

[Selfish inna Majority]

[Beliefs?] and customs - Folkstuff Copy - 1 FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview 15

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace

DATE March 23, 1939

SUBJECT Folklore Among Seamen "SELFISH INNA MAJORITY"

1. Date and time of interview

March 20, 1939

2. Place of interview

National Maritime Union

3. Name and address of informant

Left Rudder (Carmody) 25 South Street O'Halloran?

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

Library of Congress

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

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

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace, N.Y.C.

DATE March 23, 1939

SUBJECT Folk lore Among Seamen. [SELFISH INNA MAJORITY?]

(This two man contribution — by Left Rudder and O'Halloran is IWW stuff — both man are frequently in the IWW Maritime Hall on Broad Street one block off the East River waterfront. But this interview took place in the mailing office of the [Pilot?], the union paper, at the headquarters of the Union on 11th Avenue)

LEFT RUDDER — It's — it's — why, d' seamen is dumb about spirichel t'ings. Yeah, yeah, d' spirichel side of t'ings is beyond the comprehension uv d' seamen. D' Rebel, Captain two t'ousand years ago said 'I will raise up d' dead but the seaman don' undertand a simple — aplain — a simple spirichel statement. When d' Rebel Captain said that he meant he was gonna raise up the spirichelly dead but them fools dey say what d' y' mean by that, do yuh mean he's gonna take 'em outta graves and plant 'em back in their mother's womb? Dey see d' material side of t'ings, it's deir only [?]. Yuh can't do nothin'

Library of Congress

wid material like that, which can't interpret d' inner meaning. I-I-L give up I'm tellin ya. W'at d'yuh go' t'sea with. What. With what yuh got up deir. That's my univoisity. That's been my univoisity f'r t'irty years. But you gotta have it up deir in d' first place. An' d' 2 seamen by an' large he don't tink d' matter out to d' inner meaning. He's a spirichel one-of-dem-fellers-that-walks around — in-his-sleep fellers — what d'yuh call 'em — why, hell, d' seamen is a spirichel sunambulist. —

O-Halloran —Oh yeah, I know. Left Rudder is talkin an' don't anybody try t' interrupt f'r d' next two hours. So goddam rounabout an' ramblin' all over d' place. D'seamen sounds skeptical alla time but that don' mean a thing. He's always at one end and the other guys are at the pork chop end of things. D'Ye get it? Alla the dam' time. Take these rescues they have been havin' an the givin' away of these medals. Just a li'l goddam [piece?] of brass. A month later when that crew on the Baytown that pulled them people off of the Cavalier inna middle of the Atlantic'll be onna beach you'll be able to pick up these medals inna pawnshops. Every d'am one of 'em. But it serves the purposes of alla the dam people that are at the porkchop end of things. Lemme explain. An American seaman goes to India an' gets into his shore togs an' he takes a look at these Indians goin' around without shoes or clo'es more'n a li'l piece of cotton. It makes him thinks he's a helluva sight better off. What've those Indians that are exploited by d' Parsees got, he says to hisself, — sleepin' on the ground with a blue sky for a blanket — an what've I got, he says, walkin' down the street in Calcutta, — why he got a suit on wid that Sidney Hillman label on y' know onna inside that he got in Noo Yawk on Canal Street. Ha-ha-ha he says, I feel sorry for the poor Indian. He don' understan that the whole goddam struggle is tied up. What are ye gonna do when it's human nacher yer up against? That's the whole goddam difficulty. If ye have a hunnerd revolutions where's it gonna get ye if d' way this goddam human nacher operates is selfish? Ain' it true we're selfish inna majority?