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INTERVIEW

OF

ROSE CLAFFEY

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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TAPE 1

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2 MS. RENE EPSTEIN: The following
3 interview with Rose Claffey is taking place on
4 August 10th, 1986 in Salem, Massachusetts. This
5 interview is part of an oral history project
6 contracted by the American Federation of Teachers.

7 MS. ROSE CLAFFEY: My name is Rose
8 Claffey. I was born in Salem, Massachusetts on
9 September 5th, 1917. I'm the oldest of five
10 children in a family where mother remained at home
11 always and my father was a railroad conductor,
12 trainman and conductor. I live in the home we've
13 lived in all our life, is over 200 years old and
14 embraces much of the historical values of the city.

15 The composition of the city was largely
16 cosmopolitan with all types and phases of people
17 and life existing in the community. Many of the
18 people were leather workers, the leather industry
19 flourishing in the nearby cities of Peabody and
20 Lynn and in Salem at that time, and large portion
21 of the population were associated with the Peabody
22 Mills which later went south to avoid unionization.

23 No ethnic group predominated. There were all

1 strains of people living within the city and,
2 therefore, I think at an early age we learned to
3 accept all kinds of people and to live with them
4 comfortably in the setting in which we were raised.
5 And that carried over into the world of unionism
6 and teaching, and has been one of the saving
7 features of our associations with people.

8 I attended Salem schools and graduated from
9 Salem High School in 1934, and then went to the
10 state college at Salem where I received my degree
11 in 1938. At that time teaching jobs were very,
12 very scarce. And the exam system predominated
13 whereby one must attain a high mark on the exam and
14 have two complete full years of experience before
15 being allowed to teach in the Salem schools.

16 I was fortunate that I received my permanent
17 appointment in 1940 and had substituted in the
18 Salem schools in the interim period and finally
19 embarked on my teaching career in the forties. My
20 first appointment was as an elementary teacher in
21 the A. L. Low (phonetic) School, and later I
22 continued as an elementary teacher in the Pickering
23 School of Salem, the A. L. Low having been outmoded

1 and come to its end.

2 The type of experience I had as a Salem
3 teacher is probably the basis of my whole teaching
4 career. As a young teacher I was elected to a
5 committee composed of three leading citizens, a
6 superintendent and a representative of each level
7 of the school system, and together we explored
8 every facet of education. From this experience and
9 trying to prove my worth as a young teacher among a
10 group of older colleagues, I learned a great deal
11 about the educational situation of the past and
12 present of those years.

13 From that experience we learned to be
14 concerned about issues that were dividing teachers
15 and to be concerned with how we could bring them
16 together. One of the big problems facing us at
17 that time was the issue of degreed versus
18 non-degreed teachers, much the same as we have in
19 nursing today.

20 The other major issue facing us at that time
21 was the kind of salary schedule that existed in
22 education. High school men were paid more than
23 high school women, junior high men were paid more

1 than junior high women but less than senior high
2 people, and elementaries were paid less than junior
3 high women. There were no men in the elementary
4 schools at that time, and thus the salary schedule
5 seemed to be predicated on that of a single woman
6 living at home.

7 This, needless to say, caused much division
8 of the ranks, and therefore, there was little or no
9 unity in teacher ranks, nothing to bring the group
10 together. And that seemed to be the basic problem
11 among faculties at that time. The experience
12 acquired in this situation provide realization that
13 some day, not only a Bachelor's degree would be
14 essential, but that a Master's degree would be a
15 necessity in the future. With that in mind I
16 proceeded to go to work to attain a Master's
17 degree.

18 At the same time in the nearby city of Lynn,
19 equal pay for equal work had gone on the ballot,
20 the first city in the Commonwealth to undertake
21 this venture as a result of recent legislation.
22 However, it passed overwhelmingly much to the
23 surprise of the Lynn Teachers Association, the

1 ranking organization in the city at that time. And
2 they were not prepared for single salary, and thus,
3 came to a contact they had on our committee in
4 Salem to adopt our single salary schedule as
5 theirs, and it went into vogue in the city of Lynn
6 shortly thereafter.

7 The big problem, however, was that in
8 building a salary schedule, they had raised
9 salaries of all people to the then salary of a high
10 school man, which meant that a high school man
11 received no increase in pay as a result of this
12 great legislation. This disenchanted high school
13 men generally, and they migrated toward the School
14 Men's Association, an organization which was
15 popular nationwide at that time. After being with
16 them a few years, however, they realized this
17 organization could not suit their needs, and they
18 finally decided they would explore the American
19 Federation of Teachers.

20 In those days in Salem I had been a member of
21 the only existing teacher organization in the city,
22 the Salem Teacher Association, had been a very
23 active member of the association and ultimately

1 became the vice president. My reason for active
2 participation in the organization was, as I
3 indicated earlier, to bring unity to the group and
4 to rectify the horrible salary situation and the
5 division that existed within the ranks.

6 Participation in the association in those
7 days was somewhat different than any participation
8 we've known in the organization in recent years.
9 At that time all teachers in the building strove to
10 have a hundred percent participation in the
11 existing teacher organization, with little or no
12 realization what the organization was all about or
13 what it was attempting or not attempting to do on
14 behalf of teachers.

15 In 1946 the single salary schedule went into
16 vogue in the city of Lynn, and at that time large
17 numbers of teachers in the area decided to go to
18 Lynn for an increase of a minimum of a thousand
19 dollars, in my case an increase of \$1400 which
20 about doubled my pay because I had started at a
21 thousand and had received pittance increments not
22 on an annual basis to the extent of 1400.

23 When I went to Lynn, we only had a teacher

1 association available to us, thus I with the others
2 joined the association, but we were not acceptable
3 to the association, and we found it to be more of a
4 tea and crumpet situation that we had known
5 previously in our respective communities. The
6 threat of the experience that many of us had had in
7 our respective communities bothered the leadership
8 of the association. The leadership of the
9 association were afraid that we were coming to take
10 over what they thought were their posts of high
11 esteem, because we all had had experience in our
12 respective communities, and the results of our
13 experience were well known to the teachers in Lynn.

14 However, at that time the unrest in the city
15 were such that the men were pulling out of the
16 situation, and they applied to the AFT for a
17 charter, and the AFT advised them that they should
18 have men and women within the group. The men were
19 predominantly high school men and were not
20 interested in having an avalanche of non-degreed
21 elementary women join their ranks, and so they were
22 being highly selective as to the people that they
23 sought to join their union.

1 I was badgered for a few weeks by evening
2 calls from members of the group asking me to join
3 the union, and each time was somewhat evasive. And
4 on one occasion my father asked me would I please
5 advise him as to what this conversation was that I
6 was conducting nightly and giving the same reply to
7 the people, it didn't make sense to him. And I
8 told him that a union was being formed and they
9 were seeking my participation.

10 My early reaction to the request to join the
11 union was a complete lack of understanding of what
12 a union was all about and as to what impact a union
13 could make on education. My only understanding of
14 unionism was that the leather workers were
15 organized and in Lynn the General Electric was
16 organized, but in terms of education, I had no
17 understanding of a union as it related to
18 education.

19 My father on that meaningful occasion sat me
20 down and I was soundly redressed for the first time
21 and told that I wouldn't have been educated, I
22 wouldn't have had the benefits I had had, had he
23 not been a charter member of a union. He painted

1 colorful pictures of what it was like to be a
2 working man prior to unions and the differences
3 that he had witnessed as a member of a union. As a
4 member of the Brotherhood of Railway Workers, he
5 had seen a complete change in his working
6 conditions whereby, prior to unionism, he had what
7 we would call a split shift working a couple of
8 hours early morning, a couple of hours mid-morning,
9 a couple of hours in the afternoon, and a couple of
10 hours early evening.

11 But immediately after being organized, they
12 had standard shifts and working, defined working
13 day that was within normal conditions. So, as a
14 result of my lecture by my father, I went to the
15 library the next day and got an armful of books on
16 the history of education, the history of unionism
17 and read them as carefully as I could, and
18 immediately went back and not only signed the union
19 application, but told my colleagues that I thought
20 they were the poorest organizers on earth because
21 none of them knew how to sell their product.

22 The Lynn local was chartered in April of
23 1949, but in the early months it was kept strictly

1 to a closed group and it wasn't opened up until
2 December for membership to the rank and file. And
3 so, late in December I signed my card for the first
4 time and commenced to be an active union of the
5 local.

6 I was fortunate to be associated with a group
7 of people who had very clearly defined priorities
8 in terms of what education could do for union and
9 what the union could do for education. And
10 particularly in the city of Lynn where GE dominated
11 the economy and where the international union, IUE
12 local was an integral part of the community, we had
13 the support of that group in attaining our goals
14 while at the same time we were extending a better
15 education to their children.

16 We found that in the early days that we were
17 handicapped in the city by a prorata law which
18 placed a ceiling on educational expenses whereby
19 the mayor, with the support of one other person on
20 the school committee, could successfully deny any
21 increases in payment to teachers.

22 Thus, the repeal of prorata was the number
23 one priority in the city of Lynn for teachers, and

1 to achieve our goal we realized that this would be
2 both beneficial to us and to the citizenry of Lynn,
3 and we were able to sell this to the organized
4 labor groups in the community who worked diligently
5 with us to this end.

6 Our early experience was such that we were
7 able to get members of organized labor to come to
8 our union meetings monthly each month from
9 different unions, to explain what the benefits had
10 been to them as union members, and what they saw
11 would be the benefits of unionism to teachers and
12 to the public generally. The application of trade
13 union principles to education was viewed by many as
14 thoroughly incompatible.

15 However, if one had looked back at the
16 history of labor and the history of education, one
17 would see that the organized labor movement had
18 always been able to accommodate the times in which
19 it was operating. And now it was time for the
20 organized labor movement to move forth into a new
21 field, a field to professionalism and the working
22 people in these unions understood that better than
23 we did as teachers at that time.

1 I found this a gratifying experience that all
2 of us could work together effectively, and delved
3 into the union head-over-heels. I think I was most
4 stricken by a presentation made by union men to our
5 school committee when a member from the Brewery
6 Workers Union hit the table and said, "this is an
7 insult, our beer drivers, people driving beer
8 trucks make a lot more money than teachers do," and
9 as a result we received an immediate increase.
10 Now, to be sure, we were not going to use these
11 people, but these early revelations were bases on
12 which we could unite people and we could proceed to
13 do more sophisticated kinds of things.

14 The experienced union leaders from the other
15 unions were able to portray to us in very graphic
16 fashion what their evolution of experience had been
17 from the situation we were in at that time to where
18 they were as a highly organized group at the time.

19 In the midst of all this we had a strike at
20 the General Electric, and this probably was the
21 most stimulating union meeting we had in the early
22 days, because it brought forth the lack of
23 understanding of us as professional people who were

1 teaching the children of the strikers, and yet we
2 had no understanding of what these people were up
3 against. To have these people come down and tell
4 us how many strikes they participated in, what it
5 meant to them, what it meant to the families, how
6 much money they were taking home, and for us to
7 contribute to them and to bring them coffee and to
8 help them was the beginning of an experience which
9 in later years was going to be very meaningful to
10 us. We had -- I had never seen a strike before. I
11 did not understand what it meant to be -- to have a
12 strike hit the wage earner in a family, and I did
13 not understand the full implications of the strike
14 situation until that time.

15 Despite this experience, the fact was that
16 our constitution had a no-strike clause in it at
17 that time. The constitution of the Lynn Teachers
18 Union had a no-strike clause in it at that time.
19 This enabled many people who did not want a strike,
20 who did not believe in a strike, to still join the
21 union, but those of us who knew that the strike was
22 the end in the union process, knew that we still
23 could strike despite what it said in the

1 constitution at that time because of the membership
2 voted to override what was in their -- would be
3 accomplished and that's what was happening and did
4 happen at a later date.

5 At that time it didn't seem too important,
6 because we were novices, the situation was brand
7 new and would be many years before we had to face
8 this kind of situation and appropriate adjustments
9 could be made at that time. And a few years later
10 we were able to remove the no-strike clause from
11 the constitution and give us the freedom to let the
12 membership make that decision when the occasion
13 arose, and that is precisely what happened. Some
14 eight years ago, I believe, it happened, I'm not
15 sure of the exact year.

16 I was elected on June 7th, 1950 as recording
17 secretary of the organization. The following year
18 was vice president, and ultimately became president
19 in June, 1953 and was re-elected in '54 and '55 as
20 president of the Lynn Teachers Union. The major
21 event during my term of office was the repeal of
22 the prorata law. This had been my first experience
23 with a referendum, the referendum being essential

1 because it had been enacted through that route, and
2 therefore, could only be eliminated by that route.

3 During my concluding years of service as
4 president, we were able to see the effect that
5 prorata repeal had had on the salary schedule, many
6 significant changes being made for the first time,
7 thus giving the teachers some hope that teachers
8 working together with uniform schedules would
9 result in an effective and profitable future.

10 In the early and mid-fifties, Miss Sally
11 Parker was an AFT representative assigned to the
12 New England area. From Sally I received the best
13 schooling and background in unionism and collective
14 bargaining that anyone could receive from another
15 human. Sally is probably one of the brightest
16 people we ever had in the AFT, and under her
17 tutelage we wrote resolutions on collective
18 bargaining for submission to the Massachusetts
19 State Labor Council convention and the AFT
20 convention and the Massachusetts legislation as
21 early as 1956.

22 The concept of collective bargaining had
23 tremendous appeal to me at that time because I

1 could see that eventually we were going to come to
2 that, the same as all of the unions had come to it,
3 and that we should prepare ourselves with as much
4 information as possible to be ready for the events
5 that were ahead of us. However, the teachers in
6 this area were so new to the concept of unionism,
7 that to now add the concept of collective
8 bargaining was almost an impossibility. At that
9 time most of the new locals hadn't had any
10 experience with strikes, hadn't had any knowledge
11 of the labor movement as it related to education,
12 and now to add a new concept would have been
13 overpowering at this time.

14 Sally Parker was a person with an unusual
15 background, a background attained from a father who
16 had tremendous journalistic talent and a mother who
17 had been an early organizer for the AFL and later
18 for the united AFL-CIO. Sally was a very incisive
19 type of person, able to cut through all the details
20 in order to write effective legislation and
21 resolutions and to interpret this meaningful
22 concept of collective bargaining to people who had
23 had no experience in this field. Prior to this

1 time my only contact with the American Federation
2 of Teachers had been as a delegate to the
3 convention in the years '51 through '55.

4 My early experiences at the convention were
5 very meaningful ones to me. The caucus structure
6 was a new concept to me, and to go to the
7 convention floor and to see the caucuses divided
8 evenly on both sides of the floor with floor
9 leaders Mary McGoff and John Fukes and the speakers
10 for the respective caucuses was something I had
11 never witnessed before.

12 The caucus structure at that time was about
13 evenly divided with the majority of our membership
14 at that time being within about a 50 mile radius of
15 the city of Chicago where our headquarters were
16 during those early years. John Fukes was the
17 spokesman for the caucus of the Midwest, and John
18 was a powerful figure with a booming voice, and yet
19 with the most deferential manner when it came to
20 trying to mediate any disputes that would arise.

21 Mary McGoff was a spirited fighter who came
22 from St. Paul, Minnesota and she was the leader of
23 the Progressive Caucus. And when Mary and John

1 agreed on anything, you knew it had to be the
2 gospel truth.

3 The ideologies of the caucus at that time
4 were not clearly defined and it seemed our greatest
5 area of differences to whether or not the national
6 office should be located in Washington or should
7 continue to remain in the Midwest. It always
8 appeared to me that the difference was Midwest
9 versus the rest of the organization.

10 The early debates at the conventions in the
11 early fifties were largely concerned with the
12 McCarthy hearings and the communist activity
13 throughout the country. I am sorry to say at this
14 time that at that time it didn't mean too much to
15 me because I had not had any experiences of that
16 kind in my immediate environs at home and I
17 listened wide-eyed to all the stories that were
18 being discussed on the convention floor.

19 On the contrary, many of the people at the
20 convention had had deep and trying experiences
21 within the framework of their locals with the
22 communist element, and therefore, they came full of
23 vim and vigor to fight the cause as they understood

1 it.

2 I hate to say again that my early experiences
3 were very limited, so much so and so lacking in
4 understanding were the people of my area about the
5 situation, that when I had Arthur Schlessinger as a
6 banquet speaker in 1955, people thought that I had
7 joined the ranks of the communist party. That's
8 the kind of provincialism we were encountering in
9 many of the smaller communities at that time which
10 is not understandable to those people in the larger
11 cities of the nation.

12 Whereas my early perceptions of the American
13 Federation of Teachers was that it was a powerful
14 nationwide organization that could achieve most
15 anything on behalf of teachers. I realize in
16 retrospect that the AFT at that time was as much a
17 novice in the organization of teachers and the
18 problems attended to teachers as I was myself.
19 Everything in those years was done on a personal
20 basis. The organization was small enough to
21 conduct everything on a personal basis, and
22 loyalties were established based on personalities
23 rather than on principle. What I mean by this is

1 that a man like President Megel appeared to be a
2 strong, powerful, nationwide force.

3 Carl Megel had been the first full-time
4 president of the organization. Prior to this we
5 had had an executive secretary who conducted the
6 full-time activities, so Carl being the first
7 full-time president had access to a membership and
8 Carl was the kind of person who got to know the
9 leaders throughout the country by name and by face,
10 and knew all about them. And through that kind of
11 contact he developed a following which became very,
12 very effective in building the organization.

13 It must be remembered that, as I said
14 earlier, we had a concentration in the Midwest, and
15 since Carl came from the Midwest and knew the
16 people of the Midwest, he received wonderful
17 reaction from the people of the Midwest in his
18 leadership role. This he was able to extend into
19 other sections of the country, and for the time and
20 the years of service, this provided this band of
21 loyal followers, provided a good base for the
22 organization.

23 As a result of my work in the local and

1 particularly the repeal of prorata and the
2 attending publicity in the American Teacher, I was
3 asked to run for vice president in the 1956
4 election at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At that time
5 there were two caucuses, the Progressive Caucus and
6 the National Caucus.

7 I was a member of the Progressive Caucus and
8 there were to be elected 14 vice presidents. The
9 initial attitude of the caucus was to name twelve
10 and to let the National Caucus have two. However,
11 in the primary in the caucus, I placed 13th, one
12 vote behind the incumbent New England vice
13 president. And therefore, the caucus decided that
14 maybe they ought to run a full slate of 14. It was
15 on that basis that I became a candidate.

16 In the final count, the Progressive Caucus
17 won 12 to 2, the other organization placing two
18 people on the council. In the early days the vote
19 wasn't exclusively by caucus. There were many
20 votes that crossed caucus lines, and therefore, the
21 14 to 2 election does not truly reflect the
22 participation that existed in the two caucuses.

23 The composition of the Progressive Caucus at

1 that time was largely East Coast with New York and
2 Philadelphia and the state of Michigan also was
3 added to the East Coast. And so the state of
4 Michigan, particularly Detroit together with New
5 York and Philly were the base of the power
6 structure in the caucus. Although I would have to
7 say that Wisconsin, strange as it may seem, was a
8 member of the Progressive Caucus at that time
9 contrary to the rest of the Midwestern states.

10 Through the years the caucus structure
11 changed considerably, and as the situation evolved
12 in collective bargaining, caucuses began to reflect
13 in greater numbers the largest cities of the nation
14 and the wonderful organization in New York began to
15 be the base of the Progressive Caucus, and in
16 recent years New York has been the controlling and
17 dominating factor in the Progressive Caucus.

18 In the meantime, the other caucus has had
19 rather a motley crew of people with many of the
20 larger Midwestern cities gravitating to the
21 Progressive Caucus and many smaller units across
22 the nation gravitating to the opposing caucus.

23 The composition of the caucus in the early

1 days, as I indicated earlier, was largely regional,
2 but as time went on and with the unionization and
3 the collective bargaining contracts in New York and
4 the merger of the association and the union in New
5 York, New York became the stronghold. And so, the
6 desire to be with a winner became very important
7 and many people switched from one caucus to the
8 other, leaving a real imbalance in the caucus
9 structure at the present time with the Progressive
10 Caucus controlling without any problem whatsoever.
11 In the meantime, whereas the Progressive Caucus had
12 once been known for its liberalism versus the other
13 caucus for its conservatism, the situation changed
14 so as now the other caucus embraces a large number
15 of flaming liberals.

16 The lack of balance in the caucus structure
17 and the domination that results with one caucus
18 being so large seems to many people to abandon the
19 democracy that we so long urged and preserved.
20 However, on the other hand, there are many people
21 who believe that the delegates to a convention
22 reflect not their personal opinions but the
23 constituency they represent, and therefore, the

1 democracy, it's said by others, that the democracy
2 really prevails regardless of appearances.

3 When I became a vice president in 1956, I was
4 a full-time teacher in the Lynn school system,
5 teaching grade 1. I continued as a full-time
6 teacher until 1963 when I became the executive
7 secretary of the Massachusetts Federation of
8 Teachers. My early days on the council, almost
9 without exception the vice presidents were all
10 full-time teachers, and therefore, brought to the
11 situation the day-to-day problems of teachers
12 across the nation. But as time went on and the
13 organization became larger, a more bureaucracy
14 became established and many people had full-time
15 jobs either in their local or in their state
16 organization while simultaneously serving as an
17 unpaid vice president of the American Federation of
18 Teachers.

19 In the early years the Executive Council of
20 the American Federation of Teachers met a few days
21 each year before the annual convention, and every
22 year met from the day after Christmas through New
23 Year's Eve. This was rather difficult for a vice

1 president to meet only twice a year and still know
2 all the goings-on in the organization. A great
3 deal of the work was done by committees. From my
4 early days on the council, I was a member of the
5 Budget Committee which I continue to be a member of
6 through my 20 years of service, and as a member of
7 the Budget Committee had access to all the
8 information as to the financial structure of the
9 organization and the planning and allocation of
10 funds within the organization. Membership in the
11 organization in these years was very small compared
12 to the present time.

13 I'd say at that time we probably had now
14 escalated to 43 or 44,000 members, and the source
15 of income to the organization was in the form of
16 per capita from those members. Funds were meager,
17 teacher's salaries were low, teachers weren't
18 willing to pay large dues to organizations, and
19 therefore, the realization of the dreams of many
20 wasn't able to be fulfilled with the meager budgets
21 which were available. To expand the organizing
22 potential of the organization of the AFT was a
23 major concern at that time.

1 We were very limited in our number of
2 organizers. We had Henry Becker in the Connecticut
3 area, we had Sally Parker in Massachusetts and
4 northern New England, and we had Hank somebody or
5 other, I can't remember his last name, from San
6 Francisco doing the West Coast organizing. The
7 function of these three people was to service
8 locals within their area and try to expand the
9 membership of existing locals while simultaneously
10 organizing new locals in the area. This was sort
11 of a real grass roots activity which is very
12 tedious. And in those days, to join the union was
13 not a very popular concept among teachers in the
14 smaller cities and towns of the country.

15 As the testimonies to the effectiveness of
16 these people I can give readily because I worked
17 very closely with Sally Parker and Henry Becker,
18 particularly with Sally accompanying her to many of
19 the organizing sites throughout the Commonwealth of
20 Massachusetts and northern New England. Together
21 with Sally I organized my home city of Salem and
22 the neighboring city of Peabody and neighboring
23 Essex and the neighboring town of Danvers. Sally

1 on her own organized Pittsfield, Massachusetts,
2 Leominster, Massachusetts, Somerville,
3 Massachusetts, Methuen, Massachusetts, and the
4 University of Massachusetts. Again we both went to
5 Gloucester, Massachusetts and organized a local
6 there.

7 Their function was to instruct the leadership
8 in unionism, to help them write constitutions, to
9 help them plan programs, to talk individually to
10 members and to generally expand the membership
11 potential of a given area. And the growth in
12 particularly Massachusetts and Connecticut at that
13 time was very significant. The personality of
14 union organizer varies considerably. Some people
15 are very mild mannered and come across and have
16 appealed to certain sections, whereas somebody else
17 may be a bit more dynamic and be almost offensive
18 in some sections of the country. One has to
19 determine what the needs are of a given section
20 before one can assign an organizer to go in and
21 break new ground.

22 As the New York situation began to show
23 promise, the AFT added Albert Shanker as a national

1 rep to be assigned to the city of New York to work
2 with Dave Seldon who had been a full-time organizer
3 in the city of New York for the past few years. In
4 the late fifties the concept of collective
5 bargaining began to take shape when the New York
6 local decided to really move forward after having
7 combined the all New York guild with the high
8 school men's organization and to the United
9 Federation of Teachers.

10 To finance a campaign of this proportion was
11 going to be a very rigorous undertaking for the New
12 York local, and they needed help from the American
13 Federation of Teachers and any other source where
14 funds could be made available. I recall that
15 Charlie Cogan, then president of UF came before the
16 council of the American Federation of Teachers and
17 asked for a grant of \$50,000 from the American
18 Federation of Teachers who, incidentally at that
19 time, had the tremendous sum of \$54,000 to its
20 name.

21 The motion was invented to say that up to
22 \$50,000 would be accorded to New York and to win
23 their struggle for collective bargaining rights in

1 their campaign against the NEA locals, NEA groups
2 that were assembled under the umbrella of the --
3 hundreds of groups assembled under the umbrella of
4 the NEA. AFT afforded them a few thousand dollars
5 periodically as it could be expended, and at the
6 same time decided to approach Walter Reuther who
7 had demonstrated some interest in teacher
8 organizing across the country.

9 President Megel of the AFT, President Cogan
10 of the UFT, and I believe Dave Seldon and myself
11 met with Walter Reuther at the Hotel Roosevelt in
12 New York to explain the plight of the New York
13 teachers. The meeting opened with President Megel
14 suggesting that as a former football coach and
15 football player, he should take the initiative and
16 move forward, and Walter Reuther quickly told him,
17 "Now, Carl, just keep quiet and let me proceed."

18 And Walter Reuther proceeded with great
19 determination to extract from President Cogan and
20 Seldon the exact program they had in mind detail by
21 detail, and there were no extra words, there were
22 no embellishment of any kind, it was just how many
23 men do you need, you know. And one is not prepared

1 for that kind of a question.

2 You know, you thought you were going to have
3 to haggle over how many dollars you were going to
4 get. But the result was that Walter Reuther after
5 carrying on more or less of a dialogue with Cogan
6 and Seldon trying to extract from them their
7 defined procedures, said, "Now, on Monday morning,
8 how many men could you use?" Then he proceeded to
9 say he could send men from the various locals on
10 Monday morning, and on Monday morning these men
11 appeared to work at UFT. At the same time he
12 promised \$50,000 to be put into the New York
13 campaign as immediate help, and he would look the
14 situation over as time went on.

15 It was a very gratifying experience. I think
16 the thing that impressed me the most was when we
17 approached the hotel door, that the people,
18 somebody would look through the peephole and then a
19 tremendous guard, probably one of the biggest men
20 I've ever seen, let us in and he was then Walter
21 Reuther's bodyguard.

22 The Industrial Union Department was a group
23 of industrial unions of the nation that had

1 convened under the banner of Industrial Union
2 Department with Walter Reuther as president who
3 also at that time was president of the Auto
4 Workers, and they were trying to expand the
5 organizing potential for other groups outside of
6 the industrial spheres of the country, and
7 organizing teachers had seemed like a good venture
8 to him.

9 I don't remember which convention it was, but
10 at one convention, either immediately preceding
11 this meeting or following this meeting, I'm not
12 exactly sure, Walter Reuther had been the
13 convention speaker at the AFT convention when they
14 had large banquets at the convention on Thursday
15 evenings. And Walter Reuther had berated us for
16 our lack of having organized the teachers of the
17 nation, and explained to us that it took money to
18 accomplish ends, and that we must put more money
19 into organizing if we ever were going to be
20 successful in this country.

21 He at that time promised to give us one
22 dollar from the Industrial Union Department for
23 every increased dollar in funds that we could raise

1 within the framework of the organization. And it
2 was this kind of opportunity that was made
3 available to us that resulted in increased
4 organizing efforts throughout the American
5 Federation of Teachers.

6 Walter Reuther's leader in organizing efforts
7 was Nick Zonnerich, and Nick was responsible for
8 assisting teacher locals in their programs to
9 increase AFT numbers.

10 The Industrial Union Department placed in New
11 York City, also besides the organizers they sent in
12 there, they sent Harold Ash who had had a long
13 background in organized labor having worked in the
14 old CIO locals, and I recall only too vividly that
15 the law firm I was using in Boston were among
16 Harold's closest friends, personal friends. Harold
17 had worked with them many, many, many years before
18 in early organizing activities, was well known
19 nationwide.

20 Dr. Lucille Swaim, an economics major, was
21 also assigned into the situation, a very, very
22 brilliant woman with a concern about details and
23 facts and figures and very thorough in her

1 preparation of materials. And together they had
2 worked together previous to this situation and knew
3 one another rather well and worked together very
4 harmoniously.

5 One of the things that I remember most
6 vividly was my first experience visiting the New
7 York local, and it was in a horrible part of town
8 and it was a ramshackle of an office and it was
9 crowded. The ladies room was a positive disgrace,
10 and in measure of the great growth of New York,
11 their facilities in New York today have proceeded
12 on an even pace with the gains of teachers in the
13 New York City which is very important, and this in
14 contrast to my early experience in that first
15 local, in that first office.

16 My first meeting in the office was en route
17 to the Pennsylvania convention where when I picked
18 up President Megel at the Hotel Astor in New York
19 and drove to the New York local for the express
20 purpose of straightening out details attendant to
21 the forthcoming election and to set the stage for
22 the activity that would occur on the convention
23 floor when the convention convened two or three

1 days later. On successive occasions we met with
2 President Cogan and organizers Seldon and Shanker
3 relative to the collective bargaining election in
4 New York.

5 It was here for the first time that I saw
6 these three men operate together. Of course,
7 Charlie was very much the scholar, very mild
8 mannered, listened, took it all in, whereas both Al
9 and Dave were planners. They had a vision that
10 took them many, many years ahead of where they were
11 at that time, and their vision has been realized
12 both in New York and in the AFT.

13 It was an interesting experience to watch the
14 two of them. You can almost see the wheels go
15 round in their head as they sat and planned and
16 outlined for us where they were going and in
17 considerable detail brought forth all of the items
18 that they were considering in that situation.

19 It was evident that success was in the air.
20 They had covered every base. They knew exactly
21 where they were going. They knew it was a tough
22 fight because they didn't have the basic numbers
23 going in to ensure an outright win, but they had

1 calculated all the odds to the extent that they
2 were pretty sure that they could pull off the deal,
3 and that they did very, very successfully.

4 I was privileged to have been a party to
5 these early proceedings, and was very much
6 interested because I had been the coordinator of
7 the AFT workshop at the University of Connecticut
8 from the years '57 to '63, and strange as it may
9 seem, the main thrust of our deliberations during
10 those weeks in Connecticut had all been on the
11 topic of collective bargaining as a result again of
12 the tutelage of Sally Parker that this was imminent
13 and that we should be prepared for it. Therefore,
14 having this occur in New York came as no surprise
15 to me.

16 Success in New York, there was immediate
17 reaction in all the major cities of the country to
18 attain the same ends as had been achieved in New
19 York. And there was great movement in Philadelphia
20 and Detroit, and Boston had been chosen to be the
21 beneficiary of some organizing funds from the
22 Industrial Union Department who had established an
23 office, northeast industrial union office in

1 Braintree, Massachusetts. Harold Ash and Lucille
2 Swaim were first assigned to Boston, but
3 Philadelphia was in need of Harold's services and
4 Philadelphia was Harold's home city at that time.
5 So, Harold left and went to Philadelphia and
6 Lucille Swaim remained in Boston to carry on the
7 leadership function.

8 Boston had, prior to this, had only had a
9 maximum of 300 members. The biggest problem that
10 we envisioned on a short-term basis in Boston was a
11 lack of sick leave. They didn't have any sick
12 leave that prepared one if one had two day cold or
13 three day upset. They had long-term benefits. If
14 you were sick a year you get a half year's pay or
15 something similar, but what good is that when one
16 considers the variety of ailments that one has over
17 a shorter span?

18 So, the first goal was to attain sick leave
19 for the teachers of Boston which under Lucille's
20 leadership was achieved. And the membership rose
21 from three hundred to twelve hundred in that period
22 of time. And now the long-term goal that had been
23 developed in presenting the plan to the IUD was to

1 attain collective bargaining.

2 By this time Lucille had returned to New York
3 and the local had a good basis for a collective
4 bargaining campaign, but Sally Parker was once
5 again called into the area to lead the collective
6 bargaining campaign in Boston. And Sally and I
7 provided the leadership for the collective
8 bargaining campaign in the city of Boston. At that
9 time I had become the full-time person of the
10 Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, and so I was
11 into Boston on a daily basis reporting there daily
12 for a period of three or four weeks doing all the
13 dirt work that has to be done in a campaign of that
14 nature. And the election was to be held on
15 November 9th, 1965 at the Boston Arena. At that
16 time in the city of Boston our opposition was an
17 independent organization called the Boston Teachers
18 Alliance with whom President Megel had conducted
19 merger relations many, many years earlier, but to
20 no avail in the final analysis.

21 The Boston Alliance was the majority
22 organization in the city of Boston, and the union
23 was the minority organization. The Alliance was

1 under the leadership of an attorney who ran the
2 Alliance out of his office, published their
3 newspaper and did all of the work that had to be
4 done in building an organization.

5 On November 9th, 1965, the election was held
6 at the Boston Arena, and strange as it seemed, when
7 people reported to vote in the afternoon, the
8 streets for miles around were pack jammed and
9 people couldn't get to the voting place. So, many
10 people decided to go home and come back in the
11 early evening. At about five o'clock that night
12 the great northeast blackout occurred and all
13 lights went out all over the city of Boston as well
14 as in the rest of the East Coast, and the election
15 was continued by candlelight and flashlight until
16 the election hours were concluded.

17 I recall that I was manning the office and
18 left to be there for the count. When I arrived at
19 the arena it was in blackness except for the
20 candles and flashlight, and when it came time to
21 sign the official document as to the results of the
22 election, the attorney who represented the Alliance
23 just encouraged the president of the Alliance to

1 sign the thing as if everything had been hunky
2 dory, and she did and the election was over and
3 tested to them as being legal.

4 By the following morning the president of the
5 Alliance arrived at the executive secretary's
6 office full of vengeance that he hadn't pointed out
7 what she could have done the night before instead
8 of encouraging her to sign this document. And a
9 majority organization was thoroughly dissipated
10 within a very short span of time. And the union
11 grew by leaps and bounds until it became a majority
12 organization and has been so ever since.

13 The task of organizing teachers in the other
14 jurisdictions of the country was not as difficult
15 as it was in New York City, because New York had to
16 lead the way. The others had a pattern, a
17 successful pattern to follow and they did so, and
18 they did so. And as long as they continued to do
19 what had been done in New York, they were almost
20 bound to have success, and so the results were
21 easily attained than they had been early on in New
22 York.

23 In 1964 President Cogan was elected president

1 of the American Federation of Teachers, being known
2 nationally as the leader of the New York campaign
3 and being the president. Following the campaign he
4 had wide acclaim throughout the country in the
5 press, and the teachers of the nation were glad to
6 see a man of this -- (inaudible) -- as a candidate.

7 There had been a push on within the
8 organization to get somebody to run against Cogan,
9 both within the caucus and outside of the caucus.
10 And the strange part of the entire situation was
11 that in reaching for candidates, both within the
12 caucus and outside of the caucus, they were
13 reaching to get someone that was in the age
14 category of Charlie Cogan which really never seemed
15 logical, but that's what they were doing, because
16 Charlie had achieved greater current odds than any
17 of the other people of his age category. Cogan,
18 therefore, defeated the candidate of the opposition
19 caucus who was John Fukes, John having been many
20 years earlier president of the Chicago Teachers
21 Union.

22 Immediately after the election I was
23 contacted by the Cogan forces to meet with them the

1 following day. And I met with Dave Seldon, Jewels
2 Colodny -- I forget who else, but anyway, met with
3 them to take a look at the organization. The truth
4 of the matter was, none of them had had any
5 experience within the framework of the AFT. And
6 they didn't know what the procedure was. The
7 following day there was a question about who was to
8 be the secretary-treasurer, were we going to
9 continue with the same secretary-treasurer or were
10 we going to have a new secretary-treasurer, and of
11 course I voiced my opinion loud and clear. I think
12 when they realized how strongly I and others felt
13 about it, they stayed with Bob Porter, because at
14 that time the secretary-treasurer was elected on a
15 year-to-year basis.

TAPE 2

1
2 MS. RENE EPSTEIN: This is Rene
3 Epstein. My interview with Rose Claffey is
4 continuing on August 10th, 1986.

5 MS. ROSE CLAFFEY: Bob Porter was named
6 executive secretary to President Megel on President
7 Megel's recommendation and after being interviewed
8 by the Executive Council. Bob was very mild
9 mannered. He's very quiet spoken as he is today.
10 He hasn't changed one bit. He was a young man with
11 a young child at that time and a wife, a very
12 devoted wife who has been an integral part of his
13 activities. Bob is very bright, knows exactly
14 where he's going, and non-combative, doesn't have
15 to raise his voice, doesn't have to fight. He
16 knows how to attain his ends by other means.

17 The new administration everybody viewed as
18 going to be a radical departure from the prior
19 administrations. However, the new administration
20 conducted themselves very, very well in trying to
21 understand the various elements of the organization
22 and place them in proper perspective for proceeding
23 into the future. Bob Porter was readily accepted

1 by the Cogan forces, and he and Dave Seldon had a
2 very close working relationship.

3 A major function of the new administration
4 was going to be expand the organization. Dave
5 Seldon had always had an interest in organizing
6 that stemmed back to his presentation before a
7 group of people at the 1952 Syracuse convention
8 when he appeared and talked to all the delegates
9 and offered them an opportunity at the rate of ten
10 cents per member per month to organize within the
11 framework of existing locals. And he had a great
12 vision as to the kind of organizing that could
13 occur in the country. Now as Cogan's assistant, he
14 had the opportunity to make that dream a
15 realization.

16 So, in 1964 they initiated the Co-Aug
17 (phonetic) program whereby state organizations
18 could put on full-time help on a three-to-one basis
19 with the AFT assuming the three and the local group
20 assuming the one. I was a beneficiary of one of
21 these programs, because in 1963 I had left teaching
22 and taken a leave of absence to do precisely the
23 same thing in the state of Massachusetts.

1 Unfortunately we only had a backup budget of
2 \$5,000, plus current income. So, my expenses for
3 the year ran somewhere 15 or 16,000 including my
4 salary and the rent and the expenses and all else.
5 So, at the end of the first year I was four or
6 \$5,000 in the red.

7 So, when the Co-Aug program came, I was
8 rather interested in this program. The way I
9 received one in Massachusetts was when Michigan was
10 moving and Michigan, the council committee was
11 asked to support two people from Michigan, and I
12 said, "How can you ask me to support two when I
13 haven't even got one?" He said, "Will you support
14 two from Michigan if we give you one?" And I said
15 I will do that.

16 So, as a result, Massachusetts received a
17 grant that year of \$15,000 and the state had to
18 raise five and so, we moved forward with that
19 budget into a full-time program. The first year I
20 was on leave of absence, but at that time when the
21 AFT gave the grant, I gave up my full-time teaching
22 job and became the full-time Massachusetts
23 Federation person on the payroll.

1 On to the Co-Aug program, it enabled
2 Massachusetts, as all the other states that
3 subscribed to the program, to expand their
4 activities in order to be ready for collective
5 bargaining if and when, and the when was very near
6 in Massachusetts. Collective bargaining was going
7 to be allowed.

8 The basis on which people could participate
9 at that time was that you had to have per capita
10 of 30 cents per member a month payable to the AFT,
11 and to have a potential within the framework of the
12 state jurisdiction of numbers that could be
13 organized. Jim Mundy was director of organizing at
14 that time, and Mundy provided the leadership for
15 the Co-Aug program throughout the nation.

16 Mundy had been hired by the organization. He
17 came out of New Jersey and he was a rather robust
18 chap with a sparkling personality and real desire
19 to organize teachers and provided great inspiration
20 to many of the people who hadn't had the experience
21 of meeting the leaders of the organization prior to
22 this time. Simultaneously with the organizing of
23 the Co-Aug program, they had to expand the national

1 staff. We went into a very rapid, rapid expansion
2 of the AFT staff in order to accommodate the needs
3 of the nation.

4 The Co-Aug program lasted through the Seldon
5 and Cogan -- Cogan and Seldon years. Of course,
6 Seldon had been the assistant to Cogan and was
7 responsible for the day-to-day operations of the
8 entire program and thus continued so on during his
9 term of office. And the Co-Aug program reached
10 tremendous proportions in terms of staff personnel
11 and was virtually no section of the country that
12 wasn't covered by AFT personnel. And this enabled
13 the AFT to have a very, very, very significant and
14 meaningful growth, because we now, with collective
15 bargaining, we're getting majority organizations
16 where in the early days we were getting a handful
17 here and a handful there, and not able to be a
18 meaningful force in their local community.

19 But with collective bargaining and with aid
20 in organizing, we were able to organize majority
21 situations that could attain collective bargaining,
22 that could get meaningful contracts, which in turn
23 begot similar situations in neighboring

1 communities. And so, the growth was rapid.

2 The need for staff, of course, depended on --
3 varied in the different sections of the country and
4 depended on the needs of the section, the kind of
5 people in the area. And in many cases the local
6 situation had people that they recommended to the
7 AFT for consideration, and they would participate
8 in the program if they could have so-and-so doing
9 the work. And if that person had made significant
10 contributions and had a good potential, the
11 organization looked at that person in terms of
12 whether or not they should be hired.

13 Now, in other situations states would rather
14 have an out-of-towner. For example, I had a young
15 man working with me in Massachusetts who originally
16 had come from Michigan and had been raised in Ohio.
17 And one day I was in the office and found out
18 they're hiring somebody in Ohio, and I recommended
19 that they consider him because he would be second
20 man in with me for a long period of time where he
21 would be number one man in the new situation and
22 with more money. And he went and they had a closed
23 mind, they already knew who they were going to

1 hire, and they liked the second man better than the
2 first man, and they ended up hiring the two of
3 them. So, they had an outsider and an insider and
4 they worked together for a period of time. And
5 that was the kind of situation that existed in the
6 programs.

7 Now, in many of the situations, the state
8 situations and the local situations, some locals
9 qualified for this kind of activity. And in most
10 cases we took the word of the local group and after
11 some investigation by the national office, allowed
12 the decision to go through on that basis.

13 In other situations they had a new AFT staff
14 that could move into the situations and give the
15 help that was needed, and they would find somebody
16 that was worthwhile. For example, the young man
17 that worked with me went one night to a situation
18 in West Hartford, Connecticut where a strike was
19 going on. And the president was Anne Lespey
20 (phonetic). Anne is now the executive secretary of
21 the Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers. And he
22 reported back to me the next morning that that was
23 a comer, and that's somebody we ought to do

1 something for.

2 And he had asked her, could you get a leave
3 from now until the end of the year, and she said
4 yes, because we had several situations in
5 Massachusetts and he knew we could use a woman.
6 So, she got a leave and we hired her temporarily
7 from then until June. She worked in Springfield
8 for like three weeks and then in Pittsfield for
9 three weeks and then went in and took on a
10 situation all by herself and Bill Ricker. But she
11 said to me I don't mind as long as you're on the
12 end of a telephone. So, she functioned and did a
13 remarkable job there. And then there was no job
14 for her in Massachusetts. We had no more funds and
15 that was the end.

16 I spoke to President Seldon and he wasn't
17 able to accommodate her at that time. I spoke to
18 Frank Sutherland in Pennsylvania and Frank was able
19 to get her on the staff of the Pennsylvania
20 Federation of Teachers. Later the AFT saw her
21 value and they wanted to hire her and she worked as
22 an organizer for the AFT and more recently she's
23 now the executive secretary of the Pennsylvania

1 Federation of Teachers. But she came about by that
2 one night contact with a gentleman who sensed that
3 she had it and that we should utilize it, and
4 that's the way many of the contacts are made.

5 What makes one a good organizer is a question
6 that's very difficult to answer. In this
7 particular case the girl, she was exceedingly well
8 groomed and tastefully groomed and had a good
9 wholesome appeal to both men and women, and this
10 made her acceptable to many of the forces. Whereas
11 sometimes in those early days if you send somebody
12 in with a beard to organize teachers, you didn't
13 stand a prayer of organizing them. So, you had to
14 make those decisions and lots of times people's
15 success or failure hung on something as ridiculous,
16 I suppose I should say, as some of those traits
17 that used to carry a lot of weight.

18 Well, for a personal point of view, I was
19 responsible for training a lot of people in
20 Massachusetts, and I felt that my job was to make
21 them better organizers and better AFT people than I
22 was. And so they should have full benefit of
23 anything I could offer, plus benefit of anybody

1 else's abilities.

2 So, I used to take them with me day by day by
3 day, and then if I wasn't going out in the field on
4 a given day, send them out with somebody else, and
5 then ask them to assess for me the difference in
6 the way I did thus and so, and the fellows did thus
7 and so, and then say to them, now look, there's no
8 magical formula. I might not do it right, they
9 might not do it right, what would you do if you
10 were out there. And then give them the opportunity
11 to voice where they saw our strengths and
12 weaknesses and then to let them go and do it on
13 their own. And sometimes they found the answer
14 themselves, sometimes they had to come back and
15 admit, no, they should have done it the way so and
16 so did or so and so did. But it's a personal touch
17 that was important.

18 I had two young men that worked with me, and
19 they came to me fresh out of the University of
20 Massachusetts Graduate School For Labor Studies,
21 and they were just annoyed to death with me,
22 because I wouldn't turn them loose the first week
23 and let them go organize. I didn't think it was

1 fair to them or fair to the organization to do
2 that. But I was building for that day when they
3 went out, that they would be top drawer, and people
4 wouldn't refer to them as the young men as they
5 were very young. They were only like 21 or two at
6 the time.

7 So, when they went out they came back and
8 said to me, "Now I know. We thought we were ready,
9 but today we encountered this, this, this and this
10 that we didn't anticipate, and we know now why we
11 needed that long period of training, because I
12 recall that arose here and I was able to answer
13 that because it arose here and this arose there,"
14 and they were able to see the value of the
15 training. But to throw people to the winds I think
16 is a mistake and too many times we've done that.

17 I'm reminded at this time about another
18 instant we had with Walter Reuther when there
19 appeared to be a potential in the state of Florida
20 for organizing. And I recall very vividly that Bob
21 Porter and I went to visit with Reuther again to
22 discuss organizing in the state of Florida. And
23 again he was very receptive and he gave us an

1 allocation of money, allocation for Florida. And
2 staff was put on in Florida, an intensive campaign
3 was conducted over I don't know how many weeks or
4 months, but the results seemed to come to no end.
5 And it was very disappointing.

6 I felt almost like we let Reuther down and
7 that we hadn't come through like we had on the
8 other situations, and then much to my delight in
9 later years, some of those early contacts that were
10 made in Florida during that intensive organizing
11 campaign began to flourish little by little, and
12 before you knew it, we had a big organization in
13 the state of Florida. The next thing we had, a
14 merged group in the state of Florida, and today in
15 Florida we have an extensive organization. That's
16 the kind of thing that resulted from the emphasis
17 on organizing that occurred during the Seldon
18 years, Seldon and Cogan years.

19 Some people think that it catches on easily
20 in some places and more reluctantly in others. But
21 I dare say that it never catches on with vengeance
22 in any situation on the first flash. I, in looking
23 back over the records of things that happened in

1 Massachusetts through the years, I learned that a
2 woman who later had a significant role in the
3 government in Washington, Miss Peterson -- I forget
4 her first name -- had once been a union organizer
5 in Massachusetts, organizing teachers in
6 Massachusetts, which came as a real surprise. And
7 in the situations where she had been, sometimes no
8 results had come.

9 But years later somebody showed up that -- I
10 recall being in Dover, New Hampshire seven or eight
11 years ago, and a man got up and he said, "Didn't I
12 see you in district such and such in New Hampshire
13 many years ago? I'm a member because of you." And
14 he recalled, and I had no luck that first meeting,
15 but that stayed with him and it flourished later.

16 I think that's the way the growth goes. I
17 don't think that you move in and people join you in
18 numbers just for the sake, unless they've had a
19 long study and some success stories from friends.
20 Sometimes it's a cousin in California or an aunt in
21 Michigan or a brother in Michigan or somebody in
22 New York. It's amazing the network going on, just
23 amazing. You wouldn't believe the network that you

1 encounter as you move forward in this.

2 The caucus situation is a situation that I
3 call to mind in terms of how come we have the power
4 concentrated in one caucus. And it goes back to
5 the election when Ken Meesen (phonetic) challenged
6 Dave Seldon. And that was a very difficult
7 situation for me, because I was on Dave's team and
8 Ken was my protege. In the election Ken came very,
9 very close, very, very close, almost nosed Dave
10 out, but the section of the constitution that
11 called for a ballot whereby you had to state your
12 preference on the ballot was the result of Dave
13 winning by large numbers. Because a lot of people
14 who were committed to Seldon were voting for
15 Meesen, but on the showdown when they had to sign
16 the ballot, a roll call ballot was the result of
17 the election because there wasn't a clear cut win.

18 So, there was a roll call ballot, and many of
19 Ken's supporters left him when they had to sign,
20 because they had an indebtedness to Dave because of
21 Co-Aug or some other situation. And so from then
22 on the roll call was employed on a full-time basis.
23 There was a new constitutional amendment to employ

1 the roll call on a full-time basis. And that's
2 when the caucus got strengthened to the point where
3 it is today, when the roll call ballot became a
4 part of the constitution.

5 This brings us to consideration of the
6 democracy of a caucus if one caucus is a major
7 factor as opposed to the membership of the
8 organization being segmented in smaller caucuses.
9 And this is very, very difficult, particularly for
10 new people to understand. What the rationale is
11 that when you go to a convention, you do not go to
12 represent yourself, you go to represent people back
13 home. And therefore, the people back home have a
14 right to know to whom you committed them with your
15 vote. And so, this is very, very difficult for
16 people to understand. Prior to the employment of
17 the roll call ballot, when we had secret ballot
18 elections in the organization one had to be a good
19 politician to be able to survive.

20 For example, in one election I recall that we
21 had a pre-primary ballot in the caucus, and I as a
22 vice president received 90 percent of the caucus
23 vote. Megel at that time was running for president

1 and even the incumbent president only received 68
2 percent of the vote in the caucus. Now, this was
3 supposed to be a secret. They were so chagrined
4 by the results of these numbers that they decided
5 not to tell anybody. But like everything else,
6 things come out.

7 And so, when the final vote came, I found
8 myself coming in way, way, way low, because all my
9 opponents in the caucus didn't want me to outstrip
10 them, so they voted, they short balloted me in the
11 election. And so, there we were on a caucus
12 ballot, but the caucus was not adhering to the
13 purposes of that caucus.

14 On another occasion I went to a convention
15 only to find that some of my best friends were
16 avoiding me, and I began to think that a major
17 entity was denying me support. And so, there were
18 a lot of new names on the ballot that time. And
19 when I became suspicious that somebody was denying
20 me support, I found it necessary to move forward to
21 the forces outside of the caucus and to seek some
22 support which I had never had to do on previous
23 occasions.

1 When the votes were counted that year, I was
2 the ranking person in the Progressive Caucus, even
3 though a major entity had short balloted me. And
4 for the first time in many years, our caucus lost
5 control of the Executive Council.

6 So, if you're going to maintain the integrity
7 of an organization and the leaders are going to
8 know where they're going and what the program is
9 going to be and who's with them and who's against
10 them, then running on a ballot and having a roll
11 call ballot to back up the support is the only way
12 to keep the organization truly democratic.

13 Now, on the other hand, people think that
14 when one caucus prevails, that the democracy is
15 lacking. And I would have to say that New York
16 represents the largest segment of the organization,
17 and yet proportionately speaking, New York does not
18 have that kind of voice in the organization. New
19 York has bent over backward to lend all of its
20 wonderful facilities and abilities to other locals
21 and other states across the nation. They have not
22 attempted to outmaneuver any other grouping, and I
23 would say that they have maybe enhanced the

1 democracy rather than ruined the democracy as some
2 people would have you believe.

3 Now, there are people who would say that in
4 response to what I have just said, what about
5 Shanker at the time being the president of the New
6 York State Federation and being president of New
7 York City and an AFT vice president? Do you not
8 think that's too much power concentrated in one
9 person? Normally that may be considered to be too
10 much power contained by one person, but the fact is
11 that Shanker had a goal. His goal was to solidify
12 New York City and New York state.

13 To do it from the city point of view, he had
14 accomplished all he could as leader of New York
15 City, and now that the merger was effected while he
16 was president of New York City, if he could be the
17 leader of New York state he would be able to bring
18 his people in New York City with him more readily
19 to unify that whole state in the same way that the
20 city had been unified. And at the same time, of
21 course, as AFT vice president, he had the backing
22 of the national organization to move forward and to
23 attain these goals.

1 So, I don't think that was a power move on
2 Shanker's power. I just think it was a vehicle for
3 the execution of the plans that were necessary to
4 achieve that goal of unifying New York state. Now,
5 Shanker as president of the organization still has
6 a lot of power, but I don't see any misuse of
7 power. I see that power being put to great use
8 unifying the teacher union movement of the nation
9 with other major groups such as parents and
10 community groups, legislative groups. No, I really
11 think democracy has prevailed.

12 During the Seldon administration the
13 organization had tremendous growth in membership
14 because there was great intensity placed on the
15 organizing campaign, but more so because of his
16 stance on militancy and teacher power. The base of
17 Dave's beliefs were that teachers had power and
18 that they should execute that power, and that he
19 moved to do this. It's interesting to note,
20 however, that even though he stressed teacher power
21 and militancy, his book relative to his years
22 failed to concentrate on that great aspect of his
23 contribution.

1 The collective bargaining campaigns had been
2 well underway at this time and the teachers were
3 beginning to realize that the collective bargaining
4 agreement wasn't any good unless they had a weapon
5 to have it enforced. And therefore, the strike had
6 to be recognized as the end step in a collective
7 bargaining process. This was very hard for
8 teachers to understand at first, but this was the
9 thrust of Dave's campaign to make people realize
10 that the strike was there as a weapon to achieve
11 their goals, collective bargaining goals.

12 So, there were many strikes during this
13 period of time, and in the 1969 convention, I think
14 it was, a militancy fund was even created whereby
15 locals could dip into the fund to achieve, to get
16 some money to achieve their militancy goals.

17 During this time there were several large
18 strikes and the, I think it was the Newark strike
19 that Dave had to go to jail for, and when he came
20 out of jail there was a series of bread and water
21 parties across the nation to concentrate on the
22 fact that a person such as the president of the
23 organization who was well known by all of the

1 members, had to go through this ordeal and sort of
2 prepare local people for what they might have to
3 face when the time came. And we had one in Boston
4 at that time, and Dave explained his position and
5 it was a real educational medium through which many
6 of our people were enlightened.

7 In addition to women's rights, Seldon was
8 also interested in expanding the organizational
9 setup that had been initiated through the Co-Aug
10 program. It was getting very large throughout the
11 country, and so, therefore, he initiated a regional
12 plan whereby he appointed four regional
13 coordinators to be responsible for coordindating
14 the various work in the locals and state
15 federations within their jurisdiction. This was
16 sort of decentralizing the bureaucracy.

17 We had come from a situation with Megel where
18 Megel was the only person one could contact when
19 one had a problem down through the Co-Aug program
20 with Cogan whereby we had a director of
21 organization and then we get to Seldon and we have
22 to further decentralize and have regional
23 coordinators to take care of the fast growing needs

1 of the nation.

2 At this same time college organizing came to
3 the fore. Dave had always had an interest in
4 college organizing and put a lot of his efforts
5 into that, created a committee of prospective
6 college people across the nation, and already
7 organized college people across the nation to work
8 together to expand the college potential. It was
9 during this time that we did a lot of college
10 organizing in the New England area which had been
11 almost unknown prior to this time.

12 At first college organizing was rather
13 difficult because there was an air of elitism among
14 college faculty that hadn't existed in the
15 elementary and secondary schools of the nation.
16 However, after one explored with college groups the
17 similarities that existed in their situation, they
18 began to find out that they had more in common than
19 apart from the elementary and secondary teachers.

20 And at that time here in Massachusetts we
21 were able to organize several of the state
22 colleges. We organized Boston State College,
23 Lowell State College, Worcester State College,

1 Bristol Community College, Southeastern
2 Massachusetts University, Wentworth University.
3 There are others, I can't tell you offhand what the
4 others were. Massachusetts College of Art was
5 included, also.

6 Then what happened here, it happened other
7 places. The state college units unified under one
8 unit and had one bargaining representative to
9 represent all of the units. And so, the units
10 became larger and again they were more centralized,
11 whereas decentralization was occurring in the
12 organization, centralization was occurring in the
13 states across the nation.

14 The militancy fund enabled both elementary,
15 secondary and college personnel to try to move more
16 readily toward their goals when the funds were
17 available, and many, many locals took advantage of
18 this militancy aspect to do just that. The St.
19 John strike in New York, of course, which had
20 occurred during the Cogan years had set a pattern.
21 The court decision in the St. John's case was very,
22 very difficult to overcome because they had ruled
23 in that case that the faculty were in effect

1 administrators, and so it made it very, very
2 difficult to proceed, to proceed -- no, I'll have
3 to take that back, it was Yeshiva that happened,
4 and it made it very, very difficult in the Yeshiva
5 decision to have other colleges pick up because
6 some of them still wanted to adhere to that elitism
7 of being considered an administrator while still a
8 faculty member.

9 So, it was slow coming, but it has moved
10 rather consistently through the years, and we do
11 have a large segment of college people. Again New
12 York provided the leadership in organizing, all of
13 the state units in New York which proved to other
14 states that it could be done.

15 Teacher merger was a goal during the Seldon
16 years, also. And the NEA through the years -- our
17 position had been one of protest to the activities
18 of the NEA because we had differences of opinion on
19 a variety of issues, and it seemed on each of the
20 issues we finally convinced them to our point of
21 view, the latest of which at that time was
22 collective bargaining. We had started out with the
23 NEA being violently opposed to collective

1 bargaining, but as time went on they finally
2 participated in New York, put all of their -- many
3 units, not their own units, and paraded them under
4 the banner of the NEA, and finally they conceded
5 that collective bargaining was here to stay.

6 Now, if collective bargaining was reality and
7 we were being organized heavily in the major cities
8 of the nation and they were being left in the
9 smaller towns of the nation, it seemed that the
10 time was right for a merger of the two
11 organizations. Now, prior to this time there had
12 been many, many discussions on merger talks across
13 the nation. In Massachusetts we had had merger
14 talks, meeting with Frank White who was then the
15 director of organization of the NEA unit in
16 Massachusetts, and even to the extent of White and
17 his boss, the executive secretary there, William
18 Hebert, wanting to go to New York.

19 So, I took them down to New York and they met
20 with Shanker and Seldon and we went through the New
21 York offices and we went upstairs and saw the
22 computers and saw the kind of materials they had,
23 and proved to them that New York was way ahead of

1 anybody else in the country and at a place where we
2 all ought to be.

3 It was strange, shortly thereafter Frank
4 White became the executive secretary of the New
5 York State Teachers Association and, therefore,
6 started in on the original merger talks with
7 Shanker in New York state. However, Tom Hobart was
8 the president, but if you know the structure of the
9 organization in the NEA, the executive secretary
10 always was the key figure and the president was
11 more or less a figure head. Whereas in the AFT the
12 president was the key figure and the executive
13 secretary was the figure head.

14 So, finally Hobart began to realize that he
15 was the president and Shanker was the president, so
16 president ought to be dealing with president. And
17 it ended up with White being dealt out and White --
18 I don't know where White went after that but he no
19 longer was in the picture.

20 But there had been merger talks of that
21 nature across the nation, and there was great
22 sentiment among large blocks of people in both
23 organizations to move toward that end.

1 Now, at this time we had some meetings with
2 the Executive Committee with the Executive Council
3 and the NEA leaders. I think we had three meetings
4 with them. There are varying opinions as to what
5 occurred at those meetings, and I either wasn't
6 there, which I'm sure I was, or I wasn't at the
7 same meeting as some of the other people, because I
8 can't subscribe to some of the stories. But my
9 idea was that we were almost there.

10 At one time at the Mayflower Hotel in
11 Washington suddenly the opposition decided it was
12 all over and they were leaving. So, at that time
13 we moved forward and created a National Coalition
14 For Teacher Unity. In doing that we employed an
15 NEA leader from Minnesota who was to head up this
16 organization. And he was to make the contacts
17 within the framework of the NEA and then bring
18 various people together.

19 Well, a lot of that work was done at the
20 Portland convention of the NEA, Portland, Oregon
21 convention of the NEA that year. And we really
22 believed that we were moving toward a realistic
23 merger. However, my personal sentiment is that the

1 poor reception that the New York, the merged New
2 York forces received from the NEA at the national
3 conventions of the NEA, began to make people
4 realize that maybe the NEA wasn't as in earnest as
5 they had heretofore believed they were.

6 The AFT poured a lot of money into the
7 merger. There had been some benefits that have
8 come from the merger. The Florida situation
9 probably is -- I remember that the people who now
10 are the union leaders in Florida were NEA leaders
11 in the merger movement at that time, and it's safe
12 to assume that this occurred elsewhere that I am
13 unaware of. But on the overall basis it had some
14 saving grace, but it really didn't develop as
15 anticipated.

16 Why merger wasn't a success is a much debated
17 issue. First of all, there are many people who
18 believe that the job of the leadership in even
19 convincing the staff who are out in the field every
20 day to represent them, that merger was essential,
21 was not well handled. The staff, it is said by
22 many that the staff felt that they would lose their
23 job if merger occurred, which of course was

1 ridiculous because they would be more needed than
2 ever before. But there was a lack of sympathy
3 among the staff for putting over this program at
4 that time.

5 There was also a lack of understanding among
6 many of the leaders in the organization who were
7 not intimately affected by organizing activities or
8 who did not participate directly in the collective
9 bargaining process. They didn't seem to realize
10 that the time had now come when we were no longer a
11 protest organization fighting the NEA.

12 We now had come to the point where we had
13 forced the NEA to fight on our turf. For many
14 years the teachers of the nation, particularly
15 those of us that were active in the AFT, had built
16 all of our organizing campaigns and all our
17 approaches toward organizing on the fact that the
18 NEA was not doing the job that the teachers of the
19 nation thought they were doing. And therefore, we
20 were trying to prove that we could replace them
21 more effectively if we would be given the
22 opportunity to do so.

23 Now, with collective bargaining, we got that

1 opportunity in many major cities that we really
2 didn't have deep concentration in prior to the
3 elections, but after we attained the collective
4 bargaining we had great success in many major
5 cities, and suddenly now we are the power and the
6 NEA is attacking us in many of these cities and
7 towns rather than us attacking them. And for a few
8 years the campaign seesawed back and forth. They
9 would win one year and we would win the next year,
10 and vice versa.

11 So, now some of the teachers who are only
12 dues-paying members who are not activists, they
13 find it very, very difficult to understand why it
14 is that we want to merge with an organization that
15 just a few short weeks or a few short months ago
16 was our bitter enemy. They were not conscious of
17 what was happening underneath all this turmoil, and
18 that we were gaining stature whereas the NEA was
19 losing stature, and that we now no longer had to
20 consider the NEA in our day-to-day dealings, we
21 only had to consider doing a better job
22 educationally and politically and legislatively for
23 our own organization.

1 In retrospect, it appears that the National
2 Coalition For Teacher Unity might have been a
3 mistake. If the merger had been able to be
4 effected directly between the leadership of the two
5 organizations, rather than having this entity in
6 between the two organizations, we might have
7 achieved greater gains than we did. Yet, it is
8 still difficult to ascertain whether or not the
9 coalition per se was the gab slide that has since
10 moved many people to consider merger. The role of
11 the president has been documented in books and what
12 not in this regard, but the fact is that Dave was
13 an intense and devout believer in merger.

14 Until this time, however, Dave had always
15 been the man to create the ideas, to do all the
16 behind-the-scenes work and to feed it to someone
17 else to execute. And I would say that probably for
18 the first time Dave was called on to take his own
19 ideas and to develop them and to sell them. It was
20 harder for him to do that than it would have been
21 for him to have achieved this goal as second man
22 through another person.

23 It's in the nature of one's personality that

1 one sometimes gets tripped. Another evidence of
2 the personality situation was Dave's attitude
3 toward the vice president of the AFL-CIO. For a
4 long time Dave had sought to be the AFT
5 representative within this body, but had received
6 little or no reception from the power structure in
7 the AFL-CIO. At the Atlantic City convention of
8 the AFL-CIO, there was talk of an AFT placement,
9 but this never developed.

10 But during Dave's term of office, the issue
11 arose and he was brought before the Executive
12 Committee in the New York office one day, and Dave
13 indicated that he would like us to consider him as
14 the representative to the AFL-CIO. Even though I
15 have always operated on the premises of only one
16 president and one works with the president in order
17 to make things effective, I could not subscribe to
18 Dave becoming AFT vice president representative to
19 the vice president of the executive -- of the
20 AFL-CIO Executive Council, because he was not
21 acceptable to Meany and he was not acceptable to
22 other leaders on that council.

23 His relations with Meany dated back to

1 earlier years in New York, and I'm not aware of the
2 details of it, but it was deep rooted apparently.
3 However, I think it was interesting that once when
4 I was hospitalized Dave sent me a book and it was
5 the Life of George Meany, which I thought was very
6 significant knowing his attitude toward George
7 Meany. So, I somehow feel that he wasn't
8 altogether opposed to George Meany, or I don't
9 think he would have put the money into getting that
10 book.

11 The fact is that at that time those of us on
12 the Executive Council indicated to him, the
13 Executive Committee of the Executive Council
14 indicated to Dave that we thought Al would be a
15 better representative. It was at this point that
16 the breakdown came. He refers to the group, the
17 Executive Council in the group that supported
18 Shanker by some Shanker followers or some such
19 thing, I don't know what it was, but this was all
20 unpremeditated, and we all came to the conclusion
21 on our own as an Executive Committee. And then we
22 reported to the council and the council took it up,
23 and it was deemed that Shanker would be the

1 representative.

2 This then was the beginning of breakdowns.
3 It was a heartbreak to Dave, a real heartbreak.
4 But hard to understand because when one gets in the
5 arena, one has to take the ups and downs of the
6 arena. I found it disconcerting that he would let
7 something of this proportion ruin what heretofore
8 had been a wonderful relationship between himself
9 and Shanker.

10 Together the two of them had -- and I said
11 this to them at the time, and particularly to Dave
12 who talked with me at length about it -- together
13 they were planners. Together they had planned for
14 the collective bargaining in New York, first the
15 high school merger, then the collective bargaining
16 campaign in New York, the merger of New York, and
17 now the plans for the merger of the nation were at
18 stake and now we're going to let something like an
19 AFL-CIO vice presidency break a longstanding
20 friendship and break the goals.

21 If they had made these plans in the past, it
22 was my contention they could make these plans in
23 the future and still maintain this friendship. But

1 it was not to be. The vote was taken, Shanker was
2 named the AFL-CIO vice president, and Dave by his
3 reaction to this situation, created an opening for
4 Al to succeed him as president of the AFT.

5 There are many that say why did Dave take
6 this so hard? I think he took it hard because he
7 felt betrayed by his own Executive Council. On the
8 other hand, the Executive Council had recently been
9 expanded, and most of the more recent council
10 members had always viewed their position on the
11 council as something attained through Seldon and
12 Shanker. They thought of them in terms of one
13 mind. They never thought the day would come when
14 they had to make a decision between the two men who
15 had been responsible for them being placed there.

16 So, when they had to make that decision, they
17 found it very, very, very difficult. I'll never in
18 all my 20 years on the council, I have never seen
19 water run off foreheads the way they ran off the
20 day of that vote. And those of us who were
21 hardened warriors of the fight, you know, faced up
22 to it. But some people found it very, very
23 difficult. It was very, very difficult to be on

1 the losing end of that twosome.

2 The entire situation was very difficult for
3 me personally, because I had a very close working
4 relationship with Dave and also a close working
5 relationship with Al. However, I felt that Al
6 would be the better vice president to the AFL-CIO,
7 and that's why I voted my conscience in that
8 regard. That did not mean that I didn't think Dave
9 was the man to continue on in the presidency.
10 However, the ensuing months I, too, changed my mind
11 and decided that now that Shanker was a candidate
12 for president, he would be a good candidate for the
13 presidency of the AFT. I, therefore, found it very
14 difficult to be the person to nominate Al Shanker
15 against Dave Seldon before the caucus on that
16 occasion.

17 The reason I had subscribed to a Shanker
18 candidacy was I thought the time had come for an
19 experienced person, one who had had leadership
20 roles at the local, state and national level as
21 well as one who had been an employee of the AFT,
22 one who knew every segment of the organization
23 well, to come in to unify the work of all the

1 predecessors.

2 We should realize that during all these
3 period of years from 1952 until 1974, we had Megel,
4 Cogan, Seldon in leadership roles, and now we move
5 into a period where we're about to have a new
6 president, and I thought it was significant that we
7 get one that had all of the experience, experience
8 that none of his predecessors in the organization
9 had had. He was a younger man and had the
10 experience that none of his predecessors had had.

11 Moreover, I felt that Shanker had now made a
12 national name for himself through the articles that
13 the New York local had sponsored in the New York
14 Times through the past years of his service in New
15 York. Through these articles it became apparent
16 that Shanker not only knew what the problems were
17 of the day, but he knew the problems of the future.
18 It became apparent that he was reading widely and
19 thinking widely and polling widely on all of the
20 issues that were ever going to be touching the
21 lives of teachers.

22 So, we had out there in the field a large,
23 large number of people both in both organizations

1 that suddenly were looking upon Shanker as a voice
2 of teachers. The number of superintendents and
3 school committees that said to me through the years
4 how religiously they read his articles and even
5 saved his articles, was testimony to me to the fact
6 that we were now reaching into a population that
7 none of our predecessors had attained.

8 So, as we moved forward into the Shanker
9 years, we were solidifying all the work of those
10 earlier presidents. The presidency that Megel
11 assumed was no more like the presidency that
12 Shanker assumed than the man in the moon. They
13 were two completely different organizations. Megel
14 had inherited an organization where he was the
15 first full-time president of the organization. And
16 in the office there was only himself and a group of
17 secretaries -- an office manager and a group of
18 secretaries.

19 If anyone across this nation or any local
20 across this nation needed help, they had to go
21 directly to Megel. Megel was a master at the
22 communication system. Megel was and still is the
23 best vote garner in the AFT. Megel knew more

1 people by name than any other person in the AFT.
2 And so, he built -- his segment of the growth was
3 based on his personality and his personal contacts
4 with locals and individuals and state federations
5 across the states, and he traveled where any ten
6 people would convene.

7 Now, as we moved into the Cogan years, we
8 moved in with a man coming upon us who had just
9 completed a collective bargaining election in New
10 York, a win with which he had been largely
11 credited. Therefore, he was a name attraction
12 across the country as the man who had spearheaded a
13 collective bargaining campaign. And he brought
14 that emphasis to the situation that he embarked on.
15 Not only that, but he was an academic and an
16 attorney and widely read. And as a scholar, he had
17 appeal to large segments of the population. Cogan,
18 therefore, also had advantages that Megel hadn't
19 had.

20 Toward the end of Megel's term of office he
21 had added some staffing, but now Cogan comes in and
22 he has an assistant, an assistant to carry out the
23 day-to-day work of the organization while he became

1 the image of the organization across the nation,
2 and we were able to capitalize on that image in
3 many quarters.

4 We then proceeded from Cogan to Seldon as the
5 president, and here we go from a very rather
6 austere scholarly gentleman down to a very casual
7 type leader who again had a following among many of
8 the younger and more liberal forces throughout the
9 nation. And he was able to build within the
10 framework of many of these constituencies. The
11 militancy and the power and the activity that was
12 attendant to these beliefs was certainly part of an
13 evolutionary process. Under the Seldon
14 administration we increased the staffing
15 considerably. So, one would hardly recognize the
16 organization of the earlier years.

17 Dave was interested in organizing from the
18 early years. I recall only too vividly my first
19 convention at Syracuse, New York where Dave Seldon
20 had posters in the hall convening people at a given
21 point and we went and heard him talk about how he
22 was willing to volunteer his services. He would
23 come into a local if we paid ten cents per member

1 per month for organizing and he was able to
2 establish some groupings on the East Coast in this
3 fashion. But people didn't see the need of it on a
4 widespread basis, so that didn't last and he went
5 into other kinds of active work supported by the
6 New York local in an organizing campaign at a later
7 date.

8 However, I recall that as early as '52, I
9 heard his views on organizing and knew how
10 interested he was in organizing and saw that during
11 his term of service he was still putting into
12 practice those things that he had been espousing
13 for many, many years.

14 So, we had about 110,000 growth during his
15 many, many years, his many years there. But still
16 in all, there was still another grouping out there
17 that we weren't reaching.
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TAPE 3

1
2 MS. RENE EPSTEIN: This is Rene
3 Epstein. My interview with Rose Claffey is
4 continuing on April 10th, 1987 in Salem,
5 Massachusetts. This is Tape 3.

6 MS. ROSE CLAFFEY: What is significant
7 during these years of service is that after Megel
8 was president, he became the Washington
9 representative. So, during the Cogan years and the
10 Seldon years, Megel was still available with his
11 background on the organization.

12 I remember only too vividly during the Cogan
13 years, Megel and Cogan collaborated on founding a
14 professional arm of the AFL-CIO, an organization to
15 which all professional union organizations under
16 the banner of the AFL-CIO participated. At the
17 same time the Kaiserling Report (phonetic) during
18 the Cogan administration, there was the first
19 economic review of teacher economics. And
20 Kaiserling worked closely with Megel and Cogan on
21 providing that research which became the basis of
22 continued research in the organization.

23 So, Megel continued aboard all the time,

1 Seldon continued aboard, and Cogan continued aboard
2 as a member and a leader in retired teacher
3 groupings. So, all of the characters that had been
4 in leadership roles since '52 were still with us
5 except Seldon who chose to remove himself from the
6 situation.

7 Now, I would hasten to say that through this
8 they all benefitted from the leadership of Bob
9 Porter. Bob Porter probably can be credited with
10 as much of the glory for any success as any other
11 members of the organization, because he was able to
12 carry on all of the business details of the
13 organization regardless of what they may be.

14 With Shanker's election came a new day for
15 the organization, not a new day in terms of the
16 needs of the organization, because in Megel's final
17 report after twelve years of service to the
18 organization, he rendered a report that outlined in
19 detail what he thought was necessary for the
20 success of the organization. And although he had
21 made baby steps in achieving many of these goals,
22 the work remained to be picked up, and it was
23 picked up during the Cogan and Seldon years.

1 But much remained to be done during the
2 Shanker years. And I look upon Shanker's term of
3 service as unifying all the work that his
4 predecessors had done, and moreover, expanding the
5 horizons of teachers and educators generally
6 throughout the United States.

7 Whereas one time we couldn't fight our way in
8 to being speakers on selected programs across the
9 nation, Shanker is probably the most sought after
10 educational speaker in the entire nation, and even
11 in Europe. The way that he is able to address
12 groups, doesn't get upset, doesn't become
13 unraveled, keeps cool and calm through it all, and
14 presents to parents and businessmen, and whoever
15 the audience may be, a realistic picture of
16 education and teachers and has converted more
17 people to thinking in terms of teacher needs and
18 teacher expectations than we have ever had in the
19 history of the NEA or the AFT.

20 So, it would seem to me that the time has
21 come -- we've done a complete about face whereas we
22 had to be concerned with fighting for status,
23 fighting for power, fighting for competition with

1 the other organization, fighting for collective
2 bargaining rights, fighting school boards in
3 strikes and things like this -- the time has come
4 when we've reached the point where we can put all
5 that behind us and do what we always tried to do
6 but didn't have the time to do, the most important
7 part of teacher welfare, the professional
8 development of the faculty and the children within
9 their public schools.

10 So, Shanker has addressed himself to this
11 situation in such a manner that it's taking hold
12 and will pay off in the immediate future. The fact
13 is that it isn't anything new or anything
14 different, but there is a willingness not to uphold
15 to a traditional position, but a willingness to
16 explore, a willingness to try, a willingness to
17 listen, and to see if we can't find common ground
18 with those who had heretofore been our opposition.

19 It's interesting to note that way back in the
20 Megel years there emerged on the scene a man named
21 Myron Lieberman. Lieberman had written books about
22 education. He was professionally oriented. He was
23 urging the AFT into positions of professionalism.

1 But we had the positions of professionalism, but
2 there wasn't time to do all the things that had to
3 be done when one is fighting an uphill fight. But
4 Myron Lieberman made a real and lasting impression
5 on the organization. He was deeply interested in
6 the organization.

7 Simultaneously he was working within the
8 framework of the NEA, and he was trying to bring
9 the two groups to realization of many common ground
10 points. And so, I think Myron Lieberman has had a
11 real impact on the growth of the organization. And
12 as I said earlier, Megel had listed many things
13 when he left office, and Shanker now is pulling
14 together all of the valued policies of the years,
15 all of the contributions that were ever made by
16 anybody like Myron Lieberman and others, and he's
17 unifying them because he is basically a leader who
18 knows how to delegate authority and gives to his
19 subordinates authority to move. The organization
20 has grown in that regard in that heretofore there
21 was almost a choker hold from the presidency down
22 on all of the smaller units within the organization
23 and the employees.

1 But now there's a freedom. Of course, when
2 one gets to be the bureaucracy that the
3 organization is today, one needs that kind of
4 leadership. That's where we're having our success
5 today, because while Shanker is out fighting the
6 battle on one field, there are a hundred other
7 people fighting other battles on other fields and
8 we're attaining much more momentum than we did when
9 it had to be all controlled from the top.

10 There are many problems in building effective
11 organizations. One of the problems is that when we
12 were paying ten cents per member per month for
13 dues, you could get anybody to rally to any cause
14 at the drop of a pin. But after we went up the
15 ladder and we attained collective bargaining and
16 got collective bargaining rights and got many gains
17 that teachers never anticipated they were going to
18 have, and their dues increases became automatic
19 through dues deduction and people didn't even have
20 to think of the dues they were paying any more
21 because they had enough money in their pocket, it
22 wasn't sweat and blood money they were paying dues
23 with, then they began to take the organization for

1 granted.

2 They just expect that the organization is
3 going to do everything for them and they don't have
4 to work for it, they don't have to think about it.
5 And so we need to keep moving in new arenas, and
6 now the educational arena is the arena we have to
7 move in to get all our teachers to make each one of
8 us look at ourselves and say we do not measure up
9 to where we ought to be. We ought to be more
10 knowledgeable about this, we ought to learn about
11 this, we ought to take more courses, and this right
12 now is the program of the organization. Not to say
13 we haven't had that program through the years, but
14 the other years we had it and we had to divide our
15 focus between collective bargaining and
16 professional issues.

17 Now we have time to devote all our time and
18 energy to professional issues until some new
19 obstacle comes along to make us again a fighting
20 force for maybe economic issues. Who knows what
21 that's going to be. But the professionalism is a
22 thrust that people consider more luxurious
23 participation than they did any of the previous

1 kinds of protest participations.

2 Noticeable among the approaches in the
3 Shanker administration is the expansion of
4 non-teaching personnel and the expansion of health
5 care workers. There have been many, many
6 non-teaching personnel that through the years
7 wanted to participate in the work of the
8 organization, but we've been able to take any of
9 those people who had heretofore had another union
10 affiliation.

11 I know in our own experience one time
12 somebody handed me over 300 cards and I was unable
13 to take them because at that time we weren't taking
14 school secretaries and school custodians. But now
15 it seems that a more unified approach to all of
16 those people in the educational field is the
17 answer. So, large numbers of people are coming
18 into the organization who heretofore were unable to
19 participate in the organization.

20 The reason that clerks and custodians weren't
21 in the organization previously was because there
22 were other AFL-CIO units that were specifically
23 organized to provide for these groupings of people.

1 However, as time went on and the units in which
2 they were, locals in which they were members began
3 to expand their horizons into other fields. The
4 secretaries and the custodians began to feel a
5 little bit left out when they're under the
6 jurisdiction of school committees and the other
7 comparable personnel in a given city or town is
8 under the jurisdiction of a city council. And so,
9 there's two different bargaining units and many of
10 them felt that they would be better served if they
11 could be in a unit that was bargaining with school
12 committees rather than with city councils.

13 However, we have not been able to take these people
14 in those jurisdictions where union organizations
15 already existed. We were unable to take those.
16 Title 20 of the AFL-CIO prevents us from taking
17 those.

18 During my many years as a union member I saw
19 numerous changes occur. Whereas the AFT was a
20 protest movement in the early days, so too were
21 many of the other locals, other union organizations
22 in their own sphere. They were protest
23 organizations.

1 In many ways unions have been hurt by their
2 own success. I talked with many people today who
3 are driving foreign cars, for example, who earn
4 whatever money they have through being union
5 members, and yet they prefer foreign cars to
6 American cars. Many people who started out with
7 very low wages have been very successful through
8 the efforts of the union, and as a result, are now
9 the fat cats and they don't heed buying American
10 products or buying union-made products. They buy
11 whatever they want whenever they want and from
12 whomever they want.

13 The time has come when we're going to have to
14 take a good look at where we came from and where
15 we're going and decide whether or not unionism
16 means something to us, and if it does, how much
17 participation are we willing to offer to make the
18 goals of that union, whatever it may be, a success.

19 My home union is Lynn, Massachusetts, my
20 teacher union, and in Lynn, Massachusetts at the
21 present time we're having a real struggle at the
22 General Electric Company whereby there's been a
23 vast cutback in the number of employees and the

1 number of jobs available to union people. This was
2 the mainstay, the backbone of the city of Lynn
3 throughout the years. And I read in the paper just
4 three nights ago that the now president of the
5 General Electric, John F. Welsh, a former principal
6 and family friend of mine, was telling us how many
7 cuts they had made in their various units across
8 the country.

9 If Lynn is going to experience that number of
10 cuts and other places with GE groupings are going
11 to experience that number of cuts and they're only
12 one segment of the vast number of factories and
13 great conglomerates and what not that are cutting
14 back, I think once again we're going to come to a
15 day where we're going to be hiring people at lower
16 wages, creating a new group of people at the bottom
17 of the barrel, a new group of people fighting to
18 get up the ladder, and probably bring some
19 revitalization to the union movement.

20 The problem is that we don't have enough
21 people in the trenches at the present time who are
22 willing to fight or to maintain what we have. Many
23 people are too openly stating that they have now

1 more than they ever thought they'd get which isn't
2 too complimentary in terms of management's success
3 in keeping them down. And basically this new group
4 of people -- yesterday I was in a restaurant and a
5 group of young men who obviously were new to the
6 country, were seeking employment and they were
7 taking their turns being interviewed. The question
8 among themselves while they were waiting to be
9 interviewed was "Where was the man from the union?"

10 I thought to myself, these are the people
11 that are going to have to go out to carry on the
12 good fight in order that they some day can achieve
13 the gains that people of earlier years now enjoy.

14 It seems that our responsibility as teacher
15 union leaders and other union leaders across the
16 country is to see that society does not force us
17 back to the early days of unionism in this country.
18 In our work with the non-teaching personnel, we
19 must see that any newly created roles in school
20 departments employ people at living wages, not
21 minimum wages, but wages that are commensurate with
22 a living wage in that area of the country. We as
23 trade unionists have responsibility to see that we

1 never have to go back to those early days.

2 There are times when it appears that that's
3 imminent, but it behooves all of us to partake of
4 this and make this a priority issue in politics and
5 in government so that people can have homes and
6 food and educate their children and live
7 comfortably.

8 During my years of service with the AFT
9 Council I was privileged to be associated with many
10 people who were outstanding leaders, many of whom
11 are now deceased and I think that any history
12 should include their name. First of all, there's
13 Mary Harrick. Mary Harrick was a Chicago teacher,
14 a leader of the union, a woman who gave up teaching
15 to go to be the research director of the AFT in the
16 Megel years, a woman who put together a first
17 concept of research in the organization, and that
18 at an advanced age. But a brilliant woman, way
19 ahead of her time from whom I learned an awful lot
20 in my early years.

21 Another woman, Mary Wheeler from West
22 Suburban, Illinois, who was the leader in the
23 Progressive Caucus and a woman with whom I worked

1 closely on the Executive Committee of the council
2 for many, many years.

3 Mary McGoff from St. Paul, Minnesota who was
4 a great speaker, great debater, real feisty person
5 who provided great leadership on the floor fights
6 on behalf of the Progressive Caucus.

7 Florence Sweeney who I read died very
8 recently in her late eighties, a woman that I
9 served -- my first council I served with Florence
10 and I had little or no knowledge of parliamentary
11 procedure at the time. I would sputter and spume
12 until Florence would tell me what the proper motion
13 was, and then we would go from there. Florence had
14 had outstanding parliamentary procedure ability
15 learned from her dealings in the Detroit Central
16 Labor Council when she had to fight the early
17 fights with the other members of organized labor.

18 Phyllis Hutchinson from Portland, Oregon who
19 was originally from Massachusetts with whom I
20 worked on the council for many, many years.

21 Selma Borschat (phonetic) who was our
22 legislative representative in Washington was a
23 brilliant woman living in a world all her own that

1 made great contributions in behalf of the
2 organization. I recall first hearing about the
3 plight of the Indians from Selma Borschat and that
4 has always stayed in my mind.

5 Veronica Hill, the first black person with
6 whom I was closely associated. Veronica was from
7 New Orleans, and when I first went on the council,
8 Veronica was the only other Catholic on the
9 council. So we went to church together. We got to
10 be good friends. And from Veronica I got a
11 background about blacks that I never had been
12 privileged to understand before and was the
13 beginning of a long friendship with many black
14 members of the AFT.

15 My early years were dominated by women that I
16 found to be of outstanding leadership ability. The
17 organization seemed to be the only place that I had
18 ever gone where there were vast numbers of women
19 who seemed to be exerting leadership roles. And
20 contrary to what's happening generally in society,
21 the role of woman has been somewhat diminished in
22 the organization as we've had a vast influx of men
23 into the teaching profession and men have come to

1 take over the roles that many of those women held
2 in the early days. They felt strongly about their
3 role.

4 I recall one day that a group of about 15 of
5 them invited me to sit down with them and I was
6 scared to death because I had no idea what it was
7 all about. And after five hours, I realized it was
8 their gift to me, their share of the organization
9 they were willing to me. I had to assemble so much
10 material and absorb so much material in five hours
11 that some of it I never did get straight.

12 However, I think that many of them are
13 deserving of a real tribute as founders, founding
14 leaders of the organization.

15 END OF TAPE 3
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