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**Narrator**

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**Interviewer**

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DL: 00:00 When did you hear about the organization NFO?

JC: 00:05 In 1962.

DL; 00:09 Okay. How did you hear about NFO?

JC: 00:12 People were pretty actively involved in this county here. They had 750 members at that time, and I worked at an elevator and that was all I was taught for many years and argued.

DL; 00:26 Okay. What did you hear about NFO?

JC: 00:28 Well, I heard all bad things before I got involved. It was, from the people that didn't want to join, they called it communistic, and the people that backed it, they said it was the salvation of the farmers. So, who do you believe?

DL; 00:45 Who or what influenced you to join NFO?

JC: 00:49 I just got tired of marketing the old way. We changed the system of marketing in [inaudible 00:55] south of St. Paul and I always feel we lost 20 pounds a hog. Because I used to haul one and butcher about the same time, it always weighed more than the ones I shipped. So there had to be a better way. Same way with John Morrill in Fergus Falls I was never satisfied there either. So I joined. Nobody asked me to join, I just joined.

DL; 01:15 When did you join?

JC: 01:16 October 1969.

DL; 01:19 Okay. What was the reaction of your family and friends, and why did they have that reaction?

JC: 01:25 At that present time, I don't think there was any bad reaction of anybody at that time, in '69. I think everything was pretty much—went pretty smooth.

DL; 01:38 Okay. What kind of local organization did you have in 1969?

JC: 01:43 Well, they had about twice the amount of members they've got today. They could get on the telephone and, within two hours, you get the farm people in any place in Otter Tail County. They were organized. I wish they could do that today.

DL; 01:57 What kind of organization do you have now?

JC: 02:01 The organization has gone to business, it's more business-like, no holding actions or dumping actions or shooting calves or hogs, or whatever. They know they can work collective bargaining, it's used in every other segment in our economy, except agriculture. We know it can be done and can be accomplished, and I think the nucleus is out here to still do it. I'm going to keep on believing it can be done till I'm done.

DL; 02:27 Okay. Let's get a little more background information, okay? How long have you been in this community? All your life—

JC: 02:33 All my life.

DL; 02:34 Okay. What is your ethnic group? German? Danish?

JC: 02:41 Dutch. [inaudible 02:43] I think is what we always called it. Right?

DL; 02:48 Religion. I guess I should ask you that too.

JC: 02:50 Presumed as Lutheran.

DL; 02:52 Okay. Your level of education: college, high school?

JC: 02:56 I graduated from Donnelly High School, 12 years.

DL; 03:00 Okay. Have you been involved in any other organization?

JC: 03:04 Farmers Union, I was a county vice chairman for a half dozen years and I was a local chairman for I suppose the same number of years.

DL; 03:15 Okay. Now, back to NFO, who else joined your area, who else joined the organization at the same time you did? Did many other farmers join in? A majority—

JC: 03:25 At that time, they were pretty well-organized, I think. I can't recall who else signed to get members. I wasn't involved in the membership.

DL; 03:37 Why did other farmers join? Was it basically the same reasons as you did?

JC: 03:41 I think so. I think we all believed in something that could be accomplished if the farmers would work together. At that time, all they had was ideas, they didn't have the rapport of anybody out here besides a fellow farmer, and they had to educate what we call the old system, our old marketing system. That's what we've been trying to do for the last 20 years, is try to advance price of input on the price we receive for our product, the farmers.

DL; 04:10 Okay. At the time that you joined, did members pay dues? Do they pay dues now?

JC: 04:15 Your dues are \$75 per year. I think I paid that every year since I joined. I think they raised them to \$75 the year I became a member.

DL; 04:23 Are there any other requirements for membership?

JC: 04:26 You have to be a bona fide farmer.

DL; 04:28 What makes a bona fide farmer?

JC: 04:30 If you got any production at all. If you own land and you cash rented you could still be a member. But you got to have production and then you are a voting member. You could be a non-participating member.

DL; 04:49 Okay. How do other farmers find out about the organization?

JC: 04:54 Originally or?

DL; 04:55 Originally.

JC: 04:56 When they started it? They just got together and they started talking what this kind of what do you call a—

DL; 05:02 Word of mouth?

JC: 05:03 When they got organizing, they set people into an area, and they get the people in that area going, and they do their organization themselves. People get a leader at least in every county, and then that leader would take over, and they'd have meetings and get speakers in, and then they sign up.

DL; 05:19 Is it basically the same today? Have you changed dramatically?

JC: 05:22 Yeah. But we still have that type of meetings, but you don't have the organization work going on. We're trying to organize production today, not the farmers. The farmers are organized, have many different organizations, of course, but they are organized.

05:36 I think they're organized because, one reason they are, we got so many organizations in agriculture today, they like to keep the farmers conquered and divided and go on in different directions. That's what we have, 400 different commodity groups and organizations in agriculture. And they all—and they try to do something, but they can't accomplish anything because they're all working on one little goal, and the overall goal is to price all agriculture.

06:00 You can't just price corn, you just can't price beef, because everybody goes into beef. You can't have dairy like it's been guaranteed 80 percent of parity, everybody goes into dairy. We've got to equalize our prices, then the farmers don't jump in and out and bust to keep prices low.

DL; 06:16 Okay, you're talking about other organizations. How does NFO compare in membership to other organizations? Do you have any figures off the top of your head?

JC: 06:25 Nationwide, I think we're, out of the three main—there's three main organizations. The Grange is a little bit here and there all over. I would say Farm Bureau is your biggest organization. There's more members that belong to that organization than there are farmers, because they can have outside people be members through their insurance program. Farmers Union would be next and the NFO should follow Farmers Union. We don't have insurance

agents out here selling memberships. We are just farmers trying to convince the other farmers.

- DL; 06:58 Okay. Do organizers receive any formal training and recruitment methods?
- JC: 07:03 Not before, but now they do. We've got a—something just like, what was it that they have every year?... the training beyond public speaking, and I can't recall the name of it, but you would have something similar to that where they have a training seminar.
- DL; 07:29 This is every year?
- JC: 07:31 Yeah. If you started working for the organization sometime while you're still green you'll go to training seminars.
- DL; 07:41 Okay. Who does the organizing in order to build membership? Do you have a special branch to build membership?
- JC: 07:48 Not really. We got everybody that works for the organization is out building membership. Everybody, no matter who they are, in dairy, grain, beef, or whatever. If you're trying to sell a program and you've got to convince the farmer to become a member and belong to the program.
- DL; 08:03 What other recruitment methods, just like—
- JC: 08:05 On the road.
- DL; 08:06 —word of mouth?
- JC: 08:07 Um-hum.
- DL; 08:08 Okay.
- JC: 08:08 They do have meetings, they would have a grain meeting and invite members, or any other kind, hog, whatever. Hog meeting, December 7, we're going to invite 90 non-member hog producers to this meeting, to try to get them involved in the hog program, and that's how we do it. It's either one-on-one or through meetings.
- DL; 08:29 Okay. How do farmers respond when they're urged to join NFO? And why do they respond like they do? Are there a lot of skeptics, or do they sign up right away?

JC: 08:40 No. They don't sign up right away. One out of ten would probably sign up first call, and you end up taking two or three callbacks, then you'll end up getting there. I'd see 10 to 15 percent enrollment. All the organization really wants is 10 percent of the average size farmers in our country and 10 percent of any given production at one given time will put a price on it.

DL; 09:08 Ten percent, that little?

JC: 09:10 Ten percent is not little if you add it out. It would be 700 million bushels of corn or 800 million bushels of corn, 200 million bushels of wheat. Or 10 percent of the hog killed, that'd be 1000 hogs, that'd be about 30,000 per day. We know we can dictate terms to packers and buyers if we had this in our control.

DL; 09:32 Okay. Once the organization has gained members, how does it keep them involved and active? Meetings—

JC: 09:41 They've got a newspaper that comes out from Corning once a month. Most counties that are really active have their own newspaper. They have a, our county here, has a meeting every month.

DL; 09:55 Does Otter Tail County have a newspaper?

JC: 09:57 Um-hum.

DL; 09:58 What's the name of that?

JC: 09:59 News and Views.

DL; 10:02 Does that come free with the membership or is it—

JC: 10:05 We sell advertising in it.

DL; 10:08 Okay.

JC: 10:08 [inaudible 10:08] writes it up and puts it together.

DL; 10:13 Okay. Are your attitudes influenced by this newspaper?

JC: 10:21 A person that's been involved will get some ideas probably, you know what they're working, their goal is, so they don't really influence a person that's been involved with it. The non-participating member or the non-member can probably get a lot of good out of it.

- DL; 10:35 Okay. Does your organization send out speakers on a regular basis? What do they say? Do they influence your attitudes?
- JC: 10:42 In this county, we've tried to put together a supper, once a year or twice a year, sometimes we have for two times a year in Otter Tail. They'll send in a speaker. It could be the vice president, it could be anybody on the staff, that comes out here.
- 11:03 But we also, our organization is organized into congressional districts. We got a 7th District, that's where we belong here in Otter Tail County. We have, once a year, we have a convention, and to put our business through that convention. Then we have resolutions and whatever we all got. Then we go through a state convention, and probably a month after district conventions. It's where we let the people go to national conventions. The counties are the ones that's got to be the backbone of any organization. You got to have the membership, there's got to be backbone.
- DL; 11:46 Okay. What kind of meetings, rallies does NFO have at the local county, regional, state and national levels? Do you attend these personally?
- JC: 11:55 Well, we have, this convention I talked about, generally same thing as a rally. But we, as I stated previously, we always try to have sausage feed we call it. That's one thing and have always been known for these whole hog sausage feeds. That's our rallying feat, we call it, and that's where we would try to get non-members and business people to hear our story.
- DL; 12:19 Do these gatherings influence your attitudes or is it basically for the new members rather than the old, entrenched members?
- JC: 12:26 I'd say it's—well, you got to keep on educating people. There's a lot of ideas out here that can sway their mind today. If they start going the old route, and I presume they can probably come to these suppers or meetings and they can probably see what we're still trying to accomplish and see that it's still doing it, because we've got a lot of competition out here. There's no business in agriculture that wasn't priced. They've tried everything in the past to keep us from succeeding. But I think these meetings throughout

the membership, I think it's a good way to get across to the non-member too.

- DL; 13:10 Okay. What kind of member are you? Are you very active, moderately active? Why are you the amount of active that you are?
- JC: 13:18 Well, when I quit working in town, I became active. I figured there had to be some way that you could do something in agriculture to better it.
- DL; 13:26 When did you quit working in—
- JC: 13:27 1976.
- DL; 13:30 Did you quit working especially to become more active?
- 13:35 Would you say that you are proud or enthusiastic about being a member? Or are you just going through the motions?
- JC: 13:41 No. I think, I'll talk it to anybody. I've, I would say, talked to 500 farmers this summer. I think they all have been enthused. If you don't believe in what you're doing, you can't do a good job to do it, I figure. But no, I'd say I'm pretty enthusiastic about trying to get this accomplished.
- 14:09 We've got to do it if we're going to save our smaller type, family type farm. Hobby farms we don't have to worry about because the person in a hobby farm situation can survive off the farm, keep his little farm. The corporate structure farm don't need this type of organization either. But the bona fide person, family type operation, whether it's corporate or whatever, that's out here trying to subsist, needs to price their products someplace to survive. They've been trying to do it with capital means by borrowing money and they found it don't work.
- DL; 14:42 Would you say that you're just as enthusiastic now as you were when you first started? Or have you become—
- JC: 14:49 No. I think I'm more involved and I think I'm working harder for it than I ever did. Because when I joined, I was still working in town. I just joined to use their programs actually. I wasn't really involved in—I wasn't committed to going out here and talk to the farmers, at that time. But now I am.



- DL; 15:11 Okay, let's talk a little bit about that, how politics and NFO and the forming of NFO. Why was NFO formed and when? I think it was in the '50s, '54—
- JC: 15:22 Fifty-four. Just a dollar, a dollar and a half, and they started using that for the spending money and started talking to farmers and trying to get collective bargaining put on into agriculture. They know it can work, it works for everybody else.
- DL; 15:41 Okay. Collective bargaining, was that the purpose of NFO?
- JC: 15:45 No, not when everything started. They started, the first round, they went to Washington and lobbied. Most of the people that were involved in getting NFO started off the ground are former World War 2 veterans that have seen the world a little bit and they knew there's something better to life than what they were getting out of agriculture. They wanted to better agriculture.
- DL; 16:08 How was NFO going to pursue these objectives, bettering agriculture? Do they have any—
- JC: 16:14 Well, they found out while they're doing this lobbying in Washington that there's a law in the book that says the farmers can organize with collective bargaining as their goal, Capper-Volstead Act. Nobody had ever used it beside the cooperatives. But the cooperatives were not there to price the product. They were either supply cooperatives or they're procurement for the industry. They were not even big enough to be as big as big industry farms, see. So they're still beholden to the same people.
- 16:43 The NFO figured that through collective bargaining you could get the farmers organized, then you've got the farm product at their home front or out in the farm level, price it at the farm level, then you don't have to worry about getting enrollment price. You got to have the price out when it leaves the farm.
- DL; 16:59 Okay. Does NFO have the same objectives in 1983 as it did in '50s? Is it—
- JC: 17:05 I think the direction changed some in the last—agriculture has changed so fast, I think NFO changed with it. So their objectives were to organize farmers with collective bargaining and I think that's still the objective. They probably changed some ways they have to direct that. They

had the membership to do it in the '50s and '60s, didn't have the programs. Today we've got the programs, how do we get the members' commitment to use them.

- DL; 17:33 Okay. Would you say the NFO is having a resurgence now the last few years? Was there a dip in the '70s?
- JC: 17:40 Oh, yes. When agriculture finally got a fair price for two years, the farmers, they decided they could get a lot without collective bargaining or any other program, because they had some dollars. They could sell part of their crop and have some leftover ones, and pay some bills and incur some debt.
- 18:00 Now today, they've got themselves in a bind because they figured that big balloon is going to keep on going. Instead of getting to realize income from their product, they went out and started hauling the farm back to town for the capital means, borrowing money. That's why they're in a shape they're in today. I'd say 90 percent of the farmers here are in bad shape. Their assets are held in town.
- DL; 18:25 Does NFO advocate direct action like stopping foreclosures, holding actions, strikes?
- JC: 18:32 We advocated that heavily in the '60s. They had holding actions, they dumped milk, they dumped thousands upon thousands pounds of milk. They shot calves, they shot some hogs, just to verify a point that there was no money in it, the farmers are losing money.
- DL; 18:49 Were these actions successful?
- JC: 18:51 At the time I think they were. They got news and they got the people to realize that these farmers are putting something together.
- DL; 18:58 Did you ever personally participate in any of these activities?
- JC: 19:02 They were all done before I even became a member. I think 1968 was the last holding action.
- DL; 19:09 Are there any, stopping foreclosures, anything similar to those types of activities that you're doing now in '83? Anything—

- JC: 19:18 Some of the membership. We don't advocate it from the top. We try to work on the other end some, by helping the farmers keep going somehow through FHA or whoever. But I think people are—membership can do what they wish. They can go and stop. There's some people out here who want to stop foreclosures saying they'll stop it. They might be Farmers Union and Farm Bureau and NFO people who want, and it might be known. But some they might not belong to any of them. But something like that, that's kind of a snowball type deal, farmers will go do it.
- DL; 19:52 Okay. Does NFO organize cooperatives or engage in collective bargaining efforts?
- JC: 19:58 Collective bargaining is the goal.
- DL; 20:00 But cooperatives are—
- JC: 20:02 The cooperatives are all built, they are out here, either a supply co-op or a procurement co-op. They're already there, they're part of the system. We got to use that part of that system, but we want to try to price the product before it goes into that, the cooperative can't price it.
- DL; 20:17 Are these cooperatives successful?
- JC: 20:20 Cooperatives have been successful until recently. You'll find your cooperative now is competitive locally. They probably got their product is higher priced when you go to buy it. Especially when you look at a smaller operation in the smaller towns, they can't compete on account of overhead. They've got to either get more profit out of the grain or charge above what they sell.
- DL; 20:46 Is NFO involved in politics in any special way right now?
- JC: 20:50 We've gotten a group, a PAC group called GRIP, Grassroots in Politics. We've got one lobbyist in Washington, D.C. If you talk to people who are involved in Washington, D.C., they'll tell you he's a good lobbyist. But one man.
- DL; 21:07 One man, that's all?
- JC: 21:09 In the states we have one person elected as legislative liaison. He sits on anything that's pertinent to farmers.
- DL; 21:16 Okay. Does NFO try to elect, do they endorse candidates?

- JC: 21:20 We don't really endorse anybody because we're not a political melee. We figure we can get in trouble or problems can be created when you endorse a candidate. They do go out, and if somebody is a candidate that's backing our philosophy, he'll get backed. That's what this Grassroots in Politics is about.
- 21:42 We have a fund that we can go to, if they got a fundraiser for—Rick Nolan was a pretty good advocate of all farm policy, no matter if it's NFO or who. They'd have to pay a thousand dollars a plate to go to this dinner, this fundraiser. That's what this Grassroots in Politics money is used for. That man in Washington can go to that dinner. Then you got a little insight on what's going on and this person will recognize you.
- DL; 22:10 Okay. Has there ever been any political candidate or public official who's come close to representing your organization's position on farm issues? Anyone who's been a dream official?
- JC: 22:24 No, I don't think you want any candidate who wants to raise the price of food, because you will not get back in office if inflation hits food. [inaudible 22:32] in this country against inflation is to keep food cheap. But they come and they talk good when they talk to your groups, but they can't succeed in doing anything because farmers are a minority and you can't get anything passed in Washington when you're a minority, unless you are in civil rights areas.
- DL; 22:53 All right, yes. Okay. Do you keep track of—do you keep track of voting records or to see which farmers are really supporting you, so when they come out here and talk-sweet you and go back to Washington, D.C., they're not lying to your face?
- JC: 23:07 You bet. That's right in our paper, that one. I'll give the other one.
- DL; 23:11 Okay. Has there ever been any candidates that are a total disgrace, great disappointment to NFO? Anyone who promised you the moon and just let you down?
- JC: 23:24 Well, I think they're finding that, believers in collective bargaining, figured that there's no chance or anything coming from Washington besides peanut on the end of a stick, or a carrot, and just keeps you out there following it,

and not accomplishing the goal we've had in our mind, which is to price of agriculture. It always pertains, like the PIC program, 4 percent of the farmers receive over 50 percent of the payment, it don't do us much good as a smaller farmer out here to depend on Washington to survive anyway.

DL; 23:57 Are there any conflicts between NFO and other farm organizations, Farm Bureau, Grange, Farmers Union? Are you—

JC: 24:04 Previous there's been, I'd say, probably in the early history of NFO, they all were kind of fighting us because we organized so fast, it was like a whirlwind. We went through, especially through Otter Tail County, I was in Farmers Union local here, when NFO organized, our local died. They went to NFO meetings instead of Farmers Union meetings.

24:29 Through the farmer, through the top people, I think you'll find the leaders of the organization, they didn't like what was happening because the organization probably lost membership. But as I said before, our organization is organized with farmers, for farmers, we don't have an insurance representative running down the road signing up members for us.

DL; 24:50 What are your attitudes to the farm organizations? Are they really helping farmers or is it just NFO who's really holding the torch for farmers?

JC: 25:02 They all are trying to do something. You've got two groups. Farm Bureau is conservative, Farmers Union is liberal. They take care of everything in Washington, and in Washington nothing is passed anyway really. Our organization is presumably non-political. So, I don't know, I—

DL; 25:28 If you're going to encourage a farmer to join any other organization other than NFO, what would that organization be? Are there any—

JC: 25:37 Well, I always explain to my—or ask from my state, if they'll say they're Farm Bureau member, I say, yeah, you must have Farm Bureau insurance. They'll say yes. I say, well, they've got something to offer, right? Our

organization has something to offer too. We're trying to put this product together to price it.

25:55 I don't downgrade anybody. They're all organized for a reason, whether it's the price of agriculture through this way or else through the other way, or to sell insurance or have cooperatives or whatever, or else support producers of the turkey growers or the dairymen, they've all got their little organization, trying to do something. I think you can belong to that one, you can belong to this one, you can belong to all of them if you want to. There are some members out here who belong to all three major organizations, plus pork producers, plus the dairy, and everybody else.

DL; 26:25 Okay. What do local business people, clergy, educators think of NFO's goals and objectives? Do they have any special views? If so, why do they hold them?

JC: 26:38 If you're at the convention, we're going to have—I didn't look up his name, there's a Catholic group in the country going to be there. But once the people understood what we're trying to do, you've noticed in the country or churches, they're getting smaller enrollment and at school they're having smaller enrollment, especially in rural America. That's the only one reason is that the farmers have left the land, and the clergy are starting to see that they've got to try to change this some way. They've got to get the people on the farm to keep the people in your area, and to keep young people. You can't get a young person involved in agriculture today because you cannot afford to. Right?

DL; 27:19 Um-hum.

JC: 27:20 Okay, how are you going to keep them on the farm?

27:23 So the clergy, educators, probably they know we're trying to do something, but they don't want to step out and say yes or no, that'll work, for some reason, I don't know why. But they could have a lot of sway if they want.

DL; 27:37 Is anyone openly hostile to NFO within the—

JC: 27:43 Not near as bad as it used to be. We stepped on a lot of big toes, I'll tell you, when we were organizing, and well, in that book, you'll notice that a lot of toes got stepped on there and they weren't very happy and they tried to knock us on the head at every turn, and they did sometimes, and

they did succeed. But when you try and change the system in this country, it's a job. The farm system in this country and the raw product didn't have to leave the farmer's hand is pretty big. It's the biggest industry in the world, American farmer. When you put that all together, you got a lot of wallet, there's a lot of money involved.

- DL; 28:17 Okay. Do any issues arise which tend to divide NFO internally?
- JC: 28:25 The biggest problem we've ever had is financial, to keep enough dollars flowing through the organization to keep the organization going. But you always tend to get trouble no matter what organization, you're going to have somebody that's going to be in some part of it or some way of doing something, or they think that it should be done their way. There's a board of directors selected from every state in union that's organized. I believe that's—
- DL; 28:55 Has there ever been any leaders in the recent past who've been accused of selling out NFO?
- JC: 29:02 Not nationally, I don't think. We've only had two leaders nationally, Mr. Staley and Mr. Woodland. I would say probably possibly you could have that no matter what group you're working with, that some local situation could be possibly that way. But I've never been involved in one locally. Some of the members might try to renege on a contract or something, but don't amount to that much.
- DL; 29:27 Has there been any divisive issues encountered at the local county, regional or state or national levels recently? In the past?
- JC: 29:38 Oh, I'm sure there's a lot of—decisive or—
- DL; 29:42 Divisive issues.
- JC: 29:43 Divisive. Well, I think we got one right now, a little one. It's nothing big, but we've got people running for president. There must be some issue out there they're not happy with, these people want to run. I don't know really what it is, but they figured they can do a better job, I suppose.
- DL; 30:01 Okay. Well, how does one become president? You said there are candidates?

JC: 30:05 They're elected by the delegates to national convention. At the convention, that's how they're elected.

DL; 30:16 Is it possible for any farmer just to become national president or vice president?

JC: 30:20 Right.

DL; 30:21 Is there a lot of internal politics going on, a lot of deals made here and there between counties, states or whatever?

JC: 30:27 No. I think pretty much all the philosophy comes out of Corning, Iowa. It's probably interpreted a little different, but it's mainly put out here to the people the same all over.

DL; 30:42 Okay. What are NFO's strong points?

JC: 30:50 Strong points is, I would say collective bargaining is the strongest point. If you can ever convince the farmers that they can put their product together with their neighbors and go ask for more money because you've done that, that is the point we're trying to convince the farmers to do anyway. If they ever decide to do it, I think it will be accomplished goal and it will happen.

DL; 31:13 Other than collective bargaining, any other real strong points of NFO?

JC: 31:16 Oh, we've got collection points built across the United States. Farmers they got reloads, they put up barge loading systems in some areas, because the old system wouldn't handle the product for us. If we sold it, they wouldn't handle it. You load it in a box, box goes in a barge. They had to do this. In local, we've got a collection point, one in Fergus Falls, and last year, as far as I can recall, our figures, we can't say they're 100 percent correct, some \$6 million worth of animals went through the collection point, which is probably not a lot, but what I figured is quite a bit for that little collection point. And we're going to on working, we're going to double that.

32:03 The system we have in our country today in buying live cattle is based on what they call the yellow sheet in Chicago. They have a few terminals left that have about 10 percent of the live cattle and hogs that set the price. Ninety percent of the farmers' cattle or livestock go direct to the packer, but we still have these little—we call them a little bit bigger collection points than our collection points, like



St. Paul and Sioux Falls. They just collect cattle, there's nobody to pack them there, they can't pack them, what are they going to do -they just collect them and send them out to the packers. Well, we're doing this out in the country, and by having them previously sold, the farmer knows what he's getting for them, and they move to whoever bought them, or purchased them from us.

- DL; 32:51 Okay. What are NFO's weak points? Does it have any? Looking at—
- JC: 32:59 Keeping the members involved I think is a weak point no matter what organization you're with. I say, we don't have an insurance program where the dues are going to come in every year. Farmers have to use our programs or they might get disenchanted and not pay their dues. Dues is a big part of our income to keep the NFO Incorporated itself going. But we're not a toehold, like, insurances or cooperatives. I know in some areas that some of the co-ops have a check op or organization dues at the gas station. We don't have something like that so we've got to be in personal contacts to keep the people satisfied and believing in what we're trying to do anyhow.
- DL; 33:50 Okay. You've obviously been very active in NFO. Why have you been so active and other people, like you said, that's a problem, they haven't been active, keeping them active?
- JC: 33:58 You'll find that no matter what you're involved in.
- DL; 34:01 Well, what's your secret motivation?
- JC: 34:03 For being involved?
- DL; 34:04 Um-hum.
- JC: 34:06 I figured we've got to save what's left of our smaller farmer, because with our unemployment and welfare system in this country has gotten big enough, without putting more people at it, we've had a lot of small farmers displaced because agriculture has been kept at too low price, they could still have been surviving out here, and when they went to town, they put somebody else out of work, because you'll find a farmer that's forced off the land will work for a lot less money than anybody else. As I said previously, we've lost half our farmers in the last 23 years. That's our unemployment problem today, our 10 percent

unemployment has been created by getting rid of the American farmer.

34:52 We don't have a cheap food policy in this country because food itself isn't really cheap. It's a cheap raw product, the price, what we've got out here. That's why we got to try to change. We got to get the surplus taken out of agriculture and pertain to it as inventory. Then we'll have a lot better luck out here.

DL; 35:10 Okay. You mentioned income, a big part of your income is dues. What are some other sources of income for NFO?

JC: 35:19 Well, every commodity group has their own source of income via check op. If you sell a bushel of grain, you've got a certain percentage or pennies per bushel or whatever it must be, be a token like [inaudible 35:33] fee, you've got a cattle that's probably 1.1 percent or 1.5 percent. That runs a commodity program, to do it yourself or just kind of keep NFO Incorporated, the office, the leadership and everything else going. But all the commodities run their own income.

DL; 35:54 Okay. In the past, was NFO successful in accomplishing its objectives?

JC: 36:05 I think we help the farmers. I know I have gained more [inaudible 36:11] I knew an individual that had a quarter and a half [inaudible 36:14] cattle, I figured he put \$7,000 in his pocket with the old terminal or old system in the summer. Our goal is not to have a better price, it's to price agriculture. We're competitive no matter what we sell or buy or whatever move for the farmer. Our only goal is to price all agriculture. We aren't going to brag we got a better price today, but the price is poor, we know that, most economies. We're trying to make that price better for everybody. That's the overall objective, is to get the price of agriculture up where farmers can retire yet instead of [inaudible 36:47].

DL; 36:51 Okay. Is NFO successful right now in meeting its objectives?

JC: 36:57 Well, I think we are. We're moving forward anyway. I'm not in the top [inaudible 37:00] but last year I think we sent some close to \$1 billion of products through the organization, which puts us in Fortune 500. We'd like to be the top of Fortune 500, which shouldn't be too hard to do in

agriculture. It wouldn't take too many more billions of dollars to put us in the top.

- 37:21 But I think, yeah, we've been moving forward. We went through a gradual growth instead of the boom-and-bust policy of the past where we go out here and try something, they give it all they had, and then end up rolling up on them and it wasn't a good deal. We're trying to make an equal or even keel now and go slow, don't go boom-and-bust, and satisfy the people out here and service the membership. We want to have a—sure it's been working, it's been growing.
- DL; 37:49 Can you give me a rundown of the offices you held in NFO and what each has done and how long you've been in each office?
- JC: 37:57 I should look it up. I've been vice chairman for two years, that should have been in '75 and '76—'75, '76 and '77. Then I took over chairman in '77, when he sold out, I became the chair.
- DL; 38:16 Who sold out or why do you use that term?
- JC: 38:18 One member had quit farming. He was the chairman.
- DL; 38:23 Okay. You're chairman from '77 to—
- JC: 38:25 Oh, 1983. September—October—no. September 1.
- DL; 38:34 September 1. You're done with the offices now?
- JC: 38:38 No. I'm still vice chairman.
- DL; 38:39 You're still vice chairman now?
- JC: 38:40 They just voted me to be the vice chairman.
- DL; 38:45 Are these officers elected every year or every—
- JC: 38:48 Every year.
- DL; 38:49 Every year.
- JC: 38:50 We elect every year on the local level and the state level. National level is every four years.
- DL; 38:56 Okay. What does a vice chairman or chairman do?

JC: 39:03 Well, the main—position of vice chairman is, is to take over if the chairman cannot take over. I don't got hope that the chairman renege on his position, but the vice chairman will cover for the chairman, if there's a meeting he can't attend, whatever.

39:22 I'm also the 7th District delegate for our county organization. That means I got to go to NFO's 7th District meetings.

DL; 39:34 Do these positions pay you any salary?

JC: 39:36 Yeah. Vice chairman gets \$50 per year.

DL; 39:41 Big time. How about the chair?

JC: 39:44 I would love it. I think the—let me see. The secretary gets the most, I think. I think he gets 90, and the chairman, the vice chairman, 50, at least not just a token. They can take the life out of it, some of them.

DL; 39:57 Okay. I know in the past you've told me that you've gone out to North Dakota quite a bit, three days a week or something like that.

JC: 40:03 Um-hum.

DL; 40:04 Did you have to do that or was—why would you—

JC: 40:06 Oh, no. I tried to work in the specialty staff in April of 1983, part-time.

DL; 40:16 What is this specialty?

JC: 40:18 Specialty is any crop other than meat, corn, barley. It's sunflowers, edible beans, all that kind of oddball crops. It's easier to organize them people because there's less commodity to organize. In North Dakota, you know, if the sunflower is changing, they've left Minnesota now, and they're working west of North Dakota, that's why I was to go out there, to talk to sunflower producers.

DL; 40:47 Okay. I imagine you reimburse for mileage and stuff like that.

JC: 40:50 I get a little income, enough to cover expenses and eat on.

DL; 40:56 Basically you devote in your time.

JC: 40:59 Yeah. You're not getting rich.

DL; 41:01 Okay.

JC: 41:02 You could make more money doing something else.

DL; 41:04 If you had to do it all over again, what would you do differently or suggest that the organization does differently? Or what are you trying to change about the organization right now?

JC: 41:16 Well, they should have one person in a county working on sort of an incentive to talk to the membership out here to get them involved, get the production moving, because you—we haven't got the identity costs, like we've got an elevator in every town where you've got cattle buyers running down the road, you've got milk representatives running down the road. They talk to these people once or twice a year. If we had a county person that could do that, I think it would make a lot of difference.

41:54 One thing I always stress is if I sign a person up in this organization, he has a problem, call me, as fast as he can. Because you can get a problem straightened out fast if you know once they had happened. If you wait a month, it's hard to do.

DL; 42:07 Okay. How many members have you recruited personally? Rough generalization.

JC: 42:13 A hundred fifty, I'd say.

DL; 42:17 That's in?

JC: 42:18 North Dakota and Minnesota.

DL; 42:19 How many years?

JC: 42:23 I got involved with membership work in '79. The last four years.

DL; 42:31 What do you think of American Agricultural Movement and Minnesota COACT?

JC: 42:39 American Agricultural Movement started an organization like we did in 1954 to go to Washington to raise Cain. We watched the television, I'm sure you've seen it. COACT is just delaying a problem. We've got more money from

capitalists who are going to keep the farmers in business, but next year they go and get further, we figure the only alternative is to price the product they're producing.

43:06 COACT is founded to help on foreclosures, I believe, and some other goals. All we figure, or I do myself personally, is that it's just slowing things down from happening which going to happen otherwise in the future anyway because if the price of the raw product—they'll never get priced, that person can't be saved by not having a sale this year as well as not have it next year.

43:33 On the account of mother nature, our PIC program or whatever, say they didn't do it this year either.

DL; 43:38 So, do you think NFO is far superior to American Ag Movement and Minnesota COACT?

JC: 43:44 No. They're organized for a reason. All people organize something for a reason. They think they can do some good, that's why they organize. But something that's tried, we know and they're proved, that we can make collective bargaining work by putting the product together to get the prices up, and we put a volume. These people just haven't—they might be see in the back of their mind, well, if I go to NFO myself, probably [inaudible 44:08] but it is our organization, they were organized for a reason.

44:14 Because we went the route the American Agriculture did lobby, we still have lobbyists, one. But you can't put 2 percent of the people gain any respect in Washington. But with 100 percent of the farm production, which we own and control as American farmer, we could have some clout, if you organize it right.

DL; 44:33 Are you organizing it right?

JC: 44:35 Right, but it's going slow. I don't know how we can do things faster. The farmers are just as soon farm themselves into oblivion and have the for-sale sign put up instead of do a job to price their product.

44:49 Marketing is something our farmer spends about 5 minutes a day on. They produce the other however many minutes it would be, they spend about five minutes a day marketing. That's the most important thing that you do. He knows how to produce. I talk to farmers and tell them this, I said, you know how to plant your corn, you know how to harvest

your corn, you know how to fertilize your corn, I said, but don't you think the problem is the price? They'll say yes. So I said, don't you think you try to learn how to market it, right? That's our problem.

45:18 When you get involved in playing a person's purse strings through their product, it's hard to convince them, because they might get a nickel more. And another nickel will never save us.

45:32 These people that are involved here, American Agricultural Movement in Minnesota, some of them people were former strong NFO people. In the '70s the NFO got pretty slack, the farmers were making money without having NFO. These people, then when the bad times started coming around in 1979, that's when the farmers all started to haul their farm back to town. We had seminars telling me they all bought a new truck, an acre truck. The only reason they bought that acre truck was to haul their farm back to the lending institution so they can keep on farming. That's when these people, the American Agricultural was founded.

DL; 46:09 Okay. You said that NFO was going slow. It's doing what it's supposed to but it's going slow. Do you have any special—what do you think NFO will meet its goals, any timetable, 10 years—

JC: 46:19 I wish I know.

DL; 46:22 Any rough estimate when you'd be able to do what you really wanted?

JC: 46:25 If we could get the farmers—we've got the system in place, if we get enough farmers to put their production through our system, they could come fast. But if we can't convince them to use our system—we can sign up every farmer in the country as a member, but you won't do any good. You'll get their dues but you won't price agriculture. You've got to get their product, put on an outline, on the contract, with the price on it, and then go from that and build a better price, by putting more of that product on another contract.

46:58 But the farmers are saying, it's always great when you're playing with those income, this is livelihood, they'll trust if somebody they'll pay a thousand dollars a year to sell it,

and tell them when to sell, but they won't believe a bunch of farmers if you're trying to do it for them.

DL; 47:17 What do you think should be done today to solve the farm problem?

JC: 47:22 One thing I'd like to see our government do in the country itself here is the amount of product that's consumed in the physical United States that the farmer produces should get cost of production plus a return on it or some profit, because everything we buy for inputs has got that full price on it. There's no reason why what's consumed in the United States shouldn't be at a higher level than what's got to go on the world market.

47:50 I don't know if you agree with me or not, but here we are out here on 1948 prices in 1983, of course we can probably produce a little more and a little faster, but our input costs have probably went up 500 percent, our land prices probably went up 1,000 percent, and interest rates have doubled.

48:11 The only thing I would like to see on the front, if our legislators could do it, is get some kind of a two-price system, but give us at least the cost of production plus the profit for what's consumed in the United States, subsidize after that and get it out of the country, if they say that we've got too much. I've seen some embargoes put on because they thought we're too short. That could happen next year if mother nature comes through with another drought, you'll see some embargoes again.

48:38 We don't have a supply-and-demand market because the demand is controlled. We've got the supply, but they always control the demand. If we get a little short on soybeans, Mr. President will embargo. If the Russians stepped into Afghanistan, Mr. President will embargo. They don't do a bit of good because the world grain trade will still sell grain to Russia whether it comes to the United States or it comes from Argentina, the Russians still get all the grain. Of course, they might have to pay a little more, but they have previously bought that grain before that embargo.

49:11 Our grain system can sell it to them, hedge it on the Board of Trade, make the profit. Of course, you got to go buy



some higher priced grain from Argentina, or else, South Africa to sell to the Russians [inaudible 49:21] grain.

- DL; 49:23 Okay. You said the world trade or whatever, I can't remember, trade system. What makes that up?
- JC: 49:31 Oh, I can give you a book to read and you'll learn about it. It's a big book. It's just that multinational traders, which is about four of them, that controlled all of our grain trade in the world. Two of them control half of it, Cargill and Continental. There's about a dozen in the other half. But there's four majors and some small ones.
- 49:55 The American cooperatives can't get guaranteed loans to sell products abroad and guaranteed money like the grain system can. American cooperatives have 7 percent of our export capacity from the United States and handle 50 percent of the grain. But there's laws on the books that don't help them out. But they don't want them helped out either. The cooperatives have that 50 percent of the world's exportable market from United States UC grain price, but they'll never let them get in that position.
- DL; 50:34 Okay. Do you see a rosy or a pessimistic future for American agriculture?
- JC: 50:40 Well, there's going to be a need for food forever. It depends on if you're going to have a big four-wheel drive doing the farming and one guy farming for him, or if you want to keep some people out here and keep the unemployment and welfare rolls, whichever way they want to do it.
- 50:54 It depends on what system ends up coming out on top. If the new system we are trying to build can get involved enough to price this product, you're going to keep the farmers smaller. If the old system keeps going what it is, you're going to see large conglomerates out here buy 50,000 of them, producing all the agriculture in the United States. It might not happen in the next 10 years or 20, but it's going to take place. I think we've got to acknowledge now that they sit in the house and farm, they say, except when you're run into a mud hole.
- DL; 51:31 So, do you think bigger farmers or smaller farmers are the trend for the future?
- JC: 51:37 We weeded out all that. The size of farming isn't the really important thing. We weeded out just by all the inefficient

farmers today, right? Who are we going to weed out now, the good, bona fide farmer, right? That's who they're weeding out. Our fine secretary of agriculture said that if you weed our dairymen, you cut production. That's why they're paying a dollar tax, a dollar to produce milk.

DL: 52:03 Okay. Have you ever read about other farm movements in the past, say, the Populist, the Granges, the—

JC: 52:10 Yeah. They're all organized for a reason, trying to better agriculture, because they're always getting stepped on. But you organize one, there was always a segment of this country to organize another one again. The Farm Holiday Group started organizing in the early 1900s and you got a bunch of people in the [inaudible 52:27] railroad and the Chamber of Commerce in the United States decided they got to get another organization out quick because them boys are sounding tough.

52:34 That's when the Farm Bureau Organization started. It wasn't by farmers but it was by the railroad and the chamber of commerces. They might get mad to hear it or whatever, who hears it, they can check it out. That money was put up to organize the Farm Bureau by a railroad and the chamber of commerces.

52:52 The Farmers Union is just a grassroots, spontaneous organization started cooperatives. Went to a start, they started buying and selling. They figured you could order your stuff in train, the car load and sell it to their members. They'd order, trade for it, get it shipped in, because the old system was robbing them.

53:09 They started the same thing in the elevator business in the grain because the old system was robbing them, but the old system decided, why did they want to have somebody out here and build an elevator in the middle of North Dakota? The farmers did that. They did it. They still will get the grain anyway, right? They can still price that grain anyway. That's just what they did.

53:28 So I don't know. It depends on what happens in agriculture. But which way it goes, the trend is going the way they want it to go, is the bigger and bigger. I don't feel any more efficient the bigger you get or not, I think it's limited efficiency. If you want to keep some of the soil on the land, not washing all over, down the river, I think they better

keep the smaller farmers out here. Those four-wheel-drive tractors and 60-foot diggers don't slow down for hills or waterways or whatever. But the people don't worry about the future generations, they worry about today. I think they've been taught that they're the most important person, they can do what the hell they think they can do.

DL; 54:08 Okay. We know that the industrial revolution was made possible because of an agriculture revolution, it caused people to move out to the farm. As we enter a high-tech, supposedly, a high-technology revolution now, and we have, I believe, 8.8 percent unemployment right now, do you think this high-tech revolution is going to cause people to move back to the farm because they can't get jobs in anything else?

JC: 54:35 I think you're seeing some of that already, people are coming out here and buying lots and plots of land, raise their own food, and probably have a cow. For a little while in the late '70s [inaudible 54:47] I don't know if it's still going on or not. People are moving back out to the country. I think they're tired of concrete jungles. Get the people that probably never known anything different. Once a farmer, always a farmer, they've always said, whether it's an acre or a thousand or 10,000, I suppose.

DL; 55:08 Okay. What was the lowest point in NFO's history? I've heard something about the year 1972 and something happened around that area that was—

JC: 55:18 1972 we had—the Russian grain deal took place in '72 and '73, and our great big surplus disappeared overnight, and the prices went wild, and they never did stop growing up for many months. The farmers decided they weren't going to honor our contracts for grain because they seen them blowing them dollars out there in the outside. It wasn't a complete catastrophe, but it left the organization owing its membership a lot of money because they couldn't pay for the product that they had sold because the farmers had reneged on their contracts and they had to go out and spend the money they should have paid back to their membership to buy product off the market.

56:05 Pretty soon FCC says, oh, you can't do this. They had to come up with a way to keep going. Otherwise we would have probably not been here today. They are the biggest farm people in the history in Des Moines, Iowa put some

money together and voted on the way to save it, and they've, first time in history, we were getting something go bankrupt. I mean, we were totally bankrupt and we're paying our obligation in full. Within one year, that '72 fiasco was going to be straightened out, it's going to be good.

- 56:43 The judge that sits on the SEC case in Iowa says, these private organizations, the first time in history, as I said they went bankrupt and they're meeting their obligations in full, not for a penny on the dollar either, it's dollar for dollar. Of course \$22 million is a lot to figure.
- DL; 57:01 Okay. Are you pessimistic or optimistic about NFO's future?
- JC: 57:08 Oh, I think I'm optimistic, guarded optimistic here. Too pessimistic, you'll never get any place. I think we've got a goal and the goal is still the same and I'm going to keep pushing for it, until I either retire from farming or I'm done farming, or somebody comes along and changes my mind [inaudible 57:28].
- DL; 57:32 How many acres do you farm? Are you a big farmer, small time—
- JC: 57:36 Next thing to a hobby farmer.
- DL; 57:38 What's that?
- JC: 57:38 Two hundred and forty acres.
- DL; 57:40 Cattle, horses, sheep, pigs? What do you all have?
- JC: 57:44 A little bit of everything, not much of anything. Twenty-five beef, 12 sows and —