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S.D. Warren Company

Stories of Maine's Paper Plantation

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## Interview with Clyde Harriman

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## Clyde Harriman

**Track 2** I went to work one afternoon ... and they were giving these flyers out to people, telling them, giving them general information. Some of it was – rose to its being juvenile and really of know value to anybody... This was done by the International union.

**Track 3** It was my experience that S.D. Warren took very good care of their employees. But in doing that it naturally developed that people throughout the mill, you know, those in control, the superintendents and that, had these little sweetheart deals so there was no, there was really no conformity to regulations or how things should be done.

Other than that, I really had no criticism of S.D. Warren. In fact, I firmly believe that they had the interests of their employees at heart, and that they wanted to do what was right in the interests of treating them with dignity and respect.

2:25 You've heard it said -- "Mother Warren" – well that's exactly what they were. My mother-in-law in fact worked there for 20 some odd years. And she swore by S.D. Warren, which is what a lot of people did. And with a lot of justification.

2:45 It provided them a living of course, and they were treated rightly. And they used to have little parties, the women, birthdays you know, and like that. And it was the general rule of the mill to go ahead and give them that time, and "go ahead and do it." ...

I never saw S.D. Warren as being real stringent and directed in the way they handled people. It wasn't loose but it was done in a very nice way and nobody was offended by the way they were treated.

**Track 4** One afternoon I went to work ... and I had seen it a couple of times, the representatives of the International paper union would pass out these flyers... outside the gates, and they really didn't tell you anything. It was more directed with calling Mother Warren an over-bearing paper baron and things like that. Real childish stuff, I thought. And I never gave it any thought.

And in 1965, I think it was late summer, I walked up to the gate and there was a guy there an Int'l representative, and he gave me a flyer and I read it, and I just discounted it as another piece of childish rhetoric... I mentioned to somebody, you know these guys – meaning the Int'l reps – they couldn't organize nothing. They don't have a clue as to what has to be done to organize [Warren].

**Track 5** My doorbell rang and three guys are at the door. And they were Int'l reps. And they asked if they could come in and speak with me. And I said: "sure." I brought them in,[and] we sat down. They were very nice. I could see right away just talking to them, and from my experience, they really were coming on to me from a position of: "Well, how should we do it then?" In other words, I got the distinct impression that they just, you know, it was out of their league to organize a mill like that. And, uh, so finally one

of them says: “I understand that you think that we don’t know how to organized, and that we don’t know how to do things right.” And I said: “that’s exactly right.” And they said: “Well, what would you do?” So, I said, “Well, your asking me – I’m going to tell you one thing, if you want to organize this mill, it’s going to take time. It ain’t just handing out pamphlets and leaflets.” I said: “It’s going to take a couple of years.” And they were kind of taken back by that, you know. And I told them: “To do things I think they should be done, and things that I’m not even aware of [that] should be done, it’s going to necessarily take time.”

**Track 6** So I got involved with them in a big way, and it took us two years, to organize. And the way we did it was to have breakfast parties. You know, let the union spend a couple of bucks on coffee and donuts, and whatever, and to have it at a central place where a maximum number of *women* could come, so that they could address them and tell them what unions are all about and hopefully the things that could do as a union to help them and make their place of work a better place of work.

Q: Why was there a concern particularly with getting women workers into this?

A: Because women, by nature, are treated differently than men. And I’ll make a point later on that will show you that very thing.

Because women, it seemed to me, you can convince them, being the second bread-winner, some of them being *the* bread-winner, probably had lost their husband, were looking for stability and security in their job. And I mean, those things just don’t come along, and nobody grants those things.

1:25 So, I have to say they did an outstanding job in addressing that. And then [the Int’l]. And now the women were talking throughout the mill amongst themselves, unknown to me because I was busy with other things, and finally there was this guy who came out of the woodwork, his name was Bob Charette. He wasn’t overly aggressive or assertive, he recognized the need for a union, and he saw the value of it, and whenever he could, he would pass on information to me, and disseminate it to somebody else. He was more or less a conduit I used to get the word around, because I didn’t have the time to get around. He worked in the Finishing Department. [and] I was in the Finishing Department.

2:50 Bob Charette was the only one I remember being seen with me. And that meant something to me because the guy was taking a chance, but obviously, if he had experienced any problems I would have advised him of his rights under the law for protecting him.

They [management] knew I was on the move. Because I didn’t hide it.

3:30 Describes his conduct as union activist. “Very professional, above board, everybody knows where I’m coming from. And its done in a very nice and professional way.”

**Track 7** It was a real comprehensive, intensive, and well-done job, I have to say, of organizing the mill. So that when we got to the point where we petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for an election, the NLRB reps came up, and then we had to challenge the list of foremen, people who worked, [and] see where they rose or fell.

And I got to know Frank Peone from the NLRB. ...

Then I signed papers with the NLRB and along with the mill for, you know, protection under the law – and they wouldn't come down on me, and this was done of course to make the mill aware of what the law is, as if they didn't already know.

So the night of the election, they finished counting ballots at around, I think it was 8 o'clock, and it wasn't until 2:30 or 3:00 o'clock in the morning, the int'l reps were all running scared. I said: "take it easy, just let the votes take hold there." I said: "Wait and see what's going on."

1:52 Well we won three to one. Very decisive. And when it was declared by the NLRB right there that we in fact had won the election and that the union would be part of S.D. Warren, some fellow ... he was from S.D. Warren in Boston. First he congratulated me on the organizational work and what was done to get the union in. Obviously they were pleased with the way it was done. It wasn't done by a bunch of big-mouth, loud-mouth union busters with signs and all of that. It was done on a very professional level.

And he says that we want to extend to you the full cooperation of S.D. Warren, the Cumberland Mill ... will extend every courtesy to you, and you will be fully cooperated with, and we're here to work with you. Now I don't to have to tell anybody who's ever organized anything, that to hear that kind of thing from the opposite side, I found to be very rewarding.

And that's the kind of a person I am. When I sat down with the mill people at the first time, I told them what I was all about. I wasn't a person who was into a confrontational relationship. I didn't consider, I considered an adversarial relationship as being counter-productive to getting along. It's not in my make-up, and I certainly hope it isn't in yours.

**Track 8** Describes how women had their vacation time equalized by first contract.

Women always had gotten shorter vacation time than men. 2:00 And that cost them almost \$400,000 on a count of that.

**Track 9** And what was sorely lacking in the mill all this time, even though they were being treated well, and it was detrimental to the mill in this respect: A union brings organization, it brings stability, it brings law, language, things that you have to adhere to. And there isn't, there shouldn't be any doubt in anybody's mind what the intent and the purpose of what the union is there for, and management either.

Goes on to describe his relationship with Ted La Brecque. (First Local 1069 president). Harriman was the vice-president. La Brecque delegated the functioning of the union to Harriman "I was in effect the chief spokesmen."

4:00 Reached out to the Dept. Heads, e.g. Arthur Perrin. 5:00 “We met – what could the two of us do together for the mill.” We let the people [workers in particular departments] make up their mind as to what they wanted. If we felt if there idea was workable... we’d go ahead and do it.” 6:00 I got that going on throughout the mill. And what was happening was in effect participatory management.

[Brings up Demings]

6:45 [These understandings] - “It was never in the contract.