Interview with W. A. McGONAGLE May 1925

Saw Mr. McGonagle at 71 Broadway. He tells me that he has been 40 years on the ore road, first under Charlemagne Tower, then H. H. Porter. Ore lands afterwards opened by Merritts, whom he sp eaks of as explorer. Afterwards acquired by J.D.R. Says he was a subordinate when Gayley came to him, about 1905-06, saying "You must have thought that nobody noticed you but the Corporation wants to remember faithful service." I said "I thought maybe I was not worth anything." Gayley says "You are, and we want to remember your services." He went on to say that there never was a time when men who were energetic and faithful had such opportunity, that they are bound to succeed, cannot help it.

In talking of Gary, he speaks of his kindly disposition, ability to grasp thoroughly the points in a problem. "In a few minutes"he says, "he knows more about your problem than you do yourself." Knows steel historically and practically. Speaks of his forcible sermons on safety work. Gary caused that to be done which has saved thousands of lives. Says he always means what he says, that he counsels them to get acquainted with their men - better able to deal with them if you know them. Insists that foremen get acquainted, are not only authorized to do this but expected to do it. He is a broad and fair friend of labor, whatever labor thinks.

I asked him about the advancing of men. He says that they are always studying that. Tells of a young man in their freight department - one of the early and late kind - eager about his work. He took him from that department

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and made him private secretary to him and he is now a vice president. Saysthe day is going to come when it will be recognized that ... is the best and wisest friend labor has had is this period is Judge Gary.

Says some of their proudest stockholders are section laborers, that they will go down into their hip pockets when he comes around, pull out their little leather cases and show him their stocks. When they get a dividend check they act like the biggest banker in town.

He deals with unions on his road. Says that the trouble with the leaders is that they want to control and they are not fit for it. Says he has often said to them, "If you would educate your men to advance I would not only approve of it, but I would help you." We have instructors, paid for by the Corporation, helping men to learn a trade, as machinists, blacksmiths, etc., but the unions don't want us to make competent men. They want to secure higher wages for a few. He has suggested three grades, A, B and C, but they will not hear about it. Tells of a delegation coming to him - one man who had been with them 20 years and the other two about one week each. They wanted a raise. He said to the first, "I would like to pay you a much higher rate. You could earn it and deserve it, but I cannot do that without paying these two men who have been here so short a time and know nothing about our conditions, asmuch as I do you." He put it up to the two men. "Would you be willing to have him paid more?" They promptly said, "No."

The next morning the Judge came around and said

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"I am through with union men."

He says they are absolutely fair to competitors. Said he testified in the suit that in the distribution of cars, unloading, etc., that they favored their competitors. And their competitors testified that this was true. Gary's constant teaching is to help not to cripple others.

We have got around to seeing a new light in industry. Quotes Gary as often saying to them when something harsh is done, "How would you like it?" He says he thinks that question is always in his mind. The result is that we have been fair until others expect fair treatment from us, and accord us the same.

He says, "I see a new idea ahead. Some of these days labor will be in control - full partnership. Gives various instances of how he has handled labor. Certain firemen played sick. One after another claimed he was unable to fire a certain engine. He called in a labor leader and read the contract stating that they were to furnish men fit for jobs - men soon came back, saying they were fit, declaring, "I can fire any engine on the road.

Says there should be talk - friendly talk in place of grievances, instead of the "vicious discussion" Thinks that if there is any trouble, if a man has a criticism, he should bring it. Says he tells his men, "If you have got a criticism, bring it out and let us take a look at it." He speaks of Gary's interest in public affairs of their towns, and how he is always anxious to help any institution that the employees are interested in, particularly the churches; says that policy has made him

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thousands of friends. Says, "I never saw anybody who can analyze things as he can." Pictures him as taking great satisfaction in sitting back and letting warring elements in presidents' or committee meetings and then summing up the two sides. He says this is necessary to sound conclusions. It is like building a railroad. You must send gangs ahead to prepare the ground.

Speaks of the enthusiasm that was created when the word went out through the industry "You are all to help all you can to win the War." Says that this went to laborers, track walkers, pick men until every man was doing his best, giving every inch in him.

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