

## [Conversation in a Park]

Beliefs & Customs — Folk Stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Wayne Walden

ADDRESS 51 Bank St. New York City

DATE October 24, 1938

SUBJECT CONVERSATION IN A PARK - UNION SQUARE

1. Date and time of interview

October 19, 1938

2. Place of interview

Union Square, New York City

3. Name and address of informant Gus, Slim, Noisy, Bronx Looney, Redeye, Mack, Ben - and others who were neither so articulate nor convincing.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER WAYNE WALDEN

ADDRESS 51 Bank St. NYC

DATE October 24, 1938

SUBJECT CONVERSATION IN A PARK (UNION SQUARE)

1. Ancestry

From observation, these various individuals were of all racial types — a cross-section of an American group.

2. Place and date of birth

Mostly young men, between ages 26 and 30.

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

5. Education, with dates

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6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

7. Special skills and interests

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Wayne Walden

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SUBJECT CONVERSATION IN A PARK - UNION SQUARE

Gus:- Naw you got me all wrong. If you ain't got the historical perspective, and you got to consider this historically as Marx—

Slim:- (interrupting) Just a minute, just a minute. Now when you produce a surplus—

Gus:- I know all that 'bout producing a surplus, but Marx specifically says in the foist volume of Das Kapital—

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Slim:- Wait a second, wait a second; didn't Marx show concerning this very point, that the value of a commodity is—

Gus:- Sure he did, but listen and I'll tell you. The trouble with you guys is that you—

Slim:- Only as we understand the economic mode prevailing in any given society can you —

Gus:- For Christ's sake, ain't that what I been tellin' you? Historically now, from the time of —

Slim:- I'm listening, but get down to facts. Marx never contended—

Gus:- Who the hell's denying it? But you lose 2 sight of the fact that the value of a commodity is determined by—

Slim:- Alright, all-right; but there's a distinction between labor and labor power and Marx insisted—

Gus:- You're tellin' me! Listen won't you, and get it right. Marx held that as the Capitalist system reached—

Slim:- You jump around like an old woman; didn't Marx specifically say—

Redeye:- You said it, but the bushwah ain't goin' to set back—

Gus:- Marx held, now get me right — Marx held that historically the—

Noisy: But in the first place, how in hell you—

Gus:- Marx held that as the proletariat, which he termed distinctly as the instrument for—

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Slim:- But stick to your argument; Marx said you can't jump ahead of the machine, which means---

Noisy:- Say didn't Charlie Marx predict that — well, for instance, how about---

Redeye:- Naw, you got it twisted. You're thinkin' of Plato, a bushwah who wanted to---

Bronx Looey:- But the cata but the categorical imperatives of Plato ain't yet been knocked out. For instance---

Noisy: Hey Looey, is it right you found out there ain't no Santa Claus? --- and that you ain't going---

Looey:- Aw, quit trying to be funny. If I was as wise as you are I'd go and

Noisy: Gimme a cigarette somebody — anybody — any kind of cigarette---

3

Ben: When did you ever buy a pack of cigareetes. I been a feedin' em to you since---

Mack: Say, will you mental featherweights pipe down 'stead of disturbin' a philosophical argument with a lot of ---

Gus: (meditatively puffing a bummed cigarette) Now take that bird lecturing last night-if ever a guy balled up on economics-no wonder there's so many dumb---

Ben: Say, wasn't he a pain in the neck? Imagine him saying that the Hegelian philosophy was ---

Gus: If the guy hadn't made such a fool of himself when he tried to dodge my question he'd a---

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Looney: Say, Gus, maybe you can tell me, but isn't the basis of Plato's position the basis of —

Gus: Why if that bozo had ever read Spinoza, or even Kant, let alone Joseph Dietszgen; he would of—

Redeye: How 'bout this guy Spengler-ain't he a bushwah? He's now predicting or anyhow he's doing a lot of calamity howling that is supposed—

Gus: Yeap, Spengler has 'em dizzy now, just as they're getting over the headache caused by Einstein's relativity, and next they'll be—

Jack: 'Nother yahoo was — Oh, what was his name? — he wrote a book or something and — Nosy Noisy : I'm writing the Great American novel. She's goin' to be a masterpiece, boy, "How to be happy though hungry." Then I got another, which will be "How to be pretty though pregnant". Gimme a cigarett and I'll let you see the picture of a broad I —

Ben: That's the trouble with him; it ain't the class 4 struggle so much as the skirt-struggle! — listen to him and you'd—

Noisy: Where d'ye get that noise? Why, you poor fish, if you had a got—

Mack: Tie a can to that stuff, will you, and for Christ sake keep your trap closed a minute. And have you got the price of a cup of coffee?—

Gus: Take Slim there-where he falls down as a sound Marxian, as he thinks he is, is when he says that—

Slim: I didn't say any such a damned thing. What I did say, was that Lewis H. Morgan, when he differentiated—

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Gus: But your contention is a priori a priori for this reason. Beginning with primitive communism—

Slim: But how you goin' explain the—

Gus: But that ain't what I'm drivin' at-if you'll keep your bazoo out of it a minute and lemme explain I'll—

Noisy: Silence, everybody-go ahead and perform Gus-the floor's yourn. Tell 'em that one 'bout the—

Ben: Why don't you go and take your beauty nap? Really, that guy don't know whether Christ was crusified-or struck by a switch engine. A more—

Gus: For instance, according to Spencer, and I agree with him that evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant—

Noisy: I tried a whole week to learn that to Ben here, but the poor fish would get all—

Slim: But what the hell's that password to the hobo college got to do with what I was saying? That the trouble, when I—

5

Gus: Yes sir, Spencer agrees with me pretty well-an indefinite incoherent heterogeniety; and —

Noisy: Listen to that, would you! Did Charlie Marx get that off his chest, or was it Schopenhauer? A guy 'at can pull that kind of stuff—

Mack: The screws in your head, Noisy, are rattlin' again; you —

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Jack: Wasn't that guy, Spencer, in the can during the war? If I ain't mistaken he was in the same cell as me for awhile and—

Noisy: Oh, please, let me shake your hand! Wot a man. Wot a man!

Ben: Who? Him or Spencer — or do you mean me?

Slim: (to Gus) What you was saying about evolution is taken for granted, but even a child would know—

Jack: But what has evolution got to do with the question? It seems to me if a guy wants to believe his grandpap was a monkey, why—

Gus: Well, from the looks of the old gink he must a been-but as Huxley answered Bishop what's his name—

Slim-As for Spencer, I suppose his position was logical enough for the time he wrote, but —

Gus: Why, hell, even Aristotle—

Looney: Aristotle? Somebody was tellin' me 'bout him-lemme see; wasn't he the—

Slim: All I can say is, as Engles says, that changes in the mode of production mean—

Jack: Buto to get that said production, you gotta be organized for it, and until you get—

6

Slim: Who doesn't know that? But who's talking about that anyway? What I'm trying to point out is—

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Noisy: Did you ever hear this one? There was an Irishman went into a restaurant, and he  
—

Mack: Aw, can that chatter, will you; you're buttin' in on a philosophical discussion with a lot of—

Noisy: So is your old man. What the hell you—

Gus: See, that's the way it always goes; you run off the mouth on a lot of immaterial, irrelevant and—

Redeye: Goes to show what I been saying—the workers need—

Looney: This winter will show 'em. Statistics show that a hard winter is coming and maybe that 'll wake some of 'em up and—

Gus: Ah, ha, our old friend Karl again! I don't give a damn what you say, you got to come around to that old bird just the same. I was arguing with a buck the other day, and I was pointing out what Lester F. Ward—

Looney: There was a smart man — when he wrote an ode to a skylark — he was a deep thinker alright, you can't get away from—

Gus: Well, anyway I was tellin' this buck, see, that—

Ben: Say I know a good one about a buck, it seems—

Slim: (to Gus) Now, getting back to where we was, when you produce a surplus—

Gus: Just as I was tryin' to tell you while ago—just as Thornstein Veblin says if you got the historical perspective, you — (etc., etc., etc.)

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NEW YORK

FORM D Extra Comment

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Wayne Walden

ADDRESS 51 Bank St., New York City

DATE October 24, 1938

SUBJECT CONVERSATION IN A PARK - UNION SQUARE

I am not sure that the foregoing is “folk-stuff” or folklore - but it is a fairly faithful recording of an actual “conversation” as I heard it in Union Square, New York City.