the Loop, back then. Every twenty minutes, we were stopped by visitors from out of town. They'd see a policeman in uniform and they inquire about different buildings, different restaurants.

It was at the tail end of the Depression. Around the Loop, you had quite a few employment agencies. And we had an epidemic of con games. When these fellows would come out of this employment agency, this confidence man would walk over and pat him on the shoulder and say, "Pardon me, are you looking for a job?" He'd say, "Yes, I am." "Well," said this fellow, his name was Parsons, "I've got a job for you right now over in the Garland Building. Running an elevator. The job pays $30 a week." Now $30 a week is a lot of money at that time.

So the two of them go over to the Garland Building. This confidence man would take this young fellow on the elevator to the office of the building, and he would tell him to sit in the corner. And he would converse with somebody in the building. He'd walk back and say, "You got the job. You start to work tomorrow. But you need a uniform. The uniform'll cost you $50."

So they'd get in a cab and they would go out to his house, and if this fellow didn't have the $50, he borrowed it from his in-laws or his neighbors. He was so desperate to get that job. So he'd give 'em the $50 and Parsons'd say, "O.K., report tomorrow morning, and I'll have your uniform for you."

The following day, the fellow would go down to the Garland Building and he would go up to the office and he would set there, and he's looking for this fellow, Parsons. Mr. Parsons failed to appear. Then he'd go over and talk to the girl. She'd say, "I don't know any Mr. Parsons."

We had about fifty complaints about this Parsons, who was taking these young fellows. Things got out of hand. The sergeant of the district took about ten young fellows and put them in plain clothes and told them to go around these employment agencies. We had a good description of him.

We found him. About thirty people came in, and all thirty identified him at the show-up. We put that fellow in the penitentiary for five years. That gives you an idea how desperate fellows were to secure work. They'd go for almost anything.

Did you have any encounters with strikers at that time or labor organizers . . . ?

There was nothing wrong with those fellows organizing the CIO. Left wing is a term that was used, where you don't go around with the rank-and-file. They organized the fellows that worked hard for a living up at the stockyards. The American Federation of Labor did nothing for the laborer, nothing.

I can remember when my father worked at the stockyards when I was a little boy. That's fifty years ago. His salary was ten cents an hour. My

brother worked up there for the same. He worked ten hours for a dollar a day. If they mentioned unions up there, they'd get fired. American Federation of Labor did nothing for these men. It was during the Depression, the CIO came along.

That's when they started calling 'em left wings and bolsheviks and so forth and so on. Personally I don't think they were any more bolshevik or Communist than I was. They just wanted an honest living, that's all.

If all this happened today, I think the people would take it in their own hands, the way things are going. They're a different breed now. More educated today, more educated.

There was no basic race trouble at that time. The colored stayed by themselves, they never marched into any neighborhoods. People were more or less indifferent to them.

Earl B. Dickerson

President of the Supreme Life Insurance Company. "It is written largely on the lives of Negro people. Now we are seeking to move into the mainstream, due to the fact that competition is coming in from white companies. All this has happened since the 1954 Supreme Court decision."

He has been president of the Chicago Urban League, as well as of the National Bar Association, the Cook County Bar Association and the National Lawyers Guild.*

From 1939 to 1941, he was a member of the Chicago City Council as alderman from the Second Ward.

"The Depression was like a hurricane. Fortunately these 'Acts of God' are not prejudiced. They kill whites as well as Negroes."

THE SOUTH SIDE was very much as it is now in the ghettos. People standing around on corners. The streets were crowded whether it was Saturday or Monday. People who didn't have carfare to even seek jobs. Hopelessness on their faces, as they sat on stoops. . . . Almost all the Negro companies went out of business. The banks in the community were closed. Though they catered to black depositors, they were operated by whites.

At almost every meeting of the City Council, delegations came down from the South Side, asking for better relief treatment. Many times on the floor of the Council, I argued for more consideration of their needs. The Council was grudging and niggardly in its response. An alderman from a West Side ward † accused them of being lazy: "That's why so many of them are on relief," he said.

* An association of black lawyers.
† Popularly known as the "West Side Bloc," celebrated for its close syndicate connections.

I replied, "It's like tying a man's hands behind his back, beating him on the head and accusing him of being a coward because he doesn't fight back." During my investigations, I found very few Negroes employed by the city and none by most of the large State Street stores.

The Council was run by Mayor Kelly just as it's now run by Daley. He was a ruthless, domineering figure. It was a one-man show. There were only three aldermen who really challenged him. Paul Douglas was one. John Boyle was another. I was the third.

At first, Kelly was friendly. But when I introduced resolutions challenging the way things were, he changed. I challenged the winking at restrictive covenants that had so much to do with the development of today's ghettos. The School Committee hadn't had a meeting in six years, I discovered. I asked why it was that white students could transfer to other areas at will, but Negro children couldn't. None of my resolutions passed. Kelly didn't approve.

Oh yes, once I succeeded. I urged that the traction ordinance include a non-discriminatory provision. At the time, there were no Negro motormen or conductors working the Surface Lines. The pressure was so strong—manpower shortage because of the war—Kelly acceded. Not that he was personally in favor of it. He was never a friend of the Negro people. He rode on Roosevelt's coat tails.

He recounts Mayor Kelly's choosing a relative newcomer to the ranks of the Democratic Party, William A. Dawson, who had been a Republican, as Congressional candidate, over himself in 1942, "because I couldn't take orders."

I have never been to the Council chambers since the day I left. Sometimes I regret those four years. I was denied my full development as a political person. Every door I sought to open for the Negro people was closed. In matters of housing, no success. In employment, no success. In education, no success. All I was able to do was raise the questions and bring them out in the open. . . .

POSTSCRIPT: *"I was appointed by Roosevelt to the first Fair Employment Practices Commission. I served from 1941 to 1943. I remember the hearings in Los Angeles. A big aircraft company, employing twenty thousand, had hired no Negroes. Not until the morning of the hearings did they employ fifteen. I asked the personnel manager in what departments they worked. He replied, 'Custodial.' That means they were sweeping floors.*

"At another company, there were no black bricklayers. The reason given: one or two couldn't work alongside whites. They'd have to get enough to work one side of the building. Since they couldn't find that many, they'd employ none."

Dr. Martin Bickham

THERE WERE MORE than forty thousand unemployed men in town back in 1925. Lumbermen, railroad men, miners . . . they followed the railroads into Chicago.

He was making a study for United Charities, a private welfare agency. His interest was primarily in the unemployed handicapped worker. "There were one-legged men, who had worked the trains. Sawyers, who had lost an arm in training camps. A colony of deaf mutes." They, along with the blacks, were the first displaced.

I saw the Depression coming, as more of these handicapped came into my office. By early 1930, businessmen and social leaders in Chicago had developed the Cook County Relief Administration. They had no thought other than handing out a dole. I knew more was needed for preserving manhood. I developed a plan of work and talked it over with Ed Ryerson, who was chairman of the committee. I was called before them.

I told them about Paris in 1848, how the revolution was forestalled by men being put to work. I told them a revolution was in prospect right here if they didn't give the men a chance to participate in our economy. They accepted my plan.

It was simple. The man was not to earn more than would be required for his family to live. No more than he would be getting on relief, though the pay was union scale. He'd work so many days until the equivalent sum was reached.

Weren't you often asked: "Why would a man work when he'd get the same money on relief?"

The men wanted to work. This was the dominant theme through all the years of the Depression. I very seldom found a man who was willing to accept relief as a process of life. He knew it was debilitating. I'll never forget the morning we opened the office. It was a cold November day, 1930. Thousands of men were lined up for blocks. Many were skilled men and carried their tools with them. In the course of that winter, we put almost ten thousand men to work.

Soon after I opened that office, among the first to see me were the ward committeemen and aldermen. Hinky Dink came and old Bauler, too.* I

* Michael (Hinky Dink) Kenna, alderman of the First Ward for almost half a century, and Matthias (Paddy) Bauler, alderman of the Forty-third Ward, forever and ever, it seemed.