thing about these things, you have to bake them in an oven for a certain period of time. I'm not quite sure why. I've never understood the technology of that. Anyway, bake them in an oven. They gave the job to some sort of Jamaican labourer, who was just a simple labourer, to do and they didn't get a skilled man on it and apparently this guy a few times over-baked them. Ruined them. And the story was we lost a few Buccaneers as a result! [Laughs] I hope no one died as a result of it, but I wouldn't be surprised, you know, because they ... you know, there just wasn't that care of concern, you know. I mean, in fact we had another one ... it might have been the same guy, but when we were doing these telephone things, he used to ... he had a funny

sort of storage system with all these things and you had to be very careful with it because some weird reason there wasn't a safety guard on it, so this guy wasn't the brightest in the world and he used to sometimes just pushed them and it fell off the back, you see, and it was a massive great crash, you know. So after awhile we started cheering every time he did it, you know. And one day, the shop steward, he was furious, and he said the manager was showing some Japanese ... thing around here and somebody dropped one of these things. It was a huge cheer right over the factory. But whose fault is that? I mean, I don't know, it was just endless. Oh, the best one of all, was Wall's ... 'cause I was a ... you had to fill the statistics out for all the food, meat you checked in, the date, different jobs you did, different jobs in different places. Anyway, the guy said to me ... I did about three and a half sheets of figures, everything I'd checked. He said to me no, this isn't good enough. I said what do you mean? What haven't I done? He said I want four sheets of figures. I said, yeah, but, there's not enough work comes down the line. And he just gave me a hard look and he said I'm telling you I want four sheets of figures. All right then. So I stopped checking then. I mean, I just ... you want phony figures, I'm good at that. I could make nice little figures. I could make it look up and down, you know. But you know, it's the food industry, you know. As far as I was concerned, you know, people got to eat this stuff, you know, and I always felt socially responsible, but you know, but when you know you've been told, ordered to fabricate figures, you know ... I mean, I never understood why. It was just ... I mean ... There's a disconnect there. But the trouble is the disconnect gets to you, you know, but then you just, you know, say oh, OK, fine, you know. But on the other hand I used to ... People used to nevertheless still take pride in their work. I mean, that was this weird thing about it. They still did their best. You still do. I mean, like, for instance, that was one particular job. Another job, like I mean, you're sort of like on the main meat cutting line, you know, like when they sort of ham ... the legs and shoulders came down the line and they'd have to be carved into hams. You used to get these ... the farmers used to have stuck rusty needles ... there'd be rusty needles to give the pigs their injections, you know. And of course, they used to produce great abscesses in the pigs, you know. So you had to get in and do it, you know what I mean, the guys on the line would just ring the bells, or something like that. I forget what they did to get your attention. Over there, stop the line, you know, and then it was your job to cut the whole thing out, you know. 'Cause they're evil. I don't know if you've seen, but big abscesses, you know, full of really horrible yellow-green puss that stunk like hell, you know. And you had to cut everything out and clean everything down, you know. You did it seriously, you know, you really took it seriously, you know what I mean. You wouldn't mess around with something like that, you know, 'cause it ... some poor bastard could be finishing up eating it, you know, you're taking it in. Even just a little bit I would have thought would have been bad news! Let alone ... so you took it very seriously, you know.

RS: What was the Health and Safety like actually in the workplace?

TM: Very lax compared with today. I mean, a couple of times I saw people, guys under ... for instance, running off to hospital and then someone come running through looking for the finger that they chopped off, you know. But then, they were already beginning to do that. They could sew the finger back on. I mean, my aunt, she had her hand crushed, you know, so I always remember it, you know, couple of fingers or something like that left, you know. And she lost ... I was ... 'cause I played the piano and I've still got them all, you know what I mean? I was very ... you were very ... I mean, it was really down to you. I mean, you know, you either clued up on it, you know, either thinking OK, the one thing I do not want to lose is

my fingers! [Laughs] And you could sit ... you were very close to getting it crushed. All sorts of machinery, you know, and lots of people got hand, you know ... And you didn't get compensation in those days, you know, you just dealt with it best ... it was really down to you, I mean slowly it started coming in with guards and regular ... But back in the '60s and stuff when I was starting, I wasn't aware of it, you know. No one ever really sort of made a point to you, you know.

RS: So did it change like during the course of when you were working in factories?

TM: Not really, no. I think it was after that, you know. You know, 'cause it was still the era of big mass workforces, you know. I mean, hundreds of people, you know. It would be the whole street ... I don't know if you've ever seen the film of the old stuff, the whole street would be full of people going down there to you know, to clock in, you know. And you know, that was the worst, you know ... you were always on the bloody clock, you know. It was always jokes going up ... there was a joke ... so that was it, yeah. Number one company rule about health and safety, if someone dies on the job, make sure you clock them out! So, you know, as soon as they died, so that we don't pay them anything more. [Laugh] Grim humour, but you know, it was ... I mean, I felt very sad about ... British Light Steel Pressings, one guy got ... you know, they would have these magnetic lifts, you know, to pick big bits of metal up, you know. I don't know quite how it happened, but one guy, it fell on him and killed him, just about a week before it. There would be some compensation, but I don't think you'd get nothing like you did today, you know, I mean, for these things because it wasn't there, you know. Everything's been in favour of the employers, you know... That's been ... The death toll on the building industries of course was huge. Loads of guys died there and got injured, you know. Fortunately, I, you know, didn't have too much to do with that. I mean I worked on it a little bit but I realised it wasn't my thing, you know.

RS: Were there women working in the factories as well?

TM: Oh, yeah.

RS: And what was the kind of ...

TM: Well, that was the sort of legacy of World War II, you know.

RS: Right.

TM: Because all the women got brought in, you know, and you know, all women in places. And then the men started getting some of their jobs back, but yeah, yeah, it was big, yeah.

RS: Were they kind of treated equally or ... were there differences?

TM: Not in terms of pay, you know. I mean ... No. No. But I mean, in terms of ... in some places, like in terms of Post Offices, it was. But there was a lot of discrimination. But women had fought a real hard battle in World War II, because when they was conscripted there, for instance, they ... as number of them would say ... I mean I only know this from interviews and stuff, but you know, sometimes there was like toilets and all the rest of it, they weren't removed from the days of the Industrial Revolution. I mean, you're talking sort of brick walls covered in slime and dirt and filth everywhere, and women just wouldn't take it. And there was major battles. I mean, they changed ... women generally credited with sort of sprucing the whole thing up so at least by the time I started going in to work, you had fairly

decent conditions, you know. I mean, some of it bit grim in some of them, but nothing compared to what it was. And there was always a very robust and, you know ... I'd tell you, almost like equal sense. I mean, everybody was a worker. And people were respected as workers, you know. It wasn't like ... well, you just hear of it. It wasn't like office jobs where there was ... I'd say a lot of sexual harassment going on and stuff like that. You didn't really ... you know.

RS: Were women involved in the unions?

TM: Not very much, no. They ... Let's put it this way. They wouldn't go to union meetings. But of course, you used to have shop meetings, you see, 'cause you always had this to ... and your shop ... and of course, they'd all be there. They'd speak up and say things and all the rest of it.

RS: Sorry, how were shop meetings different?

TM: Well, because they were actually on the site.

RS: Oh, OK.

TM: You know. I mean, there was agreements in most places that you could have a shop meeting, you know. Often, it used to take place in the tea break, or something like that, but then everyone would get together. They would participate more in those sort of things. But of course there was strikes where women were very militant, you know. I should be able to recall some of them, but I can't. But of course, when you say you worked in somewhere like, say, Wall's, or Heinz ... which is ... I worked for some time up in Harlesden, I mean it was ... massive numbers of women worked there. But Heinz was I think very anti-union. There was ... eventually they got in there, you know. Because when they ... when the Tories passed the bill against ... you know, you used to have a thing that it could be compulsory to be in the union. And the only way they could pass ... the only way they could get rid of that out of law, saying you've got a right not to be in the union if you want to be in it, then they had to stop the employers sacking people if they were in the union. So the work ... so it was a sort of negative, positive thing. Do you see what I mean? So at the same time they lost the right to enforce a closed shop so that everyone had to be in the union or they got the sack. 'Cause that happened in a lot of places. But when they lost that, a gain was made because then you had a right to be in the union, no matter how anti-union the management was. I forget, that was in the 70s when that was brought in.

RS: And you also mentioned, like people from ... black Caribbean background ... where there a lot of people from that ...

TM: It depended on the industry. It depended on the industry. There was more in the newer industries, you know, like the building industry, the food industry, obviously buses, because you know London Transport used to specifically recruit in Barbados.

RS: Oh, right.

TM: Yeah, because they called them little Englanders because you know ... every island was different. I mean, in fact, at Wall's, that was a funny thing, is that the Irish had their sense of humour, which is all based on what county you come from, whereas the people from the Caribbean have their humour, which is based on what island you still ... so they

used to get involved in each other's humour, so that was all sort of, you know ... That's the first time I heard white people talking Jamaican, and stuff like that. 'Cause they could all do that as well! It was very funny. But, yeah, I mean, because the tough time, really, for people from the Caribbean had been like the '50s, when a number of the unions, the union leaders, were really quite anti- ... Well, they were racist, basically. There's that famous statement by the head of the railway union saying we didn't want any black workers. And of course before long there were loads of people working in the railways! So, yeah, it slowly came in. But there was never any real problem with that, you know, because they were working class. The real problems became when they wanted to become middle class. That's still a problem, you know. That's still been a problem, you know, it's slowly changing a bit, but I mean, a lot of young black people had problems with that, you know. It's hard to make your way. But there was never much of a problem because you know, it was accepted that that's what they were coming across for, you know. Nursing, of course, was a big one, you know. The nurses were nearly all from the Caribbean or Ireland at one point, you know. My mum, even when she was a nurse just before World War II. She said all the nurses were Irish. I mean the Caribbean ones ... the Caribbean ones came from the people who did military service here during World War II.

RS: So how did that kind of play out in the workplace? Did people kind of mix well or ...

TM: Yeah. There was ... things started really going backwards when they started ... the politicians started playing games, particularly with Enoch Powell, and really encouraged it. When economic problems started appearing then they started playing on people's fear. But it wasn't really ... I mean it ... Don't get me wrong. There was racism, and it ... I mean, I remember doing a poster picket down the Harrow Road in Paddington in the very early 60s about South Africa and we got a lot of abuse, you know. Because it was still a belief ... It was all tied up with the British Empire, you know what I mean? And that Britain ruled the world, and all that sort of stuff. It wasn't quite Fascist racism, if you know what I mean. It was still racism, but it wasn't the same thing that ... It was just a really ... people thought ... It wasn't so much they were against black people as the fact that they should just accept their place down at the bottom of the thing. But the real nasty, sort of neo-Nazi people, I mean, they actually think they should all be killed, which is a whole different ballgame, you know! But yeah, there was ... I was just trying to think of some better examples for you ... You know, I mean ... 'cause it ... we were involved ... I got involved in a lot of that stuff, you know, even outside of the factories, you know, 'cause I had sort of parallel experience with the Communist Party and then the Trotskyist movement. We did a lot of work amongst young black people, in the Trotskyist movement. Even the Communist Party got left behind on that one. And we recruited loads of them and talked to them. And I think we were one of the first organisations that ... I mean, the Communist Party used to do it, and church organisations do it, but they never really went out campaigning, it was just ... church people would tend to talk to black church people ... Communist Party people would talk to black ... people who were already that way radically inclined. Or trade unionists or something like that, in the same way that the odd black person who joins the police force tended to come from Caribbean police force or the Caribbean army, you know. So it was that sort of thing. Whereas the difference was that we would be say, at Acton High Street or down Shepherd's Bush or up at Harlesden by the Jubilee clock or wherever and we'd be stopping young black kids in the street and talking to them and all the rest of it. And I think that made a huge difference. I mean, I think they pay people to do it now. I think they call them "detached

youth workers"! And we were doing it all out of political conviction. Because it made ... you know ... Actually, white people wanting to talk to young black people about ... you know, young working class black people about what it was like living in London, what were their grievances ... And you always get the same kind of thing. It was the police, and harassment and all the rest of it because the police were just so racist. Well, they still are. Not a lot's changed like that. I mean, it was just dreadful. But I mean, they openly were calling people niggers, and stuff like that then. You know, which was just, you know, wrong. And I think most of them were just pleased ... They would come along to our meetings, a lot of them would be pleased to come along ... because there were white people who wanted to talk to them. And were prepared to listen to them. I mean, it's one thing, you know ... Lots of people wanted to talk to them, but how many people wanted to listen to what they had to say to you? And so, in this area, we got, for instance we got in '73, we got connected with the young kids who went to the Old Bailey, who were on a riot charge at the Old Bailey. These black kids from the Caribbean youth club in Cricklewood, because when the police raided this club, the DJ put on the record "Beat Down Babylon", which is a code word for police. And a big fight started. He got put on a riot charge for playing a reggae record, you know. It actually went to the Old Bailey. I mean it didn't wash, it just was stupid, you know, a complete waste. But these kids were very politically conscious, very politically aware. I was really impressed with them, you know. And then we did a lot of work like that and out of that, you know, one of them became ... I don't know if you remember, there was a pop singer called Yazz. She went to the top of the charts with a song called "The Only Way Is Up".

RS: Yes!

TM: And she was from Shepherd's Bush Young Socialists, and guys fought in ASWAD, and Boy George's band would all come out it, they were all just young kids when we knew them. And Southall Young Socialists became Misty and Roots, which is a sort of major reggae group and still in being, you know.

RS: So there was a close connection between music and politics?

TM: Oh, yeah. We were doing all that stuff way before Rock Against Racism, you know. I mean we were ... it was very ... it was ... if we went back far enough, we were even going 'round talking to Mods and Rockers, trying to persuade them not to fight, you know. I mean, there was all sorts of things going on back there. It was a very weird thing, that was in the sort of earlier '60s, you know. But lots of young kids wanted to ... and nobody ... that's the big problem now. Since the collapse of all those left organisations, nobody goes talking to young kids anymore. I'm not just talking black kids, immigrant kids, I'm talking ... kids from immigrant families, I should say ... but white working class youth either. Who talks to them? Who bothers with them? Nobody does. They're just laughed at on TV and programmes like "Skins" and what's it called ... "Shameless" or something like that. They're just ridiculed. I remember the real turning point, with Harry Enfield, and just taking the rise out of working class youth. I was just disgusted by it, you know. Because we talked to them all, you know. And I mean, it was interesting, like I mean, we had a bunch of young white, working class kids from Shepherd's Bush and who used to steal cars and**,** you know, would turn up at meetings and we said look, you shouldn't do that, you know. A, you're stealing cars from other working people who worked hard to buy them and all the rest of it, but B, you know, you could easily bring the police down on us and they could come chasing after us as if we're something to do with your illegal activities when we're not, you know. And oh, they

could see that. But we didn't come up with some fancy moral argument because everybody knows the people at the top are bigger thieves, as they've now proved, but you talked to them in terms that they could understand. Oh, yeah, you've got a point there. Perhaps it is wrong, you shouldn't do that, you know. You know, I mean, this gang, at one point they ... I don't know if you know where White City is, the Tube station and the motorway flyover there ... they ... the Roots car factory, they used to be the Humbers, but then they had another one up in North Kensington, they used to make cars there and they used to park them. They used to leave the keys in. You know. And these kids ... this was before we met them ... and they climbed over the fence one night and they played Dodge 'ems all night with these brand new cars, crashing them into each other. And there's so much noise there, because the trains going all the rest of it and no one heard them. Anyway, they all cleared off. And they said they tried to resist the temptation, but they wanted to go back and do it again. And of course, people were waiting for them. But they only got probation or something like that, you know. But it was just who they were, I mean it was a ... But I mean you could ... I think it was one of the problems is that there was more leniency. Now everybody's turned into the enemy by the police. For instance, we got ... Paddington, where I came from, back in the '50s, you weren't allowed bonfires in World War II. I don't know if you know, there was a complete blanket, you know. Nothing was allowed. People would be after you immediately if you lit a fire at night time because they said no, you're pointing the way to the enemy and so on. So of course, after World War II, people went bonfire crazy! You know, and we used to have a massive big fire, right across the road, and it used to burn the tarmac. And every, every Guy Fawkes night ... 'cause my parents wouldn't let me go down to join in, but we used to watch it from the top window, and all the local lads would be there and they'd fight the Fire Brigade and they'd fight the police, you know ... It wasn't in the papers the following day. That would be a major story in the national papers, but it wasn't even in the local papers because everyone accepted ... oh, yeah, that's what they do on Guy Fawkes Night. A bit of a barny with the police. And it was accepted, you know. And that's all gone now. That tolerance has gone now, you know. That's one of the things we really, really lost, you know. I suspect that was a very long tradition that went back, a long way, you know. They had a bit more intelligence. My ... he wasn't actually a blood relative, but he was called "Uncle" in the family, and he was the station sergeant of Notting Dale Police Station in North Ken, and he brought his police station out on strike in the 1919 police strike. There was a national police strike. Because they had a union then. And this guy was this massive six foot two or three Irishman. Huge, he was. And he was the only policeman who could walk North Kensington on his own at that time, you know, he wasn't scared of anybody. If anybody wanted a fight, he'd give them one. And they'd usually lose, you know. Anyway, he brought his police station out on strike and he beat up his own brother ... his own cousin for scabbing, and he got hard labour for it and thrown out of the police force. And, you know, that was a big loss to the police, you know. To lose guys like that. You wanted people of integrity and strength, you know. And it's not like ... the police aren't like that anymore, you know. You just ... you saw the way they acted at the G20 thing, when they killed that guy, you know. Dreadful, you know. Nothing to do with it. I mean, guy with a football shirt on. At a demonstration? I mean, come one, you know. Anybody knows that. Chances of him being part of the demonstration are next to nil. Guy with a football jersey ... you just say OK, mate. Go on, go home. Stay away from it, you know. But they got, you know.

RS: Just going back to you, and the ...

TM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RS: So you kind of got up to, I think, '76 when you got the ...

TM: Yeah.

RS: Did you go back and do another degree at that point?

TM: No, I'd already done it. When I got thrown out of the Trotskyists in '70, that's when I took my exams and then I went back into it. But I wasn't really ... Again I missed the boat really. But the real thing was I started this dance company and I'd always been interested in dancing, and that was another one of the problems I had, I suppose I was always regarded as not really serious about politics because I liked dancing, you know. Dancing is still regarded with deep suspicion, you know. And --

RS: How did you become interested in it?

TM: I always had, you know. People danced at home. You've got to remember, we were like pre-television. So Sunday nights, you know, people would often come 'round the house and people would sing songs or dance or play a musical instrument or whatever, you know. And then when the '56 thing started, you know, rock 'n roll, that was just ... And that was just like a whole new world for us. And that of course created ideological problems for me because it was all American, and the Communist Party didn't like anything American, you know, as far as we were concerned ... but the other side of it was this was it, you know. So I, you know, learned to dance with my cousin who was just about older than me and we did rock 'n roll jiving, you know. I was ... And then when I joined the Trotskyites, interestingly enough, they had ... they were the ones who really started off all this youth work. They broke off from the old sectarian attitudes of small, little parties, and reached out to loads of ordinary working class kids. And one of the ways that they did it was organising dances. So I actually got into the sort of like semi-entrepreneurial role ... although it wasn't making any money for myself, it was for the organisation ... Actually booking local groups ... I mean, I run dances here in Acton, and ... It was a bit hairy at times, you got all the local lads in, you know, and you had to deal with them. And often it was only you or a couple of other people there, you know, it could be quite tough, you know, at times, but ... So that actually kept my interest going, you know what I mean? We had close connections with the youth, and the changes and things and when reggae came along we were there sort of connected with what ordinary white and black youth were into, you know, and followed it all the way through, you know. Funny enough, I've just written an article about ... I haven't written about me, but I've just talked about that experience at the time and about the way in which the role of dance changed and really, when the music industry took over and kept dance subordinate because the problem they had in '56 was that all the working class kids were doing their own thing and they were running around trying to catch up with what they were doing, they didn't know what was what, you see, but once they got the Beatles and the Stones and that, then they started to get a hold on the industry, and everything was under control. But I got really interested in that and it sort of stayed with me ever since. You know, you couldn't help noticing, every time you had a big upsurge in popular music, there always seemed to be a big political upsurge, and I got curious about that. Was there ... '56 was a big year, because it was a ... I've told you about the Hungary thing with the Communist Party and Stalin, there was also a major year for the civil rights in America, and it was a major year for the end of

the British Empire, with the collapse of the whole Suez invasion by the British and the French and the Israelis in '56. So '56 was a decisive year, you know. I mean, I can remember all of it because I was actually there at the big demonstration in Trafalgar Square when Aneurin Bevan said let's march on Downing Street, you know. And it was huge, you know. You know, so my ... you still had them all compartmentalised in your head, but you were still aware that they were all happening at the same time. It was very strange, you know. So anyway, yeah, I thought basically, that I wanted to get back to the roots of it. In the mid '70s it came to my attention that the neo-Nazis elements were trying to make an issue out of rock 'n roll, saying this was white man's music, so they wanted to campaign against reggae and all the rest of it, so that's what got me interested in starting the group, you know. Saying hang on, let's do some research here because as far as I know it comes from Harlem, African Americans invented it. But what was the story? No one knew that, you know. So, you know, and that's how we got going on that, you know. You know, and somehow, you know, somehow when you're doing things like that, you suddenly find it almost shines like a searchlight back through your past experiences and then it makes a ... you know. 'Cause it got involved with things along the way. When I was a kid I used to go and see people, you know, I'd see Buddy Holly and jazz musicians, all sorts of things like that. And then later in was involved in concerts ... I can't think there was anybody ... not mega famous people, but involved with different people, you know. From the music scene, and stuff like that. But you kept involvement with it, you know. And then we got involved in sound systems and developed huge, big ... you know, had our own ones, you know, that we ... Organised, used to run big dances with them and stuff, you know. And none of that ... I had no training, it's just that you were just events and the equipment wouldn't work and stuff like that, so I learned how to fix them. Then I developed a certain ... nothing fantastic, just learned how to get an amplifier and speakers to work so an event wasn't ruined because someone didn't know what socket to plug what plug into, you know. And actually, funny enough, that's how I got my job in a college afterwards, because I could pass myself off as an AV technician. Purely on what I learned ... I couldn't tell them where I'd learned it, you know.

RS: So when was that, that you got the job in the college?

TM: '79. And I stayed there ... I wasn't intending to stay there, but I stayed there ... become a shop steward there ... I was shop steward there for the ... what was the union? Christ, I can't even remember it. NALGO, I think it was, or something like that. Union names have all changed so much, I can't even remember what they are now. And I know I finished up as a member of BECTU, which I still am. But I didn't intend to stay but then I started the dance company and then I realised this was what I was really interested in and here I was getting a wage, you know. So I thought I'd stay there until they finally told me it was time to leave, you know.

RS: Which college was that?

TM: It was City of London Polytechnic, which became London Guildhall University, which has now merged with another college, and I think it's now London Metropolitan University, you know. Then again, it was funny enough, it was almost like see these back to it, but we had a lot of sciences in the building and we had a machine shop and all the engineers worked there, so it was like the old days for me, you know. I used to spend a lot of time down there, you know, before they closed the whole thing down. Another absolute stupidity,

you know. Again, you know, these guys could make anything, you know, it was ... It's just ... I don't know ... sheer bad management ... stupidity. We had a guy there doing research and ... what was his research on? Yeah. He had ... I'm trying to think what it was. I think he was ... Yeah. He'd come up with some new material for making lightweight, incredibly strong artificial bones for ... artificial bones for like hip replacements and stuff like that. And he had a stack of research, you know. They wouldn't give him a full-time job so he left and he took them ... Of course he took all his funding, which was worth half a million a year with him to some other college and they were surprised, you know. It hadn't even occurred to them, you know. The money goes with the research, you know. Again, but to me ... Everyone had the same ... In fact, he used to talk to different guys at work, technicians in the university, and every one of them had been multiple redundancies from this factory, that factory, you know. It was just a long, long list of similar stories, you know. Most of them stayed on, but I'd sort of got out, you know. But a whole ... historical experience, really, you'd just see it going down the drain. And the interesting thing is, you talk to a load of guys, all the thing they were interested in was in making steam engines. And they did, you know. They'd all be out there, they'd all be living out in Essex and places like that, Southend or so on, and they'd actually be building them with their mates. They'd go around to ... in auctions and they'd buy lathes and mills and all the rest of it, they had all their own stuff and they could ... 'Cause all that understanding and skill had gone with them, you know. I mean ... I don't know. It was all very sad in a way, because you really ... you really ... These guys were so creative in what they would do, you know. You could go to them with anything and they could make it for you. And they would, happily. And then that all came to an end, you know. The college just moved in and closed the whole thing down. You know.

RS: I've kept you talking for a really long time.

TM: Yeah,.

RS: I'm aware you must be a bit tired now.

TM: No. It's fine. Maybe a bit ... you l know, you can cover enough. You know.

RS: Yeah. Do you want to carry on talking or do you want to stop now?

TM: Yeah, we could just do a little bit more if you wanted to, yeah.

RS: OK. Just in terms ... what were you actually doing while you were at the college?

TM: I was the Audio Visual technician.

RS: OK. And how long were you there?

TM: I think I was there fifteen years.

RS: Oh, right.

TM: Stayed there a long time, and I should have moved on, but the dance company, to be honest, I stayed a little bit. I got a diploma in educational technology when I was there, but I mean ... I tried to get better jobs but nothing happened, you know. And no, I really missed the boat, you know. I should have done other things. I started a PhD there, in fact, on the ... that's why I know a lot about the ... war production and shop floor. That's why I know a lot

of the World War II stuff because I went around talking to people and did a lot of work back then when there was a lot of people around you could talk to, you know. Because I was really interested in this whole thing about how London was ... really dismissed by the government. I mean, a lot of nonsense talked about World War II now and there was a belief that the bombers were just going to come in and wipe everybody flat, as if the bombers could only reach London. But of course, when the bombing was done they hit everywhere. Even Northern Ireland, I mean the bombs, you know, was all over the place. Nothing, nowhere got hit quite like London did, but it was everywhere, so that was nonsense. But what it meant was the underplaying London in the production effort meant that when they finally decided to so the D-Day landings and they had to suddenly ... because it was very last minute, getting into position, that's another story. It was a last minute decision, if you look at the official documents, and they had to suddenly turn it around, and of course that meant London was being underutilised. So London became the centre. Really. That's what my belief was. So I started looking in it, and I found various documents in the Public Record Office, you know, that supported that, you know. All sorts of things were being ... Loads of things were being produced around here. Halifax bombers were produced just down the road here, at the old London bus works, and they were re-equipping the American tanks with decent guns, just up there at the Acton Town Tube station and all the big works there, you know. All the big factories were making stuff around here. Flat out. And they made a huge difference, you know, equipping the forces, you know, for the ... Especially, I think because they were so close to the action. It was a bit more difficult for the Americans because they were so far removed from it, you know. But the Brits by that time were beginning to get their head together to produce actual weapons that could be used, you know. That were effective against the Germans, you know. So I was quite interested in that. But then I was interested in what they thought of the war on the shop floor, and what their attitude was, you know. Because I came across something to do with the London docks, you know, where the government asked the port employers would they thank the workers for their work for loading all the barges and the ships for the D-Day invasion, and the port employers actually replied to the government don't think that's such a good idea. They hate us so much, you know. It'd be better if you told them directly and it didn't come via us, you know. 'Cause they're likely to say something very unpleasant back to us, you know. So I mean there was deep animosity there, you know, I mean ... Britain was really ... I mean all that ... really sharply divided. And of course I had this thing about the docks anyway because of my Trotskyists activity, I'd got involved a little bit in the dock struggles of the 1960s. So I'd been to the docks quite a few times. And that was like going back in time, I mean you'd have all these --

RS: Where was it? Where ...

TM: Well, the West India Docks and the Royal Grouper Docks and, you know, ... they were still in operation then. And even when I was a driver ... driving a little bit toward the end of my industrial career, I used to have to go down the docks and deliver stuff and all the rest of it, so I had a certain, you know, quite a bit of experience with them. So I was very interested in the whole docking industry. You know, partly because of the historical thing, I think, you were very much aware of it, very ancient history, you know, the docks go back a long ... the beginning of London, really. The old ships ... you look at the old engravings of all the wooden ... Thames is packed full of them ... wooden ships, you know. Sailing ships that would come in and out, you know. I'm just trying to think, when did I get involved in that?

That was when I was at college, yeah. Because one of the things ... being all the ... I never did all the things I really wanted to do. I always wanted to do scuba diving. Never any time for that with politics, so I did that when I got to the college, you know. And I got involved in different projects and stuff like that, you know. Fascinated me. So even then ... and then someone got me involved in a project and we were trying to ... looking for wrecks in the Thames estuary, because so many ships have gone down there, you know. Now they're doing much more elaborate ones than what we were just doing, really off our own backs then, you know. But really, you know, just got involved in different historical projects like that, you know, which ... But I was aware of that. People were ... a lot of the trades and all the rest of it. A lot of people interested in history and they're very proud of their ... what they represented in terms of the work practices and all the rest of it. That's the terrible thing that's gone now, you know. People have got no idea ... you know. People knew the tradition they came from, you know. Who they were. And those values they passed on to their kids and no one passes anything on to anyone anymore. And of course you've got these young kids, they haven't got any ... Don't know anything, you know. All they see is the stuff on the TV, which tells you absolutely nothing for the most part, you know.

RS: And so were you running the company at the same time you were at the college?

TM: Yeah, until I got sort of warned off by the college, and we started getting press articles about us and stuff. That got a bit embarrassing, you know.

RS: Can you tell me a bit more about the company?

TM: Yeah, well, I mean, it just sort of expanded, became a performance company and you know, we just did all sorts of things, you know, we did a couple of films, loads of TV, press articles, performed all of the place. Putting various shows together and stuff, you know what I mean. But I mean it ... In fact, I'm still involved with it. Been to this big thing in New York, you know. But the actual running of the company, I'm ... we've got most of our dancers now are sort of getting on a bit in age and I think there's going to have to be a major change. But there's some younger people coming in and taking an interest. So maybe, when I've got my dissertation finished I'll work with them on it. 'Cause I actually like producing ... it's funny enough a bit like politics and a bit like trade union organisation, you know. You know, there's a ... I think one of the great things about, you know ... One of the interesting things you notice about England in general was that there is this tradition of informal organisation. It's more or less accepted that wherever you go, that the people at the top, and it doesn't really matter if it's a trade union or if it's a place of work, but they're all incompetent. You know, because they get their jobs by being well-connected. And so the point is, the people at ground ... shop level, you know, have to collaborate, you know, to make the thing work. And do the best they can, when confronted with the sort of almost like ridiculous demands put upon them by the people at the top. And so you know, that's pretty standard. The British Army's run like that, you know, the NCOs run the army and everybody knows the officers are idiots, you know. And it gives it considerable resilience and strength when put in adverse circumstances because they can rely on themselves. They're not waiting for someone to tell them what to do. They know what to do. And that used to be the big strength of British industry and stuff like that, you know. But then that all got smashed up, you see, and that's the real problem. You know, shop stewards became demonised and all the rest of it. People just realise ... the vast bulk of them were just guys who didn't get paid for being shop stewards. They'd do it voluntarily, they'd take their time out, they could be

just sitting there quietly, minding their own business, reading a book or whatever, but no, they'd be going 'round organising and collecting union money and all the rest of it. And it's just dreadful, you know. All that strength. And you could see it in all these ... so many of these big places up north, you know, where the whole social fabric's fallen to pieces because the unions were the strength. They gave purpose and character to these communities, you know. And the coal mining places, and the steel mining ... steel industry places and all the rest of it where it's just collapsed. Local youth are nothing, you know. Unions used to have real authority.

RS: Do you miss unions in your life?

TM: Yes and no. My problem is that I've perhaps developed too much into a social historian, so I'd sort of tend to be more objective about it all, you know. I was just down the ... a meeting last night where the local council are going to close down a couple of major facilities in the area and turn them all into housing, you know, so ... I must admit I've got myself a little bit detached from it. I'll try and do something about it as best I can and maybe someone else will do something I don't know, you know, 'til a certain ... you realise we're on such a slippery slope, socially speaking, that everything's going ... getting worse so rapidly, that if you try and do too much yourself, all you do is run yourself ragged and destroy yourself, you know. And certain things that you have to do, I think it's better to do less, well, than try and spread yourself out. By doing too many lost causes, you know. I mean, yeah, you miss the camaraderie and all the rest of it, but that's sort of gone anyway, you know. I mean ... They decided ... it was obviously decided here they wanted to get rid of mass working force industries, you know, because they were seen as a threat to the state, you know, you know, just stupid. Most people want to earn a reasonable living and live a quiet, enjoyable life, and they're quite happy with that, you know. But it just seems that that's not on, you know. I mean the ... you know, the just the whole ... the mayhem that Thatcher caused by encouraging people to buy their own council houses and stuff like that. Ultimately, the main problem is ... it's caused nothing but misery and unhappiness. Divided families. I was talking to some lawyer recently, he said since they started buying your own house, he said so much work. Families are just all in legal disputes over properties with each other. You know, there used to be a thing as a family house. Not anymore. House now is an object for making a quick buck on. So quite opposite of what Thatcher intended. It wasn't about enhancing family values, it was destroying it. That's really what she's done. You know, and Blair, of course, followed her up in doing it. You know, you have to come back to a notion of ... basically just need human collaboration to get major tasks done that concern the survival as us as people. If we don't work together, create together, you know ... We've lost it, basically. You know, the image, say, put over by Alan Sugar on "The Apprentice" of all these people just trying to stab each other in the back, to me is just utter nonsense, you know. Real life ... I mean, you can do that at the top, it's the interesting thing about it, it gives you insight about what it's like at the top, but that's just the stupid people at the top doing that. The real people, you know ... you can't run a hospital like that, you know. You can't run a train service like that, you know. All the essential things, you know, you can't run a supermarket like that, you know ... people necessary jobs to ... that's important to us all, you can't run with all that stupidity, you know.

RS: Seems like it might be quite a good place to stop, unless there's anything else that you want to add.

TM: No, it’s just ...