AFT Oral History Project

Paul F. Cole

DG: This is Dan Golodner at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, April 12, 2006. Part of the AFT Oral History Program with Paul Cole. Thanks for doing this, Paul.

PC: Well, thank you.

DG: Why don't we just get started with where you were born and raised.

PC: Born and raised? Well, I was born in Ilion, New York, on February 9, 1939. My father worked for the Western Union, and had just opened a delicatessen on Second Street. Unfortunately, he died of a heart attack; I think it was on Thanksgiving Day, 1945, when I was six years old. So, my mother moved my older brother, John, who is six years older, and my younger sister, Mary Lou, who was two at the time, to Lockport, New York, where her family was. She was a Trace -- Cecile Trace. My father's name was John Wesley Cole, Junior. My brother is John Wesley Cole, the third. And so we were raised with my mother's family in Lockport, New York. I attended St. Patrick Elementary School, and

then I attended DeSales Catholic High School -- it's an all-boy's high school in Lockport.

I Graduated in 1957. Not a bad student. Not a valedictorian. I guess my accomplishments largely were in the area of athletics, I was an all-league football player. I played basketball and baseball, which worked out well because it ended up with me receiving a football scholarship to Marquette University. So, I attended Marquette on a four-year football scholarship, and very pleased with that because otherwise, I probably would not have been able to go to school. My mother never remarried, so we were raised in a single-parent home for those years in Lockport.

DG: Did she work?

PC: My mother was very active in Democratic politics. She was a state committeewoman and she was the Deputy Election Commissioner of Niagara County, following the job that her father had before she did. Her father was quite involved with baseball, was the manager of the Lockport Reds, which was the farm team for the Cincinnati Reds, and was connected with a lot of the famous baseball people of the time. My brother was quite a good baseball player in his youth. He also ended up being the chief of detectives of the Niagara County Sheriff's Department and was a county

legislator for Niagara County for many years. My younger sister, Mary Lou, has distinguished herself -- has a great reputation as a tough, no-nonsense director of housekeeping for a variety of major hospitals. They both still live in Lockport.

Then I graduated in 1961. I found a job as a high school social studies teacher, world history at the time, at Lewiston Porter Central School -- hired by Paul Haley, who was the principal then, and with my connections because the Haleys were from Lockport and that worked out well. He was a terrific guy. The best principal I had in all of the years that I ever worked there. I started off teaching five classes of world history and made $4,500 a year, $450 a month, paid once a month, and was also at that time in the army reserves.

I should back up a second. Well, I started in '61. We were married -- Lynne and I were married, Lynn DeLange, on June 30, 1962, so it became quite apparent that I was not going to be able to support a family on $4,500 a year. Interestingly, we were married in June. I got my draft notice in July, I think. I joined the Army National Guard and spent six months out of my first year of marriage in

the army. Went through basic training at Fort Dix, and advanced training at armor at Fort Knox in Kentucky and was then discharged in May. So, for the next 12 years, by the way, I remained a member of the Army National Guard and then the Army Reserve. A friend who was a friend of the family was a former colonel in the army national guard, so he convinced me to go to OCS. I did go through the OCS program, got my commission, and then I left the Army Reserve in 1974. I spent 12 years in the Army Reserve, and was discharged as a captain. Interestingly enough, the last company I commanded was a company that was called a Cadre company, whose two-week summer tour of duty was commanding a basic training company at Fort Dix, where I did my own basic training. [Laughter.] So, that was kind of fun. It was a little different view as the company commander as opposed to the recruit who went through the basic training there.

We have two children. My daughter Emily was born in 1963 on June 11, and my son in 1964 on May 24. They both grew up in Youngstown, in the Lewiston area. Attended the same school -- Lewiston Porter -- that I taught in. And have ultimately done very well. Emily graduated, and attended the University of New Hampshire, where she was a four-time

All American swimmer, set a number of swimming records at the school and in New England. Of course, she set all kinds of records in high school, some of which, I think, still stand. She taught for a year in an area BOCES here in the Albany area, and then went on to get her Master's Degree at Oregon State University in adaptive physical education, and then was determined to get her PhD and not pay for it. She ultimately succeeded in getting a PhD from Indiana University and she's a psychomatriaion. It was at Indiana University, in Bloomington, where she met her husband, Tom Bayer. And they were married and have two wonderful kids -- Cassidy, who is six, Cassidy Lyne -- named after her grandmother -- and Clark Conrad Bayer named after the father's side. Two wonderful children. He's two as we speak.

My son graduated from high school and went into the Marine Corps for four years, said he wanted to do his "four for the corp." He came out with $10,000 in the bank -- one of these usurious lenders I think. Wasn't sure what he wanted to do. Ended up in the carpenter's apprentice program for a couple of years. Got involved in the related training at Hudson Valley Community College and decided he actually was a pretty good student after all. Went on to Erie County

Community College where he got an associates in architectural technology and then on to Utica College, part of Syracuse University, where he got his bachelor's degree in construction management. He now has been working with the New York State Power Authority in a construction management role for 10 or 11 years now. Married Linda Neary whose mother worked for many years for the New York State United Teachers. And he has a daughter, Sarah, who was born in 1999 on Labor Day, and twin boys, Kevin Paul and Jason Paul that were born on, who are four now. And Sarah is Sarah Lyne, born November 27, 2001. They live in Clifton Park, which is just north of Albany.

Emily and Tom live in Alexandria, Virginia. He works for an international development company in Washington and does a whole lot of work internationally. Emily worked for 10 years as the coordinator of evaluation at Charles County, Maryland schools. She left a year ago, after 10 years, for balancing family and work, and now does some consulting work with the school and some others. She's now an adjunct professor at George Washington University where she teaches in the Graduate School of International Affairs, quantitative measurement statistics -- teaching people from the FBI and the CIA and the defense department how to make

everyday sense out of numbers, statistics, figures and so on and so forth. Plus she teaches a course for Notre Dame College in Maryland helping teachers with tests and measurements. So, she's busy as well. So, I've been blessed with a terrific and supportive family all of these years.

I taught at Lewiston-Porter Senior High School for 23 years. I left in November of 1983. Virtually all of that time was teaching European History, although we did have a number of electives that I did teach -- racism in America, crime and society, poverty in America -- but the one I was most proud of and the school board was supportive of was that we developed a 10-week, ultimately a full-semester course on American Labor Studies.

DG: When was that?

PC: That would have been in the late seventies and early eighties. The full semester course -- the first 10 weeks of the course was labor history, and then we would look at the organization, the structure of the labor movement, what a local is, what a state organization does, about the AFL-CIO, how it's organized, what it does, the International Labor Movement, constitutions, contracts, and so on. And then we would do an organizing simulation where we would

have students be management, some would be union, a few would be anti-union. We would actually go through the NLRB process with actually facsimile of cards, and I would fire a couple of kids. I'd be the boss and they'd take me into the NLRB and charge me with, an improper practice. And they'd actually have the election. I would say most times the union won the election. And then we would go into a collective bargaining simulation and go through the whole process of collective bargaining and do a lot of after-action questions -- such things as is it possible for an employer to cause a strike. But also look at the whole process of collective bargaining. Kids really loved that. Then we'd get into a number of contemporary issues. Should public employees have the right to strike? Minimum wage. We had a section on using music to learn labor history -- we'd actually play songs. Kids could write their own lyrics. So it was a terrific course. I don't know of many other courses like that at the high school level in the country. Philadelphia, I think, maybe had one. Ted Kirsch, president of Philadelphia Federation of Teachers has long been supportive. I think they actually have contract language that talks about this. So where you find them at the post-secondary level, it's rare, I think, even to get labor studies into the curriculum -- which we'll

talk about later -- let alone having a full course. So, that went well, and that was a lot of fun, that course.

I got active in what was then the Lewiston-Porter Education Association, which was a NEA affiliate at the time. Actually, it was an independent local. You could join the NEA and join NYSTA because at that time there was not, what we call unified locals. So, you could join just the local and not the state and not the national organization, so I don't remember exactly, but I remember I joined, interestingly enough, I joined the Lewiston-Porter Education Association for $5 a year upon request of my principal, which was how things were done then.

DG: Was that when you first signed your contract and he said you have to also join the association?

PC: Yes. I signed the card, and for $5 a year, and then I think I joined the state organization. It was the New York State Teacher Association. I don't think I joined the NEA that first year. I may or may not have. I was really focused on all of the challenges of being a first-year teacher. And then what happened over the next couple of years is that by providence, I had the same free period or planning period as the president of the local at that time, a guy by the name of Henry "Hank" Dowski. And obviously,

one thing or another would come up and we would talk about, how teachers did not have really good pay, working conditions and the way to do that probably was to have an effective union, or at that point in time, an association. So, what happened was he got me involved in the local teacher's union, the Lewiston-Porter Education Association, through the dialogue in the conference room over these many weeks. And we actually, then, were able to get the Board of Education at Lewiston-Porter to agree to sit down and come to a professional agreement. It was not, what we call, a contract because you didn't use those terms, but we actually signed an agreement with them. Before that, it was what people historically call collective begging. You know, you would go into the Board of Education and the union president; the association president would make a plea for higher pay. The board would listen and say, OK, you have a $200 a year raise, which I think is what I got for the first number of years. This contract, I think, probably took place around 1965 or '66 -- I don't know exactly, this collective agreement or this professional negotiated agreement. The NEA called it professional negotiation, not collective bargaining at that time, and I got more involved at that point --

DG: Let me back up to this contract or professional agreement. Was it a basic language?

PC: It was very basic language that had -- a grievance procedure -- not as strong as maybe it might be at this point, I'd have to go back and look -- but it had the salary, health care, and things of that nature. No pensions, of course, because pensions in New York are covered by state legislation. But it did recognize the association as the representative of the teachers in the district. It's kind of interesting to look back because as you look at the challenge of workers to form unions, now, and get collective bargaining, and the nature of organizations that recognize workers and don't have collective bargaining, it's interesting to note that for many years, and still in many states, there are teacher associations that do exist and represent their members. In some states they have the right to bargain collectively and others not. And New York was quite interesting when, in September of 1967, New York State's Taylor Law, which granted public employees the right to bargain and organize and bargain collectively officially went into effect. In virtually every school district in the state, the school boards just automatically recognized the existing teacher's association. So it wasn't all of the hassle of going out

and collecting cards and going through elections. You just transformed yourself into the official bargaining agent. That was a watershed event in New York State, which was the passage of the Taylor Law, which gave teacher associations the right to organize and bargain collectively.

[break in audio file]

PC: Since we were talking about the adoption of the Taylor Law, we could go into the history of that, but I'm sure there are other places to do that where it resulted from -- the previous law was the Condin-Wadlin Act, which was very, very harsh and people could be fired for life. But obviously the Transport Worker's Union and the UFT and others ignored it, and really demonstrated that the Condin-Wadlin Act was unworkable, so they commissioned -- Rockefeller commissioned -- a report. No legislator wanted their name on it, so it became the Taylor law named after Professor Taylor at Penn State University, who headed the committee. Once the Taylor Law became effective on September 1, 1967, the then New York State Teacher's Association did extensive training of individuals, local people, to do bargaining as well as some of its staff. So I negotiated -- I became the chief negotiator for the then Lewiston-Porter Education Association. Probably negotiated

the first five or six contracts, I would guess -- very strong contracts. It had all very solid grievance procedures, wage increases, unlimited sick leave. There were some very good things in that contract, so that worked out -- that worked out quite well. I then actually was asked by NYSUT to do some negotiating for some other local teacher unions in the area.

DG: This is NYSTA or NYSUT?

PC: NYSTA. I think I had become president, if I'm right, in 1968/69 of the local.

DG: Was this common for most association locals that had such strong contract language?

PC: Yes, for a couple of reasons. For one, the school boards were not prepared for this and neither were the superintendents. So the teachers were very well trained. They were trained by our state affiliate by and large, given sample contract language, and so on. We negotiated with a guy by the name of Dick Kahl, who was the school board attorney, and Jack Broughton, was the school board president for many of those years. He was a very enlightened guy and actually became a Supreme Court judge. In fact, I just heard recently from his daughter who I had as a student, who is a librarian in Southwest New York, who is 60 years old. One of my very first students, which is

kind of interesting. The superintendent didn't feel that he had a role in this at that time. He was an old-time superintendent, so, as a result, we went in very well prepared, very skilled, and won very good contracts. I think that was more often true than not, a little different, maybe than in some of the urban areas, where, the boards might have been a little more sophisticated.

Of course at that time, NYSTA represented about 105,000 teachers in the state, the NEA affiliate. The AFT in the state was much smaller obviously -- they represented the teachers in New York City, and some urban areas. In Western New York, about the only presence they had was a little bit in Buffalo and Niagara Falls. They did represent teachers in Yonkers and Schenectady and a few other places as well. One of the others things that Hank Dowski got me involved with was the state teacher's organization -- NYSTA -- had sub-divisions in the state called zones. And we were in the northwestern zone. So the northwestern zone would have annual meetings with all of the teachers who would have a day off and come to the meetings and they were generally sponsored by the state teacher's association. So, I got involved in going to those and Hank had been on what they called the council of

classroom teachers, the committee of classroom teachers at that time with NYSTA -- which is kind of interesting because here you have a teacher's organization that had to have within it a Council of Classroom Teachers at the zone level, and there was a Council of Classroom Teachers at the state level, and also at the NEA level, there was an Association of Classroom Teachers. The NEA Council had its convention just prior to the NEA convention. But this was my beginning path moving to the regional and state and national level. So, I succeeded him as a member of this northwest zone as a member of this classroom teacher's council. I think, if I recall properly, I became the chairman of the zone classroom teacher's council. That made me a member of the NYSTA Council of Classroom Teachers. This is all in the late 60s, and then I became the chairman of the NYSTA council of classroom teachers, which then made me a member, or got me to be a member, of the association of classroom teachers representing teachers at the NEA level. So that was my first exposure to state and national teacher politics through the NEA side.

DG: Was this pushed by your local president, that Paul should be here, Paul should be there?

PC: I think so. I think he maybe saw some potential there as a young male not satisfied with things. I had been chairman

of the young democrats and I had an activist family. Not, by the way, with a strong trade union tradition. My mother was in politics, and my father had died earlier and was not part of the labor union, so I did not come out of a labor family, except that Lockport, New York, where I grew up, is a good union town. General Motors has a company there, which is now Delphi -- which is represented by the UAW. UAW Local 686 is very big there, so I had an affinity to be supportive of labor since I was brought up in a labor-friendly environment, if not part of the labor movement myself. So, I think that that helped.

I got involved, and other people -- especially Tema Bellinson from Troy -- became good friends and began to promote my political career and convinced me to run for second vice president of NYSTA, which I lost. I probably had no right to run. And then of course the famous election in 1971, I think it was, when I was convinced to run for president of NYSTA against Tom Hobart. Actually, it was a three-way race. Tom, I think, had been the first vice president of NYSTA, and President of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation and long-time activist and a board member of NYSTA. Carl Hedstrom, who was an active board member from Great Neck, and Tom. And at the convention in

Syracuse, it might have been 1970 -- that was a three-way race. I was a what -- a 32, 33-year-old kid, who was convinced to run and I did. It became a run-off between Tom Hobart and myself, and Hedstrom, I think, threw some of his support to Tom, and Tom, eventually won the election about 55 to 45 percent. I think we both know the story, but the best thing to ever happen to me are the things I didn't get at the time, because it ended up having a bigger impact later on. I thought, obviously, that my career was finished, and actually applied for a staff job with NYSTA, in communications with Fred Lambert -- that didn't work out, which also was very good that it didn't work out because it would have been a different career path.

Then with my involvement with the NEA and the Council of Classroom Teachers, I became friends with Catherine Barrett -- Catherine O.C. Barrett, who was the president, the former president of NYSTA, and a very active NEA board member. And so I was asked to be her campaign manager, since I was involved with the NEA Association of Classroom Teachers and had some knowledge of the NEA structure and NEA people. And so I became her campaign manager for president of the NEA and worked with Ned Hopkins who was Tom's assistant -- a brilliant and interesting guy who did

a lot of the day-to-day management of the campaign. At any rate, Catherine Barrett won the election. She, interestingly enough, was the conservative in the campaign. Thelma Davis from Georgia was the liberal on the campaign, believe it or not. And interestingly, Catherine had not been much active in politics, so we had to find a way to attract some of the more moderate to liberal urban people in the NEA. We came up with this idea of political action, that the NEA ought to be involved in political action. So we built her campaign around that, and never again will any congressman, you know, thump up their nose at the NEA. We'll build a big, powerful machine, nothing that she really initially thought about, but that became part of the campaign. So, when she won, she had to deliver on this and so that is really the beginnings of NEA's political activism under the Barrett campaign that then became part of the theme of her campaign.

DG: What was the NEA doing before with politics?

PC: Not much. A lot of it at the state level, they would do probably I would guess out of every conference, they might do support cards and things of that nature, but it was not anywhere near the political activism that started with Barrett and really took off and now they are, of course, a major political powerhouse -- a very effective operation

politically, nationally -- and that grew at the national level and also at the state levels. So she became president and then I was just there and not doing anything, and I guess mostly involved in my local level. Then --

DG: Since you ran a national campaign, did you have to travel?

PC: Well, I did. A friend of mine, Danny Horanburg had an airplane, and we flew it with a friend of mine from the local -- we flew it out to Indianapolis or somewhere and threw a party for her and came back. I didn't do as much traveling as she did, but we did go to the convention and we had a campaign like the NEA had never seen before. We bought our delegation in, which was a very large delegation. We were all very disciplined. We all had red jackets. We all entered quietly, just before the beginning, and the discipline of the campaign just impressed the hell out of everybody. And so, she won, and I guess my reputation, even though most of it was Ned's brilliance, but being associated with it probably enhanced my political reputation a little bit.

And then we get to -- after the election, and that was before, I think, the election with Tom. Probably my campaign with Catherine Barrett gave me some status among other people, and they said, well, maybe he's the guy who

can run here and be president, so I think that probably preceded it. At any rate, we had the election in Syracuse and Tom won the election. And then interestingly enough, what happened again was that right after that election, the New York State Teacher's Association and what was then created, the United Teacher's of New York, which UFT really put together as a statewide organization, so you would have two state organizations merge, began discussion. It was Al Shanker and Sandy Feldman and others had been at the convention at Syracuse working and talking about teacher unity and so on and so forth, and I hadn't thought a lot about it then, but I certainly had no objection to it. I just hadn't thought about it a lot.

DG: So you were just neutral on the issue?

PC: Yes. It just wasn't on my radar screen to a high degree. At any rate, what happened over the next six months is that the United Teachers of New York, under Al Shanker's leadership, and NYSTA under Tom Hobart's leadership, and Toni Cortese and Ed Rogers as officers negotiated a merger agreement to put the AFT and the NEA together. And what happened was that they then came back to the famous convention in the Concord with a proposal to merge. The Board of Directors had voted overwhelmingly against it -- of NYSTA -- was not in support of it.

DG: Were you on the board?

PC: No. I never served on the board. John Conley, who was the board member from our area, he won the election, and I just never thought about running for the NYSTA board. I had this classroom teacher's council thing and I was busy at the local level. So when I ran against Tom, in this whole period before the merger, I was not a member of the NYSTA board of directors, interesting enough. But I was really identified with the NEA because of the Catherine Barrett thing, the Association of Classroom Teachers -- we had unified our local, which was an interesting thing then, because we had changed our constitution to say that every member of the Lewiston-Porter Education Association also had to be a member of NYSTA and the NEA. It was called unification. We don't even think about that now because it was just automatic. But at that point in time, a teacher could belong to just the state and not the local, just the local and not the state.

DG: So this is very unique to your local?

PC: Our local was one of the very first to, what we call, unify -- probably in the late '60s some time, and it went through, and I was amazed it did, but there were not problems. We became a unified -- and that also, I think,

enhanced my prestige within the NEA, the state, because we were able to pull this off at the local level.

We get to the convention, at the Concord, with a merger agreement there, and I had not been on the board, not party to a lot of the internal discussions, but I had a couple of friends that I had confidence in. One, of course, was Dean Streiff, who was Tom's assistant; and the other was a guy I worked with on Catherine Barrett's campaign, Ned Hopkins. Most of my conversations with them just asked a lot of questions about the merger, the merger agreement, and so on and so forth, and I became personally convinced that it made a lot of sense. Why have two teacher organizations? Why not have one? The people were arguing about things like secret ballot and stuff like that were not relevant to me. I just saw the sense of having teachers together.

What happened at that convention was that when the issue came to the floor, nobody knew what I was going to do, and everybody figured, since I was close to the NEA and Catherine Barrett, I would get up and use the opportunity to side with the board and go after my former opposition, Tom Hobart, and kill the merger agreement. So, what happened was, there was somebody who made a weaker motion

before I did. I moved to the microphone and Tom recognized me -- I think by then he had a sense of what I was going to do -- and to everyone's astonishment, I made the motion for the merger. And, still, today, it's called the Cole resolution. So people were like, hell, if he's for it, it must be OK. So, the motion passed, and it went to a --

DG: It was passed after a long debate.

PC: It was a debate, but there was not a lot of opposition to it. It passed quite overwhelmingly. And, you know, that's a whole history in itself, that convention -- the NYSTA history -- and people writing that can get into a lot more of the details of it. But at any rate, it passed, and then it went out to a referendum among the members and then Tom, at that point, we had become actually pretty good friends -- and he had paid off his campaign debt a lot sooner than I did because he won -- but at any rate, I think I was asked to go out and help sell the merger among NEA locals, and I did that, began to speak to the locals.

DG: What was the initial response usually to the merger from teachers?

PC: It was -- except for a few pockets, it was overwhelmingly supported. People understood. And you have to understand the context because we were getting killed in the state legislature. The famous Jerabek bills moved tenure from

three years to five years, attacks on pensions and so on. What was going on is that you were going to the state legislature and they'd say, "No."

NYSTA wouldn't want the AFT to get credit for something, and the AFT wouldn't want NYSTA to get credit for something, and so they'd kill each other's bills, and in the meantime, we were getting murdered. So there was a sense that teachers understood, that teachers and education were under attack. It made no sense, in that environment, to have two teacher's unions spending their money fighting each other when they could come together and fight for better legislation, better teacher pay, tenure, and things of that nature. So, I think rank and file teachers and local leaders pretty much understood that. There was some pockets of resistance, but the referendum passed overwhelmingly, at least, I think, two-to-one. And that, then, ended with a merger convention, which originally was scheduled, I think, again for the Concord but there was a strike there, and so with about two or three weeks to go, the convention was moved to Montreal, and that was 1972.

At that convention, this was really part of the early politics because Malcolm Wilson, Governor Rockefeller had

become Vice President -- Malcolm Wilson, the Lt. Governor became governor -- he came to the convention to speak and for the first time said, you know, if a superintendent can't decide whether teachers should have tenure in three years and not five years, he said, the problem is not with the teacher. The problem is with the superintendent. We made a movie at that convention called "All in Favor," which you should really get a copy of if you don't have it -- it's available from NYSTA through Tony Bifaro. It was a film that Ned Hopkins put together that starred myself and Gary Duesberg, who was a member of the board from Platsburg, and eventually became a member of the NYSTA executive committee, and the Education Director of the New York State AFL-CIO -- and two women from central New York. What it was designed to do was to show all the positives of the merger and was used, then, to take to the NEA conventions to try to sell a national merger. It actually did open the next year, I think, in Chicago, at the Playboy Club, but not to very good reviews from the NEA, which is a different story in and of itself -- but it's an interesting piece of NYSUT history, that movie.

At that meeting, the new constitution was put into place. The NYSUT board was a compromise because the NYSTA board of

directors were all elected by districts, by zones. The UTNY board was all elected at large, so the compromise was that the board would be two-thirds elected regionally, and one-third elected at-large. There were some other issues there as well. At any rate, Tom asked me to run on the slate of the caucus, which was really a new thing, and came from the UFT side -- the Unity Caucus, from election districts one and two, which was all eight counties of Western New York, on an at-large slate. The election district people ran by and from their election districts, but the slate, all of the at-large people, we have a slate, with Tom and Al at the top. So I was elected to the NYSUT board of directors in 1972. It was the first time I held an elected office in the organization. Shortly after that, my local, the Lewiston-Porter Education Association changed its name to the Lewiston-Porter United Teachers -- one of the few locals in the state that did that.

So there we are, merged, and on the NYSUT board, and after that, our major focus was on national merger. I mean, we were just so solid in our commitment to this and understood the value of it, we thought, why wouldn't the rest of the country want to do this. So, we went to the convention -- I think it was that summer in Atlantic City -- just full of

piss and vinegar and ready to spread the gospel on teacher unity, and we ran into a windstorm. Sam Lambert, who was the executive director of the NEA, gave a vitriolic speech just condemning the merger, condemning the AFL-CIO, and that the NEA is not a labor organization. "We don't belong with plumbers and steam fitters and people like that," and really poisoned the atmosphere at that point in time. And so they adopted new business item 52 that prohibited any future mergers by state or local affiliated within the NEA with the AFT. And that really stopped the effort in its tracks. We didn't stop there. We went to the next one or two conventions of the NEA, and again, tried to make the case for national merger. We actually had some people run for office -- Toni Cortese ran for president of the NEA, Walter Tice ran for, I think, the executive committee, and some others, at this point, to try and have a platform for teacher unity. It went nowhere, largely on the AFL-CIO -- it had three major issues. Largely, the AFL-CIO affiliation, what they call minority guarantees or quotas that NYSUT didn't believe in, although I think NYSUT and the AFT and UFT had higher percentages of minorities. It was an issue of over-rigid quotas. And secret ballot versus the open ballot. NYSUT and the AFT both have open ballot, the argument being if you are elected by people at

the open level, and they're going to vote for people at the state or national level, and they're representing you, you have the right to know how they vote. Secret ballot was that people should be able to vote secretly. It was a long debate. At any rate, that's one of the issues that still separates the NEA and the AFT.

DG: It seems that the New York teachers didn't mind being part of the AFL-CIO.

PC: No.

DG: As the rest of the country did.

PC: The interesting thing is -- that's a great lead, because once we became merged, the decision by NYSTA was to pay the full-per-capita of all of its member -- former NEA and AFT -- into the state AFL-CIO, and into every central labor council in the state. In most other unions, the local makes a decision to join a central labor council, and a state AFL-CIO, whereas what NYSUT did was say, look, we can be a powerhouse here. We can leverage the support of the labor movement for us. We can have an impact here, but only if we're fully participating. So, NYSUT, to this day, pays the full per-capita to the state AFL-CIO and to every central labor council on behalf of its local affiliates. Well, what happened is that a lot of us then started going to local central labor council meetings. One piece of this

is Gary Duesberg and the "All in Favor" film, because it shows some of that. And we saw quickly that these folks were allies and they could help us on school board elections and budget votes and other issues of economic and social justice and things that we all agreed to.

As a matter of fact, in some parts of the state, especially on the southern tier, there were no central labor councils. Teachers after a year took the initiative to create central labor councils in some of the more rural parts of New York state. And those central labor councils exist today, down in southwestern New York and out in the North Country and else where, which was interesting. We had little success with getting the NEA or other states to merge. There were some local mergers -- I mean, there was activity, obviously, in Florida. The teachers in New Orleans -- the United Teachers of New Orleans -- merged. The United Teachers of Los Angeles, but that was different because people joined the local and the state and then joined the NEA at the state and national level, or the AFT at the state and national level. They only merged at the local level.

DG: So, they had a choice between which national groups they would be a part of.

PC: Yes. Each individual teacher. And that's still true today in Los Angeles.

DG: Is it?

PC: Yes. Now, San Francisco which has since merged, and the other mergers that have gone on since, it's quite different -- the ones that -- we're jumping ahead quite a bit, but in Montana and Minnesota and Florida, it's all very different now. And the pending merger in New York, if you can call it that, with 525,000 now in NYSUT, and maybe 30,000 in NEA New York, which interestingly enough, to go back to the merger, you had 105,000 in NYSTA, and you had maybe 65-70,000 in the United Teachers of New York, and the vast majority, of course, in the UFT. So, that brought the numbers up. Within a year or two after the merger, the total numbers were up over 200,000 -- 205, 210,000. What happened is that teachers said -- since you're not fighting anymore, I'm going to join the organization. So it became, almost instantaneously a real powerhouse in terms of the resources, the number, and I would argue the quality of the leadership that was there, its involvement in the AFL-CIO at the state and local level. Obviously, the political power it could put together, the service program that NYSUT put together very early on, it just became unparalled and was quite a success story.

DG: I'm sure the NEA didn't just roll over for New York.

PC: Well, the NEA did not like the model because it had an affiliation with the AFL-CIO, and so did virtually everything they could to undermine the merger. And so a number of us, by the way, were elected to national office then, in 1972 -- the number of members on the NEA board, because we brought all these members into the NEA -- and spaced out the number of members in the state -- the number of NEA directors from New York went from three to 10, and in 1973, I was among the seven new people who was elected to the NEA board of directors, along with Tom Hobart, Toni Cortese, Gary Duesberg and others. In 1974, they increased the AFT Executive Council, I think, from 20-30, to accommodate new members from New York. Not all of the 10, but a number of the new members elected to the AFT Executive Council were from New York, and I happened to be one of those. I was elected to AFT Vice President in Toronto, 1974, the same year Al Shanker defeated Dave Selden and became president of the AFT. Interestingly enough, from 1974-1975, Tom Hobart, Toni Cortese and I had the distinction of being the only teachers in history who served simultaneously on the NEA board of directors and the AFT executive council. Now, with the mergers in Florida and Minnesota, there are others who have that distinction,

and I'm sure Dick Iannuzzi will probably go on the NEA board. He's on the AFT executive council, but for that period of time, that was really quite unique. But at any rate, the NEA began the NEA in New York program to undermine the merger, and to make a long story short, NYSTA board saw what was happening and made a decision to have NYSTA disaffiliate from the NEA, and that happened in 1975. And there again was a vote among the members. I went on leave from the classroom at that point in time and traveled the state, along with Tom, Toni, and a couple of others, going into locals who were making the decision at that point, whether they were going to stay with the New York State United teachers, or go with a new organization, NEA New York, that the NEA created. After the split in 1975, they created their own state organization, and so I spent a number of months debating a number of NEA leaders around the state encouraging our locals to stay with the New York State United Teachers. Well, you know, what happened is history.

Today, NYSUT has 525,000 and they've got some 30,000. The biggest disappointment, I think, was Tom Hobart's local in Buffalo, because the influence was then president Tom Pisa. Buffalo stayed within the NEA and then they have

Binghamton, but most of the others were small, rural districts in the southern tier or the North Country, and a couple out on Long Island. An overwhelming number of locals stayed with NYSUT. And largely, they said, by the way, maybe we don't want to give up our AFL-CIO affiliation. Now, that we've tasted this, we understand the value of it, and why would we want to do that. Then there were lawsuits and so on and so forth after that, which was a different sense of our history. So, we were booted off the NEA board of directors in 1975 and that was it. Then the battles between the two, the staff defections occurred for a period of time, but the NEA never regained any foothold at all in New York, and of course, now ironically, as we sit here in 2006, we are a couple of weeks away from a convention at both NEA New York and New York State United Teachers who have merger resolutions and if all goes well, which I'm sure it will, we will have again a merged NEA and AFT in New York effective September 1, 2006. NEA will actually become part of NYSUT -- it's not going to have a new name or anything of that nature, and they will incorporate their staff and they will accommodate leadership issues and so on and so forth so that's very good. It's kind of ironic here that the "Cole Resolution" that created the merger between the NEA and the

AFT in New York, I stepped down as an AFT vice president in January of this year, 2006 -- so I served 32 years as an AFT vice president, and the last vote we took at the AFT executive council in January was the motion to approve the merger between the NEA and the AFT of New York. And we said, well, we've come full circle now. I feel good about that.

Still, unrealized, of course, is the national merger, which I don't think I'll see in my professional or real lifetime. We did make a major effort a couple of years ago to bring together the AFT and the NEA -- there were very, very aggressive efforts to do that. The relationships have improved largely because NEA, which historically has been a professional association, and the AFT this militant trade union, both changed to some extent. NEA obviously became much more of a union, especially in the urban states and Michigan and places like that. They were unions in every respect, behaving much more and acting and believing like a trade union. And the AFT, under Al Shanker's leadership, obviously, never left its commitment to trade unionism, but also became a leader in professional issues and school reform issues. Over the years, the distinctions between the NEA and the AFT really became more, I don't want to say

they disappeared, but the became quite blurry -- so they both look quite the same. The two began to cooperate on political campaigns, legislative issues, professional issues, and one thing led to another so -- and especially with the election of Bob Chase as president of the NEA - a very progressive guy and under the leadership of Al and subsequently Sandy Feldman. That the talks, the merger talks between the two national organizations moved quite aggressively. We had a number of joint meetings between the AFT executive council and the NEA board -- not all of the board, but a number of the NEA board members and leaders of the NEA board and senior staff and retreats -- to get to understand each other's issues, what are your concerns with us, our concerns with you, and the negotiations went on and on, but there was an agreement, a basic agreement, and it went to the AFT convention, and it was approved by our delegates, like 98 to 2 percent. It went to the NEA convention and was shot down by 2-1. They really didn't have their political act together.

There were a number of reasons for that. One is the opposition within the NEA to the merger weren't unified in what they wanted. They were unified in what they didn't want -- they didn't want a merger. So people like the

president of the Buffalo Teacher's Federation, the people from Illinois, New Jersey, who historically have hated Al Shanker and the AFT for different sets of reasons. They significantly voted down the Unity agreement that was in place that would have moved the merger between the AFT and the NEA together.

Interestingly enough, part of it has to do with governance. There were two very different governance models between the NEA and the AFT. The AFT executive council is elected by the convention but the executive council, as well as the officers, run on a slate. There is a political party -- the Progressive Caucus -- and it has a platform so they know where people stand, and they work out things within progressive caucus meetings. The advantage of that is that when you elect a team, and Al Shanker or Ed McElroy, and the vice president, all of whom are major players -- they are presidents of Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, you have a team in place that's able to deliver the votes and is able to move ahead an agenda quite aggressively, plus the brilliance of Al Shanker cannot be under stated here. Absolutely, totally brilliant tactician in every sense of the word -- trade union, fighting for democracy, education reform, and so on. So, you have that brilliant leadership

and plus you have that governance model. The NEA is a confederation of strong state associations. Al Shanker and the AFT executive council are not term limited, so he's able to build some stature, some time, some confidence in the office. The NEA officers are term-limited for a period -- it used to be a revolving door. Back in the old days, you became second vice president, first vice president, president, past president, and out, usually out to staff, so you didn't mess with the executive director. So, the power in the NEA model was with the executive director, whereas in the AFT, it's with the elected leadership. Now, that was true also of NYSTA and one of the transformations between NYSUT and NYSTA was that it really adopted the union governance model, so they eliminated term limits, and you can develop people who develop some competence which I think was part of the success of NYSUT. So in the NEA, people would get in and they'd be in for a year, and then later, two years, and then two two-year terms, and now it might be two three-year terms, but it might still be term limited, so you really don't have that strong, centralized leadership, plus the board of directors are elected by and from the states. It's a very large board -- well over 100 people -- and most of the people who are elected are people who are rewarded as having been the president of the state

association, which is term-limited. So, you might become the president of the Iowa's State Teacher's Association, and then you become the NEA director, and it's a reward. So it's nothing really to do with the politics, and so your interest and your loyalty is back to your state and local area, so it's very hard to build a common agenda and to provide leadership -- you know, the proverbial phase of herding cats, it's kind of what the NEA is.

The NEA leadership has really little influence over providing guidance and direction to its board or to its membership. Plus the NEA convention has about 10-12,000 people at it, and each state delegation is run by its executive director -- they hold us signs, vote yes, vote no. Now, it's electronic. And so you have these two very different governance structures. It's much more difficult to get the NEA to agree with the merger for them among other reasons. Plus, I think, the NEA with nearly 3 million members, and the AFT with nearly 1 million members, feared a takeover. I think they've got a right to believe that because what happened in New York is that the AFT was smaller than the NEA side, with NYSTA -- once the merger happened, it was an intellectual, ideological coup d'etat -- I mean, once we got in there and saw the union model, we

thought -- well, this makes a lot of sense. We're not going to give it up. The fact is, this couldn't happen within the NEA. So, they have the NEAFT -- a joint committee now that currently works cooperatively on legislation, political action, No Child Left Behind, professional issues, -- and there are some good staff relationships and the leaders get along well -- but I don't think, as I said, there will be a merger through the national organizations anytime soon.

Now, there have been, as I mentioned, mergers in a number of states -- Florida, it was a very successful merger. In Minnesota, in Montana -- I think they're talking about in New Mexico -- there will be one in New York -- so, whether or not in the long run that will move a national merger forward, I think, remains to be seen. The other interesting development, of course, is within the AFL-CIO, with its split, now, which is a disaster for the labor movement. At the last convention, with the Change the Win coalition, and with five or six unions, but with some 55 or so unions remaining in the AFL-CIO, the AFT among them -- and despite Ed McElroy's heroic efforts to try and work things out. He played a significant role in that. The other unions left, and quite recently of course, with the

AFT blessing, the AFL-CIO and the NEA reached an agreement where NEA affiliates can become affiliated with AFL-CIO affiliates at the local and state level. There are a number of places where that will happen relatively soon, and other places where it will not happen or may take some time -- but there's been good relations with Jefferson Parish and Kentucky and other places the NEA's always been going to the labor council meetings anyway -- places like Rhode Island and other places where you have excellent relationships between the NEA and the AFT especially -- you will probably see some movement there.

DG: They'll get the taste of union model?

PC: Yes. Where that's going to happen is that you have the state and locals who really are much more progressive -- they are the industrialized states and so on. You're unlikely to see it in South Carolina or North Carolina or a place like that. New Jersey, interestingly enough, which has the NJEA -- the New Jersey Educational Association -- has a long antipathy toward Al Shanker the AFL-CIO and for reasons, I guess, I'll never understand.

So, given all of that, the two remarkable stories is the success of -- three remarkable stories -- is the success of

NYSUT, the success of the AFT, and the success of the AFL-CIO in New York -- all three, which I've been fortunate enough to be involved in. I think one thing that characterizes my career, as opposed to other people who are my friends, is that they spend all their time at the local level, or the regional level, or the state level, or the national level, or the international level. What teacher unions have provided for me is that once I moved out of the local level, the regional level, I've been actively involved simultaneously at the state level, the national level, and the international level. At the state level, as a member for many years, I retired as a NYSUT board member in 1997. But was then an emeritus member. I was the secretary/treasurer of the state AFL-CIO. I was the vice president of the AFT. And then involved in a variety of international things we can come back to later on, but they all feed on one another.

The growth of NYSUT has been a Harvard case study, and it's a remarkable story, on how 525,000 members, brilliant leadership all the way -- with Al Shanker and Tom Hobart, and Toni, and other people there -- their board -- you have a political program that I think it unmatched in the labor movement. They don't brag a lot, like some of the other

unions do, but they get things done legislatively. Their political action program, I think, is the most sophisticated in the state. Remember one thing about public employees unions, particularly teacher's unions as opposed to others; they have members in every voting precinct of the state -- in every congressional district, in every senate, and in every assembly district. And not only that, they're well educated, they're articulate, they convince people of things for a living. So you have the makings of a very powerful political machine, and also participating within the AFL-CIO. The service program is unparalleled, and I think, probably matches any international union. NYSUT's field staff has 16 regional offices, well over 100 field staff people who are exceedingly well trained to negotiate, to handle arbitrations, they do the arbitrations, and so on and so forth -- very well trained, new training of local leaders. They have a legal staff of 30 full time lawyers. In fact, there are three unions within NYSUT. The field staff has a union, and the clerical staff has a union, and the lawyers have their own union within NYSUT -- shows you how sophisticated this operation is. And they do all kinds of things, really -- due process issues for teachers and so on and so forth. They don't do the arbitration and

negotiations -- the field staff does that -- and they usually clean the clock of the lawyers the school boards hire because they're so well trained. They have a member benefits program that is unparalled in terms of the legal services and buying services and insurance programs and, you know, it's just so comprehensive. They have a professional development program where they train teachers how to be better teachers through a teacher-centered network that is really unrivaled anywhere in the country. The idea is to help them have better working conditions and better salary and benefits, but also how to be better teachers and better professionals, better professors, and one of the philosophies that came out of the AFT and NYSUT is that their goal is -- to be successful, you have to make sure that the institutions that you work for and serve are also very successful, so that means public education, given all the attacks on public education-- it has to be very successful, and the way you do that is to make sure the teachers are well-trained and are good teachers and take the lead in education reform because they know it. So, I think today, NYSUT is the model trade union organization in this country and maybe elsewhere as well.

The AFT also of course grew from what they call a band of 50,000 or so in the old days to now 1.1 million members, the bulk, of course, from New York, but there's been tremendous growth elsewhere. Initially, teachers also, because of the work of the UFT, brought in the para-professionals, especially after the '68 strike, brought them in and said, we have a program that will allow you to go to school and become teachers, and so it was a way to move minorities into the program to become teachers -- very successful program. Then obviously, it's moved into higher ed, so in New York, for example, NYSUT represents all of the professors at the state university and the city of New York, the City University, so you have about 20,000 or so SUNY professionals, faculty, and staff, and the same thing at City University, about 10,000 -- as well as a number of community colleges, and that's growing around the county. There are a number of universities in the public sector who are organizing. Obviously you have the Yeshiva decision, and that inhibits private sector organizing, but there have been interesting things going on there. There was the whole controversial issue in the beginning of organizing health care, so the AFT set up a federation of nurse and health professionals, which are now called the AFT healthcare. I was the AFT vice president assigned as the

liaison back in the early '70s to help coordinate that effort. I think it's been quite successful within the AFT.

It is one of the differences, again, between the AFT and the NEA, and again, it's because the NEA sees itself only as an educational organization, and at some point in time, really, saw para-professionals as second class citizens, but really, the fact that AFT organized healthcare and the NEA didn't was a sticking point in the merger talks as well. The AFT is again blessed with brilliant leadership with Al Shanker and Sandy Feldman and now Ed McElroy, and his two partners, Nat LaCour and Toni Cortese, who we hated to lose from New York, but I think doing a terrific job there. So, the AFT now, is one of the very top three, four, or five unions within the AFL-CIO, certainly a leader in terms of political action and intellectual leadership within the federation. I think the AFT is highly respected. There are still some people, far fewer now than originally, who think teachers ought not to be in the labor movement by the way -- it's gone the other way -- as well as some teachers who think they should not be in the labor movement, but I think the involvement that we've had at the local, state, and national level, has dispelled a lot of that, a lot of those rumors. In fact, when we first merged

in New York in '72, we had to train teachers when they went into the labor council, in some cases, they were instant majorities -- cool it. Don't go in there like a bull in a China shop. Go in there. Be supportive. Do what you can do to help other people. Don't immediately run in and take the thing over and so on and so forth. So that all was, I think, important. And then NYSUT's role in the state AFL-CIO, and the AFT's role in the national AFL-CIO, and hopefully we can get into some of the international affairs stuff later. Maybe I should go back to the AFL-CIO role, which we haven't talked about the teacher stuff up until now.

DG: Sure.

PC: I became a delegate to the Niagara-Orleans labor council and went to -- after the merger -- and went to some conventions of the New York state AFL-CIO. The local labor council was fine. I was quite disappointed in the quality of the state AFL-CIO leadership there, so to make a very long story short, Tom Hobart and Al Shanker, eventually, they orchestrated what could be currently called a coup d'etat within the New York State AFL-CIO. So, in 1983, in November of '83, I left the classroom at Lewiston-Porter and went on, as Tom Hobart's assistant for a few months, taking the place of Dean Streiff, who had died. And Tom

and Al and others were working on the then-president of the state AFL-CIO Ray Corbett, who was out of the ironworkers -- longtime president -- that probably it was time to retire. So, that happened. In January of 1984, Ray Corbett retired as president of the New York State AFL-CIO, and Ed Cleary, Edward J. Cleary of local 3 of the IBEW of New York City was elected president. Among his first acts were to appoint the legislative director and political director, Richard Winston, of AFSCME DC37, was appointed the legislative director, and I was appointed the COPE or political director, in January of '84 of the New York State AFL-CIO. And then at the convention in the summer of 1984, the then-secretary/treasurer Howard Molisani, who was out of the Lady Garment Worker's Union, also decided to retire. It was at that convention, in the Concord, in summer of 1984 that I was elected secretary/treasurer of the AFL-CIO.

DG: You're always going back to the Concord.

PC: Yes. Concord is a great place in my labor history. Unopposed. You know, obviously, with the support of Al and Tom and others, at that point in time. And so I became a full time officer of the state AFL-CIO. That is significant for a number of reasons. That is the first time in the history of the AFL or the CIO that a white collar professional trade unionist, teacher, became an

officer of a state federation, so I think it symbolizes the growing influence of public sector professional unions within the labor movement at that period of time. And so that is a position that I held for 22 years. I retired at the end of December 2005. So, Ed Cleary remained president of the state AFL-CIO until 1998, I believe, and was succeeded by Denis Hughes who was Ed's assistant, a very good friend of mine, and Dennis still serves as president. I don't think there was any consideration for me to become president of the state AFL-CIO. I had no desire to do that. But I think the dynamics of the labor movement in New York dictate other things. I think my own personal opinion is to be president of this 2.3 million organization -- very sophisticated -- with the bulk of them from New York City -- that the president really needs to come from New York City. You need to grow up in a labor culture of New York City, a private sector or the building trades -- and all of the unions now have some understanding of that and I also think, most of us like to think that at least for the foreseeable future, the president of the AFL-CIO of the state of New York ought to come from the private sector because we don't want to be accused of just taking over everything. That was my role as the chief financial officer and one of two elected officers, and so we had a

big staff ---- we grew the organization, and when I took over, we had 12 cent per capita and -now it is 38 cents.

END OF PAUL COLE INTERVIEW PART ONE

PC: The state AFL-CIO finances were so bad that I couldn't go on the payroll until March and actually used a NYSUT car for the first three months. That's how bad it was. The offices were really not much to look at. We had a very small staff, a couple of secretaries in Albany, a couple in New York, and a PR person and one legislative assistant and that was about it. So I give a lot of credit to Ed Cleary for helping to bring the state AFL-CIO into the 20th century. We moved pretty aggressively. We took over and bought a building in Albany that we opened in 1985 on South Swan Street. It's a four-story building. It's got its own print shop, conference room, offices -- a very nice facility right across from the state capital. We opened new offices in the UFT building in New York City, when it was on Park Avenue South, and then we moved with them when they moved down to Broadway for our New York City offices that are very nice. Our staff now at the state AFL-CIO is about 25.

We have, I think, the best state staff in the country. We have an outstanding political director -- Susie Ballantyne and Ed Donnelly, the legislative director -- both have been there for a long time. Art Wilcox, from our public employee department. Joe Jamison, our research guy. Mario Mario Cilento our PR guy. We just brought on Janella Hinds from the UFT as our public policy person. Colleen Gardner, who's probably one of the best and brightest in the labor movement, is our organizing director, and a very competent secretarial staff. My own assistant, Cindy Ruth, who is the best in the world. I came in as a social studies teacher, so I'm not an accountant.

So, the first debate I had with Ed Cleary was whether we were going to hire a bookkeeper or an accountant, and I prevailed. See, I'm a social studies teacher, so we hired an accountant, Rich Garbarino, who is with us still today, and who really manages the day-to-day functions. Cindy takes care of all the per-capita, all the incoming finances, and Rich takes care of all the outgoing, all the paying of the bills, the pension system, the healthcare system. Plus of course, we have a very competent outside accountant to assist us on that as well. So, that part of the operation pretty much ran itself with my oversight and

the president's oversight. And it has run quite well over the years. It's gone through a number of audits, including audits from the IRS, and we've never had any hint of trouble, so I'm very pleased with that.

In that role, you have to really define a role for yourself in a sense. Smaller state feds, secretary/treasurers and officers, because they're small, are also the political directors and the legislative directors, the organizing -- because they have no staff. Well since we had a large, very competent staff, I didn't have to do that stuff. So, obviously, with one foot in education, and one foot in the labor movement, my interests went toward education and training for workers, so I developed some degree in expertise in that, and became very interested in working at the fundamental issues of the changing nature of work and how workers needed increased skills, more education. Workplace was changing, requiring new and different skills of all the workers. What the implications were of that for education reform was how schools and educational institutions and training institutions had to change because before you could get out of high school, go to Harris Radiator in Lockport at 18 years old, learn the job in 10 minutes and do it for a generation. And because you

had a good union, you were able to support your family and send you kid to college and buy a house and maybe even a boat go on vacations.

That all began to change with globalization and the competition from the Japanese and others. So there were huge implications and the only way you're going to compete effectively in a global economy was to increase the quality of the education of the American worker. So I really began to focus on that and so a number of posts helped me to gain even more expertise in that.

First of all, Tom Hobart asked me to take over as chair of the AFT Vocational Education Committee, so I did that probably sometime in the '70s, and I was a social studies teacher. So we changed the direction of that to look at policy issues. And from there really representing the AFT and vocational education and training issues, I began to look at other things. The America's Choice report came out and had a big impact on me.

As a result, I was selected to be on a number of national boards and commissions. Among the first was the secretary's commission on achieving necessary skills, the

famous SCANS commission, and I was the head of the education committee on the SCANS commission, which really came up with this whole idea of, what knowledge, skills, and abilities workers needed to function in this new workplace, this new high-performance workplace. Bill Brock, former secretary of labor, was chair. There were other very famous people, very bright people on that, and that had a huge impact, I think, -- on the education and training world.

DG: How did the SCANS report differ from the America's Choice report?

PC: It was more in the implementation. America's Choice said, if you're going to compete inter-nationally, we have to look at what they're doing in other countries. In other words, if Denmark and Sweden and Korea and Japan are beating us, what are they doing differently? So what they did is look at the educational and training system in those countries and said, we need to do some of that here and we need to elevate the quality of all workers and so the SCANS Commission then went in and identified what exactly are these knowledge, skills, and abilities that people need and issued a series of reports as to what specifically needed to be done.

DG: Was this before Perkins?

PC: No. Perkins pre-dated this and Perkins was simultaneous to all of this. As a result, I had the opportunity through SCANS and other opportunities to travel a number of times to Europe, particularly to look at the German Apprenticeship Program, training programs in Sweden and Denmark and the UK and Ireland, and really became quite impressed with their commitment to education and lifelong learning education and training of workers and we developed some expertise in international workforce development issues.

I then was appointed by President Clinton to be on the National Skills Standards Board, and became vice-chair of the National Skills Standards Board, and its mission was to develop a system of national skills standards for the United States in a variety of areas, such as manufacturing and healthcare and retail. We broke the economy into 16 industries, and within each industry you established some skill standards. In manufacturing, there would be the basic skills, which would be the trunk of the tree that everybody had, and then more specific skills, which would be the branches, and then leaves were very, very specific skills. The idea was to develop a set of standards which was to define what work required and what knowledge,

skills, and abilities workers needed to do that work in the specific sectors, but more specific than the SCANS. So, we moved ahead with that. Jamie Houghton, who was the CEO of Corning, was the chair and became a very good friend. We were actually married on the same day and always kid about that. Robert Reich was a member of the board and there were some other very impressive people from business and industry and labor. The uniqueness of it, because it was adopted during the Clinton administration, and I think with a Democratic Congress, it was a tri-partide board. One-third labor, one-third business, one-third public educators, which I think was a great strength of the board. It had some growing pains, but we did, with Mark Tucker and others who are involved in it began early on to look at developing a national system of skills standards. So we did look to Germany and Sweden and Denmark and we traveled over there again to look at that. And we began to move ahead and actually started to identify sectors to look at, so we started with manufacturing and retail and actually the education sector got to be a part of it. The process was moving along and then the election of 2000 happened. Unfortunately the Bush administration didn't understand the power of this idea, just to their free market philosophy. With the right wing saying, this is really communism and

state control and it was really very, very bad. It undermined the work of the skills standards board and so eventually, it went out of existence. Fortunately, a couple of the sectors were able to get their skills standards in place, so manufacturing, now, for example, and retail, and we did develop skills standards for education, for example, school-related personnel. So that part of it, that legacy lives on, but one of my great disappointments is that the work of that board was not allowed to proceed because I think it was really needed in a global economy to have that kind of operation going.

President Clinton did push through the National School-to-Work Bill, and I did serve on the National School to Work advisory committee. I did serve on, as an AFT Voc Ed Chair, a number of national assessments of vocational education -- which is the research to evaluate the Perkins Act, so they had a panel. I served as chair of that a couple of times. Other Washington groups -- currently, the National Center on Research and Dissemination of Career and Technical Education, which is a research arm of the Perkins Act and has a national advisory council. I still serve on that for example, so there are a number of national commissions and boards that I served on. Simultaneously,

because of my work here in New York, and my association with the state, I served as chair of the state council for vocational education and a number of New York state education department education and training panels. I served on the New York State Work Force Investment Board.

So I advise young people what they can do. I learned from that they need to develop an expertise in something. Learn more about one thing than anyone else knows so that you're the go-to person there. I think that the workforce development has played that role for me, and I think, served me very well. I think it was good advice from people to do. Of course, all the involvement at the state level and the national level -- I get invited to give speeches all over the place and speak, not only in New York State but around the country and internationally, and so I represented the AFL-CIO at the ILO conference on developing work force development training policy. I've spoken at a variety of other international forums. I served on Education International voc ed committee. That is the international trade secretariat. It has a different name now. It's the Global Union Federation.

A bit about that -- at the international level, just as you have the AFT and the AFL-CIO, at the international level, there are international trade secretariats -- global union federation scuffs, I think they're called now, which are organizations of unions in various countries in the same sector. So they have one in the metal trades. They have one in the textile industry. They have one in public service. In education, there is one that's called Education International, which is an organization of all the teacher unions in the world. That actually, interestingly enough, is a merger of two previous organizations, one that the NEA was part of, called World Confederation of the Organizations of the Teaching Professions -- WCOTP -- and the AFT was involved with the International Federation of Free Teacher Unions -- IFFTU. Interestingly difference. The IFFTU is much more of a trade union organization, but the other striking difference was that the WCOTP allowed so-called teacher's unions from communist countries to be members. The AFT and the AFL-CIO never agreed with that, saying these are really not bona fide unions. They're really extensions of the government. They're front organizations. And to recognize them and to work with them really legitimized those dictatorships.

They should not be afforded any legal recognition or official recognition at all.

After the Berlin Wall fell, and communism pretty much dissipated, and Mary Futrell was president of the NEA and Al president of the AFT, we were able to broker another merger, and that was a merger of the WCOTP and IFFTU. It became Education International. Mary Futrell, president of the NEA, became president of Education International. Al Shanker became founding president and Fred Van Leeuwen became the general secretary. He was from the IFFTU side. That has been a marvelous success. They have their convention, or what they call their congresses, every three years. So it's another opportunity I've had. I've been to Marseilles. I've been to Zimbabwe. I've been to Bangkok. And most recently to Brazil to these conventions of Education International, which gives you another opportunity for this global experience. Plus I served on EI's vocational committee, which allows you to learn more about education and training worldwide. If you take all of these opportunities and experiences collectively I've had together, and you put them all in one head, you can begin to see where you can draw upon a very rich variety of knowledge and resources simply by your experiences, not

because you're more brilliant than anybody, but simply the exposure you've had at all of these various levels, so when you go on and recommend to New York State how to reform its vocational education system, you can say, well in Sweden, they do this, or in Denmark, they do this, or whatever -- and it's been very, very, very helpful, and in that respect, so you become a leader.

Most recently, as a member of the New York State Workforce Development Board, I've been able to take that idea of skills standards, based on my experience on the National Institute for Literacy and following the demise of the skills standards part, to develop a work-readiness credential. This is based on adult learning standards, adult as citizen, consumer, and worker -- and defines what knowledge, skills, and abilities adults needed to function in this world, so we carved out the worker piece and said, wouldn't it be nice if we could develop a credential that said to a worker, once you can demonstrate this knowledge, these skills, and abilities, we will give you a work-readiness credential. Employers all over the place are saying, I can't get people who are ready to come in and do the job.

So, that was moving ahead with the National Institute for Literacy and the Bush administration came in and killed that, and so at about that same time, I was at a New York State Work Force Investment Board meeting and said, why don't we pick this up. It's too important. From a worker's standpoint, to have a credential that's recognized by an employer gives you currency in the labor market, gives you portability -- you can go from one place to the other and say I can do these things. From an employer's standpoint, it says, I don't have to look at 10 people. Three people have this credential. I know what they know, and I know what they can do. So, I convinced the New York State Work Force Investment Board to pick up this work readiness credential. We brought in other states: Washington State, Florida, a couple of others -- we now have a national consortium, and we're about to launch that credential in a matter of months, sometime this year, so that will be one victory we've had on the skills standards effort -- there will be this credential, this work readiness credential, that will eventually be more than a consortium of states. It will be national, and that will be one achievement that I'll be very proud of, assuming that it comes to its full implementation, which I think it will.

DG: It sounds like you took the standards movement and put it into vocational ed.

PC: That's right. Work is changing, and if you define what work requires, what knowledge, skills, and abilities a worker in that workplace that becomes the basis for a vocational education program. This is what we learned from Europe, everybody, whether you're a high school kid or a dislocated worker or an incumbent worker or a displaced homemaker, you all need those skills since you're all going to work. So what's common in all of these places, in places like Denmark, is that they set out and say, let's define what you need to know and be able to do. Once you define that, and I call that the supply side, you really have standards, assessments, and credentials -- standards define what you need to know and be able to do; the assessment, to determine whether you're able to do those things; and a credential that actually gives you the certification that indicate you do, those are the three legs of the demand side. That's what work requires. Once you have that in place, then everybody, whether you're an education and training system or an elementary and secondary school or a second-chance system. Your needs to organize the curriculum and the pedagogy to get people to learn those

knowledge and skills to be effective and to work. What's happened with high performance work places is what was required of a worker to function in a high-performance work place and what was required of a person going into post-secondary education, began to blur. You needed the same thing. You need to do math. You need to be able to read. You need to be able to solve problems. You need to be able to work with others, and so forth. So the implication for secondary and elementary schools, was for those kids who just want to become a philosophy professor maybe the academic routes the way to go, but eventually, everybody's going to go to work at one time or another.

Al Shanker used to say, when you go to work, you don't do math for the first hour and English for the second hour and history for the third hour -- its an integration of those. So it became important that the AFT led the initiative on this. For the reauthorization of Perkins, you needed to have in elementary and secondary schools, what we call the integration of academic and vocational education. That is, you needed both strong academics and you needed these strong workplace skills that are required and so, if you do that, what does education look like. Well, it looks like the very best vocational program. It looks like vocational

programs like aviation high school in Queens where kids are learning their geometry and they're learning their writing and they're learning all of these things in the context of a real world environment. That better prepares vocational kids for each new job, but I think it also enriches and makes academic education much more interesting.

That's the ideology, the philosophy, the strategy that I worked to advise New York State and the national Perkins and education in training systems -- this single idea that it's not sole-academic track, or sole dumbed down vocational track -- it's the blending of the two: high-level academics and high-level problem solving. You know, working with others and all these other kinds of things in the workplace. So that characterizes what is happening now. Places like South Carolina just required a career major, for example, in high school; and even though the school-to-work thing dropped, there are other groups like Jobs for the Future who are always doing great work like this, and you are seeing high-quality schools begin to do that.

My daughter Emily worked in Charles County where they're opening up a new vocational school that really does all

this. It blends the academics with the high-quality workforce development. So, that's really what I learned from that and that's really what we're doing here with the work-readiness credential, because if you look at that, it means you have to have -- for a person to be work-ready, they have to be able to read at a higher level, they have to do more higher level mathematics, they have to do more problem solving, they have to work with others. The challenges once we've identified workers is how we assess them, and so we've spent a lot of time looking at assessment tools and how to evaluate that. You have the demand side of the standards assessment credentials, and you have the supply side, which is the education and training system. The other piece of that is the issue of access. How do make sure that everybody has access to that system? That's where public policy, that's where the workforce investment act, and other programs that help young people or dislocated workers or displaced homemakers and others who don't have the wherewithal to make sure that you provide opportunities for them to get the education and training to get these higher quality jobs. That's what Bush preaches, but that's not what Bush does.

DG: Do you think --

PC: He's the biggest hypocrite in the world because he wants to zero out for the third year in a row, a billion dollars in Perkins funding to vocational schools at the secondary and post-secondary level. The biggest money that goes into secondary schools and he calls for zeroing that out as well as massive cuts in the workforce investment act and other training programs. He talks out of one side of his mouth -- he goes to Europe and says, don't worry about globalization, don't worry about all of these manufacturing jobs going overseas -- we're going to compete by training our workers with some of the best training in the world. And that's what he says over there. But when he comes over here, he cuts the Perkins Act, he cuts the workforce investment act, he does everything he can to provide unskilled cheap labor, which really doesn't provide any opportunity for workers at all.

DG: Well it sounds like with the credentials you're bringing in the Dewey philosophy into vocational education.

PC: Yes, I did a piece a long time ago. I said John Dewey would not be surprised at all at what he sees here.

DG: Can we talk a little more about the vocational work?

PC: Sure.

DG: What differences did you see when you first started getting involved with the vocational education at CTE -- the

difference between American versus European --and was there anyway you could bring American to European and vice versa?

PC: Yes. And that's what I've been working on for about 30 years now. The American system was a two-track system. The top 20 percent of the kids are going to go to the good colleges, they work hard, they're academic achievers. The other kids were shunted into very low quality academics or vocational programs. By the way, years ago, even though they're low quality, because work did not require high skills, you could learn a trade, you could learn something in a good vocational program that was not high-skill and get a good job, a middle-class job, because that's what work required before this whole revolution took place in the nature of work. So, vocational education served the country well for many years because it met what the labor market needs at that time. The labor market changed because it required new skills.

When we went to Europe we found the German Apprenticeship program values all workers. Here, every parent says, everybody says, well, everybody has to go to college and if you don't go to college, somehow you're not successful. Well, over there, CEOs of Siemmans and other places often times come up through the apprenticeship program. The

fundamental difference and philosophy in European countries, especially in the Northern European countries is that they value work, and they see you're not a second-class citizen if you're a master craftsman or an auto mechanic or whatever, because they have integrated this high idea of a very high academic component into the vocational program of those countries.

There had not been a very high academic component in the vocational program in our country so the idea here was to -- and what we've done here in New York -- is to enhance the academic piece of the vocational side. I think that's, simplistically put, the biggest change that we've seen in the good vocational programs here, and there are very many of them now that are doing that, and doing that pretty well.

DG: Has there been input in standards for voc education teachers as well? Have you brought them out of their isolation?

PC: Yes. The idea is, what the AFT has argued, for example, in the Perkins Act, time after time, is the biggest need is for high-quality professional development. Now, most people think that's just for the vocational teachers, but we're saying, no. If you're going to integrate academic

and vocational, the way to do that is to have professional development where they come together. So, the best professional development model is where you bring vocational teachers together with English teachers and math teachers and you sit down and say, this is what the kids have to learn. How do you incorporate the math and the English into the vocational program, which they're doing a lot of. What we haven't yet done well enough, is how do we take the learning pedagogy of the voc ed and put it into the academic programs? So, for example, if you're going to select an English topic, why not something like in Aviation High School. It's about the history of aviation or if you're going to do geometry you take it from a carpentry class or an airplane or something of that nature, and you are able to better integrate. You're better able to improve the quality, I would argue, of the learning environment for kids, in an academic setting, if you take real world issues and use them for your model as opposed to the one where the train left San Francisco at two o'clock, the other New York, and they're going so fast -- when will they meet? Who cares, kids are going to say, but if you contextualize the learning -- what they call contextualize the learning -- learning your academics in the context of real world settings. Part of the problem is with the focus

on No Child Left Behind and the standards in just reading and math, that there has become this laser-like focus on that, and programs that are so narrow because people are scared, they really think to integrate contextualized learning takes a little bit more time and a little bit more planning, so I think that's one of the downsides of it.

DG: Well, that's something Shanker had taken from Hirsh, talking about the fact that kids love dinosaurs, they love reading about dinosaurs, they love to learn about dinosaurs if we get them to do that, and now has this gone back to teaching to the test?

PC: Yes I think so.

DG: Instead of the critical thinking aspect of learning.

PC: Yes. Well, critical thinking -- when I was a teacher, my classroom was very different from most other classrooms because when you walked into my classroom, you didn't see five rows of kids sitting there and then me telling them and them recreating knowledge. See, the difference is recreating knowledge and creating knowledge, and what we learned in Europe was to create knowledge, not just recreate, not just give information back. My students weren't vessels I filled up and they gave me the information back on a test. So, how do you organize instruction to do that? Well, you put them in four groups

of six kids and you do some introduction, but then you give them a challenge so they have to create knowledge.

My favorite lesson was one on the causes of World War One and who was responsible. Now, the traditional way to teach that is to get a blackboard or even an overhead projector and say here are the causes, nationalism, imperialism, militarism, and so on. Write them in your notebook. Remember, we're going to have a test or a quiz. What I did was to take the kids and assign them each an ambassador of a country: France, England, Germany, Bosnia, Herzengovina, Serbia -- the countries that were involved in the outbreak of World War One. And say, you have to learn the extent to which your country was or was not responsible for the outbreak of the war and how it could have been prevented. I would do some lectures, some background on the outbreak of the war, and then I would give them some readings where authors would assess the various responsibilities. Then, they would go to the library and do some research on this. Then I would put all the kids from Germany together and all of the kids from Austria/Hungary together, England, and say, now you have to plan your best defense, and I'm going to put you into a group with the ambassadors from the other countries and the mission of the group is to rank order

those countries as to who are most responsible to the least responsible for the outbreak of World War One.

This strategy, by the way, I learned when I went to NEA summer workshops at UC Irvine. Group dynamics. I took all that group dynamics stuff and incorporated it into my instruction, which was one of the big things I will always be thankful to the NEA for when group dynamics were big in the '60s, I got all that, and I said, this has implications for the classroom.

So, at any rate, their job was to get their country as low on the list as possible. So, they had to defend their country and blame others, but they also had to know how to get their country down on the list and rationalize, explain away what they did. But they also had to be able to pin the responsibility on somebody else. So, they could conspire there. And then the next day they would come in -- and I had four groups with all of these ambassadors from the different country -- and I would say, "OK. You have until the end of the period. You have to come out of here with a rank ordering -- who is most responsible to the least responsible -- and your job is to get our country on the bottom of the list…" -- well, it was chaos. I mean,

kids arguing and, you know, well, you know. The Serbs assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and therefore they are responsible. Yeah, but the archduke provoked them by going in there. Yeah, but had Germany not backed them, they might not have done it, and if England had done this, they might have prevented the war. And it's a very rich discussion of all of these kids playing these roles, which they really got into. And it was noisy and bellicose and unruly and so on, because kids would get into it.

So, once that whole process ended, I would say, OK, now your assignment is to step out of this role, based upon what you learned and write an essay, rank-ordering now who you really think, not defending your country, who is most responsible to the least responsible and giving your evidence and your reasons why. And then make some suggestion as to what you learned and how future wars might be prevented. Now, that took a week. The problem is, when you're teaching world history that is a huge chunk of time, I tell people, I'd have to teach the entire history of the world in 38 weeks, and that's why I talk so fast. But, that was a very rich lesson, and I never had kids having any problems understanding the outbreak of World War One. But, you couldn't take a week, with only 38 weeks of

school, if the idea is to cover the curriculum. This has always been the debate early on, way before the standards movement I kept asking myself and saying to the state education department -- tell me what is most of value, and don't tell me what to teach -- tell me what I don't have to teach because you'd say, well, they don't know this, they don't know the Pacific War in World War Two or something. I can't -- 38 weeks, or in any history course -- there is no way you can cover all of that, and that's why some teachers try to use textbooks that are very superficial.

With an exercise like this -- kids are going to remember that for the rest of their life -- and not only that, but they're going to learn thinking and reasoning skills. I would start off the year with lessons on thinking and reasoning; the skills that you need to know. Here's what a hypothesis is. Here's comparing. Here's contrasting. Here are all these skills.

It's a very rich teaching model, but again the downside is, if you do that, you are limited in content. And so that is the historic tension in education, especially with social studies teachers -- how do you get depth and breadth at the same time. And so when I was asking that innocent question

-- what's of most value -- really what I was saying was what are the standards. Long before standards come about. People finally said, we need standards. We need to be able to define what kids need to know in American history and European history -- and that led to this whole debate over the standards. Which is wonderful, because now, at least, a teacher can walk in and say this is what my kids need to know -- and I don't have to worry about those things. They still have the problem of breadth versus depth and content and so on and so forth. So, again, it was this wonderful experience of two or three summers of this NEA classroom teachers meeting, where they did all of this group dynamics training that just had a profound impact on my own teaching, and my own functioning as a leader or, when I go to meetings to understand how to function as a member of a group. It was very exciting stuff. Not any smarter than anybody else -- just a question of this unusually wonderful and rich set of experiences that I was exposed to because one day I told my local president in the conference room, yeah, I'll get involved in the union -- and the rest was history.

DG: Then you create the knowledge for everybody?

PC: Yes. It's just been terrific.

DG: This is a great segue way into labor studies and the labor movement in high school.

PC: Well, as I said, I understood early on, once I got involved in the union, I began to look around and say, you know, there's not much of this in the curriculum. Kids don't know much about this.

DG: All I remember is the Haymarket picture.

PC: Yes. I mean you might know Sam Gompers or that the unions strike. And strikes are violent, and that's what happened in history. You know, Pullman and Haymarket and that's it. You know, very little about it. I really got interested in that and I really began to look at the role of labor and labor history and the curriculum and began to do some research on it and contacted the AFL-CIO. They had a teacher's kit. And then in the late '60s, early '70s I guess it was -- in Lewiston, we had the opportunity to move to elective programs, and develop these mini courses.

I wanted to develop one on labor studies, which initially was a 10-week course and then went to a full-semester course. As a result of that, and then being involved in the labor movement, and then being an AFT vice president and a teacher -- again, this confluence of these things coming together, it was ah-ha, labor in the schools. So,

over a period of time, I became the go-to guy at the AFL-CIO for labor in the schools. There was a short history on American labor that they printed in their magazine. Well, I wrote a lesson plan for that so that became available to teachers. NYSUT printed it and distributed it, and it's available on the American Labor Studies Center Web Site. I began to do more and more of that, and then once I became secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO I focused on it more. My involvement at Cornell University added to it. I became a member of the Cornell ILR advisory council and chairman of that, and trustee there for 16 years and a connection with the ILR School. I had additional opportunities. I saw vacuum out there, where there really wasn't anything going on. I really said, who else is vice president of a national teacher's union, has involvement in a labor movement, and who was a teacher in social studies and involved with the ILR school of Cornell.

Again, nothing to do with brilliance, but it was this confluence of experiences that come together. I'm in as good a position as anybody to try to promote more widely this incorporation of teaching and labor studies in the schools.

We did that for a period of time, and then when we moved to Albany, I did some more of that work, did some talks on it and so on I got somehow involved with the local historians, and they were talking about this Kate Mullany House in Troy. And first of all --even before the Kate Mullany House, I worked with this very rich history of the area. The confluence of the Hudson and the Mohawk -- a very rich labor history here. There's a book called "Worker City, Company Town" by Dan Walkowitz. The Worker City is Troy, with the iron molders and the collar laundry workers. The company town was Cohoes. There is a very rich labor history here.

So, somehow I got involved, I don't know exactly how, in saying, well, I wanted to develop a labor studies center where we can bring all this stuff together and maybe we can locate it around here, so actually we did this Riverspark and actually did a study and said we wanted to develop a center in here where we'll become the focus, which ultimately may grow.

We put that together, and people told me about this Kate Mullany House, which I had never heard of, and so I went with a fellow by the name of Paul Bray who is a local

activist here in historic preservation to see Congressman Mike McNulty, who is our congressman here, saying, we want to get a national landmark status for this Kate Mullany House in Troy. I had learned about this 23-year-old Irish immigrant, about the Collar Laundry workers who went on strike in 1864 and became the first bona-fide all-women's union in the country. She became the first woman to be an officer of a national union. And we said her house ought to be declared a national historic landmark. Mike said, I don't know much about that. Let me introduce you to the chair of the Interior Committee, a guy by the name of Bruce Vento, a congressman from Minnesota. So we went over to Vento's office, and he said, it's a very complicated process, he says, but you know, as I think about it, the National Parks Service does these national theme studies. They did one on the Civil War and the Underground Railroad, the Constitution, on the maritime industry. He said, you know, we've never had a national theme study on American Labor History. Why don't I put a bill in to direct the National Park Service to do a national theme study on American Labor History to identify places of national historic value, so we could name some of them national historic sites, and we'll get the Mullany House. Terrific. So, he introduces the bill and I work with Pat Moynihan,

who was our senator then. He carried it into the Senate. This bill passes! It is signed by Bush I, becomes federal law, directs the National Park Service to conduct this national study on historic places of significance to labor. Manny Lujan was the secretary of the interior. He put three labor people on the National Parks Service advisory board to oversee this study. Stewart Kaufman was one. I was one, and a guy from the teamsters was the third.

I was a member of the National Parks Service Advisory Board overseeing this theme study, probably the best job I ever had. We met in Glacier. We met in Rocky Mountain National Park. Like I said, I'm probably the highest-ranking Democrat in the Bush Administration. So, for a couple of years, we did this theme study with all the resources of the National Park Service and identified places -- Union Square and places out in Montana, maybe Haymarket, I don't know where else, and the Mullany House. Well, that was a battle because, you know, who the hell is Kate Mullany, it's a lousy neighborhood, and you'd have to meet high standards to be nationally significant. It has to have building integrity. If she came back, she would recognize it. There were very high standards. Holly Robinson from Georgia who just kept saying; this is not nationally

significant. Well, we won the battle, and out of that national theme study, the Kate Mullany House became a national historic landmark. Also it said the National Parks Service would have to conduct a feasibility study to see if it should become part of the national parks system, because our vision here was to bring the national parks service in to interpret labor history in the area.

As a result, I got involved in the Mullany House, and then people said, why don't you buy it, and we did decide to incorporate it into the American Labor Studies Center, which we did on Sept. 11, 2002, the ALSC has a board. John Sweeney is the honorary chair. Tom Hobart was the chair. We got labor history professors and union people on the board. We used the ALSC to put the Web site together. Gary Duesberg, who as my education director at the state AFL-CIO had done a wonderful job, putting a Web site together to disseminate curriculum materials all around the country on teaching labor studies. I've been to the AFT and NYSUT conventions and National Council for Social Studies, with an exhibit. The AFT and NYSUT papers have run wonderful stories on Kate Mullany, and the ALSC.

On the Kate Mullany project. We wrote to Senator Bruno, who is the Republican Senate Majority leader, from Troy, and we got what we called a member item to buy the house. It's actually a duplex -- 350 and 352 Eighth Street in Troy. We only bought the right-hand side. Kate Mullany's mother built it, and they moved in in 1869. She used it as income-producing property.

We bought the 350 Eighth Street, with a grant of $75,000. I paid $55,000 it. I had $20,000 left, and I said, I'm on easy street. Well, $90,000 later, the money I raised from the NYSUT, AFT and others to renovate the site was absolutely a disaster. I mean, it was a disaster. So we had to put in all new HVAC, all new electrical, all new plumbing. Renovate the first floor, which now is ready for an exhibit on Kate Mullany and the Collar Laundry workers, and we're working with the Rensselaer County Historical Society to do that.

The second floor is the office of the American Labor Studies Center, so when I retired from the state AFL-CIO, I took all my labor history books and materials and moved them into the second floor office. I have a nice little office there and a little conference room.

The third floor is Kate Mullany's apartment. We haven't done anything. It's in really bad shape. But we're working with the National Parks Service, the state parks, and the local people. We're going to restore it to what it looked like when Kate Mullany lived there so people can visit. It's a big project. So, that part is all done, and we're just ready for that process to move along. Then people said, you're right on this corner as you go into Troy, on this major bridge, a major thoroughfare over the Collar City Bridge, the first block on your left is Eighth Street. There was this boarded-up Qwik Lube, and then the Kate Mullany House. They said why don't you buy that.

I went back to Bruno and I got $175,000. We bought the property for $150,000 and then I had $30,000 to demolish the Qwik Lube. I had a bid of $20,000. I said I'm in good shape here; I'll have some money left, so they had to do an asbestos study. The asbestos study came in -- the roof was hot. I had to spend $10,000 to get the roof off. So, the $30,000 we used to get rid of the roof and to demolish the Qwik Lube. If you go in there you'll see the lot is empty and that's where were going to build the Kate Mullany Park, honoring trade union women pioneers. The idea is to put a gazebo in there, carpenters said they would build that,

maybe some wrought-iron fences like they have in Troy. The electricians say they would do the electrical work, and the bricklayers said they would do some brickwork -- so we'll have this wonderful park honoring trade union women pioneers right next to the Mullany House.

That's a major project that we're involved in, so, with all of the problems with the budget in New York and Pataki and the debate with the legislature, I've got requests in for $150,000 more from Bruno and $100,000 from the Assembly. I'm really bumping it up to do all of this park development. Plus, the building itself has some serious physical problems -- outside, the walls crumbling. So, I'm working with the state historic preservation office to get additional funding. They did a study for me, an engineering study. The stairwell hasn't been done. The back of the building needs work. I'm gathering all of this money that I can, plus raising money contributions from the labor movement. They had my retirement dinner here in March, so all of the proceeds from that dinner went into the Labor Studies Center.

It's all program development. I'm the executive director, but unpaid. So, they've paid my expenses to go to a social studies conference or teacher conventions.

So, that project is going well I've been invited to Ireland because Paddy Healy, who comes to the AFT conventions, the president of the Teacher's Union in Ireland, said, come to our Congress. We have great interest in labor history as well, and we want to know what you're doing. So, over Easter time, I'll travel over to Tralee and I have a PowerPoint presentation that I'm working on for the TUI. And then he said would you also be willing to speak to members of the Irish Parliament Thursday night. They're interested. And I said, hey, I'd love to do that. So, one thing leads to another on that.

So, this is a terrific part. Roughly about 1,000 people a week, I haven't checked the figures recently, are visiting the Web site. They are all over the place. Most are teachers. But I do talk to people who use it and they are excited about the project.

Gary has retired as the state AFL-CIO education director. He's out in Plattsburgh, now, so it's a little more

difficult than me walking across the hall and saying, how do we update the Web site. It's a wonderful site, and teachers love it, and in this week's New York Teacher there is a great story. I'll show you that article. They always put little blurbs in there. Roger Glass from the AFT always puts a little thing in the AFT paper. So, I'm getting good plugs from there. And success, so far from the NEA financially, although I have been invited to the NEA New York convention. I have an exhibit I take and pass out my brochure, a web site facsimile and Emory boards.

DG: That's a good project. I tell people about the Web site all the time.

PC: Thank you.

DG: The one-stop shopping for your labor curriculum, and the immediately smile.

PC: Well, the mission is to get more people to know about it, so that's what I do. I spend a lot of time doing that, now. But we looked at the people around the country -- there are people from all around the world getting onto the Web site. You can tell because they break down how many are edu or org or wherever they're from.

DG: That's excellent.

PC: Yes. Well, Sue Schurman said, that would be my legacy, the labor studies center, but we have a lot of work we have to

do on that. We do child labor materials, obviously. We work on child labor -- wonderful curriculum materials on child labor. We put together the labor legacy project here a number of years ago with the New York State labor department, building trades, NYSUT, and the state AFL-CIO to develop a curriculum on child labor in New York. We did that, and it's two parts. What we did is to say, if you are a seventh or eighth grader and you had lived in this period in American history, how would your life be different. So, we picked periods in history and looked back and said if you lived in Colonial times, you may very well have been an indentured servant, so we had a labor historian write up the background of an indentured student -- a child who was an indentured servant with indentured contracts. I forget because I haven't looked at it in a while, but there are these different periods and then we brought teachers together to develop a lesson plan around that unit, and then we used money from the child labor fines, labor department child labor fines, to put the project together and to print this -- from "Forge to Fast Food" it's called. The education department agreed to mail copies out to every seventh and eighth grade social studies teacher in the state.

And then Steve Schecter's wife, worked on it Russell Sage, she's a social studies teacher, and has been doing workshops in the teacher's centers on how to use this curriculum. They didn't have a digital format, so we are trying to scan it in, and we've done most of that. That led, then, to some changes in child labor laws in New York in terms of how many hours' kids could work. That's how I got involved with consumer group and other groups on that. The AFT has some good materials on the child labor movement, too. So that's just a natural extension of what we're doing.

DG: It sounds like the Baltimore Industrial Heritage Museum, where they take children and go through the exhibit, and it's an Oyster Shucking Factory, so the kids start working in the oyster-shucking factory. It's all made out of cardboard and stuff, and then they go into the company store and find out how much they don't make.

PC: Yes. There's some great stuff like that. The idea of course is that once you finish with that, then you look at contemporary child labor and say here, you have an understanding of the history of child labor and now don't think that child labor has disappeared. To what extent has child labor been a problem in the United States, and, obviously the whole globalization issue with the

exploitation of kids -- Bangladesh or wherever. Kids love that stuff.

DG: Why don't we just cover a few other things. We've been at this for over two-and-a-half hours.

PC: Fine.

DG: OK. Just a few more of these questions and kind of like wrap-up stuff.

PC: OK.

DG: You were part of the AFT when the AFT went through a huge transformation with Futures One and Two. Do you want to comment on that?

PC: Well, we've had Futures One and Two. And during two, I think Herb Magdison was the chairman of it.

DG: How did the first future committee come about?

PC: Well, part of it, I think, was the challenge of the NEA on one side. The challenge of, tuition tax credits, and the challenges on public education, and, all of those things that went on. The growth of the AFT, the issue of whether or not you organize healthcare professionals and para-professionals -- and if you were mostly a teacher's organization, then it's not a problem. Your conventions are all teachers; your committees are all teachers. So, I think there became a realization that we'd outgrown the structure, and needed to take a fresh look at what that was

all about and where we wanted to go. And whether we wanted to organize in healthcare, and if we were going to have these different constituency groups, how could we enhance their voice in the AFT and meet their needs in a better way, at meetings and service programs and legislatively. So, there was a typical strategic planning process that you go through -- all the steps of a strategic planning process, and from that, we came up with the concept of better identification and service to the constituency.

First of all, that we would continue to organize in those constituencies, right now it's teachers, higher ed, para-professionals, state workers -- largely because of the influence of PEF and that whole story, and healthcare. So, those are the five areas. So, the organization had to change to reflect those things. A number of things came out of that. One, probably the most important was the establishment of what we call program policy councils, and so each sector has program and policy council. You still have the executive council, and you have a couple of nurses and a couple of higher ed people, and a couple of state vice presidents but it's hard, when you meet four times a year. So, it was a major investment on the part of the AFT to put together, in some cases, fairly large -- the K-12

program policy council has 40 members -- probably bigger than the executive council. It was fairly large. The nurses one might be smaller.

So that allowed each constituency group to have a forum, to have a meeting sometime during the year. To have a structure. To be staffed. And then prior, or during sometime during the AFT convention, they have meetings of their whole groups. So it provides an opportunity for those constituencies to develop their identity, to promote their own organizing strategies, to have the staff they need to support their needs and also to feel that they're not subservient to the K-12 teachers within the AFT. I think that's worked out, actually pretty well. Futures Two -- I think a lot of that came out of -- I could be wrong on this -- but I think a lot of that came out of the NEA/AFT -- what should the AFT role be -- the question of the AFL-CIO and the NEA. I think part of that came with the whole conversations with the NEA, which is ongoing now.

DG: And there's a Futures Three?

PC: There is discussion of a Futures Three. I think, periodically, strategic planning is not an event. It's an ongoing process, so, periodically, you have to step back and take a look. The state AFL-CIO has been going through

a couple of strategic planning processes. You know, the whole effort on the part of the AFL-CIO. New York State was the first new alliance program of a state AFL-CIO in the country, which meant a re-examination of bringing people all together for a comprehensive strategic planning program that involves all of the affiliates and ends up in a big convocation. In New York it resulted in some significant changes at the regional level. At the state level, we focused more clearly on political action, legislation, organizing, we've always had a good political action and legislative operation, but we've Colleen Gardner director of organizing, and helped define what the appropriate role of a state federation is in organizing for example, and to help create a climate of organizing. We don't do the organizing, but we do have to define that a role.

We've restructured the staff and the priorities at the state level to reflect the new alliance more focused on what our priorities ought to be. And then at the regional level, we created area labor federations. We had 32 central labor councils historic structures, some effective, some not so effective.

The problem is you only had one or two, maybe in New York City, Long Island and Buffalo, that had the wherewithal to have the resources to have a staff, to have an office, to have computers, to do the things they needed to do. The others were too small. In the capital district, there are 100,000 people and six or seven central labor councils, but each labor council individually by itself does not have the resources, the staff or the wherewithal to model an effective program given the new alliance focus on legislation, political action organizing and mobilization. It was a long tough battle, a lot of hand-holding, pushing, shoving, cajoling -- two steps forward one step back -- but eventually, we created a number of area labor federations, and these area labor federations are comprised of, in most cases, five or six central labor councils.

So you have, by example, in this area, you have the Capital District Area Labor Federation. I think five or six separate labor councils. And what we did is move the per capita structure, so the per capita now goes from local unions, not to the central labor councils but to the area labor federation, and it's 20 cents for everybody. Some CLCs had five cents, some had 15 cents, some had 10 cents, whatever, and none of them had enough money -- plus, they

were spending the money on beer and pizza at their meetings, or giving it to the local girl's club or whatever -- they weren't doing these four priorities.

We brought in major leadership. We negotiated with the major political leaders in the state -- the Tom Hobarts and the Danny Donahues and the others, to come up with executive boards and presidents of all of these area labor federations, and work with them to hire very good staff people. They all have an executive director, some have secretaries, some even have a second staff person, and all of the money goes there, and they are in charge of the legislation, political action, organization, and mobilization within these areas.

Central labor councils submit a program budget, so you want to do an education program, or you want to do something, whatever -- you submit your budget to the area labor fed. Now, those labor council presidents are also on the boards. I think it's worked out quite well. There are growing pains, and there are a couple of labor council presidents who didn't want to have anything to do with it, and wanted to quit, or whatever. But there is still some tension, so our more recent -- with Colleen and myself and others --

strategic planning, we spent a lot of time over the past year trying to clarify the appropriate role for the AFL-CIO, the state federations, the area labor federation, and the central labor councils. What is it we do? What is it we don't do? So, for example, if they go out and endorse a candidate, we will publish the fliers for them. We'll do all that kind of support.

The biggest tensions are between the central labor councils and the area labor federations because central labor councils want to, do what they want. But the degree to which you do that, you're diminishing the effect on this and a more centralized powerful operation, and so some are more effective than others. Obviously we have problems in Long Island. I think they've been straightened out, but that's an area of labor federation by itself, and New York City, and the Buffalo area, they had a problem because of the prominence of the Buffalo Central Labor Council and bull in the China shop kind of thing, so you have to work through some of those things to make sure that the other labor councils feel like they're part of the team, so those are all of the issues that we're working through now. But we have guidelines -- we provide training for them. We provide some subsidies in some cases. The idea was that

the new alliance would bring all kinds of new money into the state fed -- that hasn't happened. We end up subsidizing the ALFs.

The state AFL-CIO, has remained a little over 2 million members, and our budgets are going up because we raise per capita, but while the auto workers have gone down, the teachers have gone up, SEIU has gone up, so our membership base, actually, in New York State, grew, both in percentage and in numbers the last couple of years, which is pretty remarkable -- largely because of the public sector, the service sector, because the building trades seem to be holding their own, especially in the big urban areas, but the autoworkers and the manufacturing units are getting killed, like they are everywhere else, obviously.

DG: Yeah, Michigan's in a funk right now. That's a good segue way again -- where do you see the labor movement today as well as tomorrow?

PC: I wish I had a crystal ball. I think you have to break it into two parts, and one is the labor movement generally and then sectors within the labor movement. And if you look at sectors within the labor movement, I think the public sector is being challenged in a variety of ways, and places where they take away bargaining laws, like in Missouri and

Indiana. I think that you're going to see a strengthening of the public sector in most places. Hopefully, the pendulum politically is beginning to swing back after all these problems we're seeing with the administration in Washington, and with a number of the state administrations.

I expect we'll have a Democratic governor in New York, probably have one in Massachusetts, hopefully in Maryland, and we'll hang on to Michigan and Pennsylvania and places like that, which I think will be good for the entire labor movement. Certainly it will be good for the public sector, and to the service sector, which depends more on state governance. I think the industrial unions are still in decline for a period of time. The attempts to merge them would have been great -- but it's a problem. They've put the machinists, the autoworkers, the steel workers together but failed. You're going to see some consolidation, I think, of the various unions. There are going to be fewer unions, and smaller ones going to CWA and elsewhere, which I think will be a trend that will continue and should continue -- and gives them more capacity and resources.

It's kind of interesting to look at the state level, because the interesting thing is that people don't look at

the regional structure of the labor movement. Everybody primarily focuses on the local and its organizing and collective bargaining and its relationship with the employer -- a collective bargaining relationship. Or they will look at national unions and what they do in Washington. It's very interesting to look at the intermediate structure of the labor movement, because it's so varied. So, and as form follows functions -- at the industrial union side, they have strong locals and they have strong nationals, but they generally have weak, intermediate structures, so the UAW regions, the steelworkers districts, the various other district councils that you have and so on. They perform a function of really providing people to get together, but they are not in most cases political entities in themselves. The teamsters might be different here, so you have small staffs and they function primarily to support the locals or to work at the federal level because very little of what effects private sector unions is dealt with at the state level. There is no need for private sector unions to have a strong, state organization, so they don't in most cases. In some places, you have, the autoworkers have two districts in New York -- 9 and 9A. District four, the steelworkers, is a number of

states. So they vary, dramatically, these regional structures of the private sector union.

The public sector unions almost invariably have a very strong state organization, and the reason is that they are governed by state law; they're right to organize and bargain collectively. Their pensions are generally determined by state law. Funding mechanisms for the services they provide are done at the state legislature. A whole variety of other issues, healthcare, are all state issues. So the teacher's union, and the AFSCME unions, and all of those groups have very strong state organizations, which, in New York, has really blossomed into a huge political power. They met great success legislatively, great success politically, and then they've transformed themselves into great service programs as well, just by the nature of the fact that they serve individual members. New York State United Teachers services individual members, whereas most regional organizations wouldn't have that kind of structure. So I think that's kind of interesting. I think you'll see because the decisions made at the state level, and you have much more opportunity to hire your bosses or influence politics at the state level -- I think public sector unions, where you have collective bargaining,

will increase and hold on to their influence. Where they don't depends on the politics where in some places they'll increase their influence and in some places not -- places like New Mexico -- you get a new governor there and they're going to do better in those places.

Nationally, one can only hope that what we see as this self destruction, that I don't think a lot of people could have predicted, both in terms of the administration and in both houses of congress, that one can only hope, to maybe close the gap significantly or to take over the House or Senate. If you do that, you can have subpoena power, you can do all kinds of things. And I'm hopeful that that will happen and that we will elect a Democrat president in 2008. Singular success -- one of the great successes of the labor movement over the last number of years has been the increase in the quality of its political effectiveness. You know, Steve Rosenthal, what the AFL-CIO has done, and what the affiliates have done -- very, very effective politically. The problem is, density, we did not have enough members to elect Kerry and to carry Ohio and Florida. I do think you'll see more effective organizing, but that's partly because of the political climate. But, the AFL-CIO is working very hard to develop much more effective and more

targeted political operations in Ohio, in Florida, in places where you don't need to win every state -- you don't need to win Wyoming. We don't need to win Utah. We need to win a majority of the Electoral College. Those are the states that are the new alliance states. Those are the states the AFL-CIO is focusing on and others are focusing on to increase and enhance the power of the labor movement. So, I'm encouraged by that. I'm very discouraged by Change To Win. I think it was a disaster to the labor movement. I think they left for all the wrong reasons, whether they will eventually come back or whether the AFL-CIO --

END OF PAUL COLE INTERVIEW PART TWO

PC: -- will be re-united. We'll see. I just don't know what is going to happen. The point is while this is a disaster at the national level; it has virtually no impact at the state or local level, because of the unity charters. The disaffiliation of Change to Win on the national level has had virtually no impact on New York whatsoever. All of the very bright, powerful political leaders you have in this state, and all of the diversity we have in this state - I keep remarking to Denis Hughes, that it is remarkable that the unity and the stability is as great as it is in New York State. So all of the groups that are left are still actively participating in the state fed -- on our board, on

our programs, and so on. I think part of it has to do with our philosophy of leadership, and that is how do you define the role of the state federation and its officers? Some states, the state federation president think they are the King of the Labor Movement. They're the God and they're the boss and they're the dictator of the labor movement and whatever they say goes.

We have a very different philosophy in New York. We know that we borrow our power from our affiliates. Our goal is to bring affiliates together, to provide leadership in a way that we're able to tap the resources of our affiliates and mobilize them to get things done. A classic example of that, on the public sector side, was the cost of living increase for our public employee pensions. For a long time, each public employee union went in and said, well, this is what I want in terms of a COLA or I want this or I want that, or I want this batch of reforms and so on. And they finally said, with Denis at leadership and Art Wilcox, bring all the people together into the public sector and say, look -- if we have one bill, if we have one program, and we all get behind it and the state fed provides the leadership and you provide us the resources to mount a PR campaign and you provide us the political organization so

that we're all speaking with the same voice, and we'll all bring our members together in Albany on the same day for the same rally -- and it's the state AFL-CIO rally -- we might be able to get something done. Well, we did that. That took leadership, that took coordination, on the part of the state AFL-CIO -- but that wouldn't have happened unless there was a willingness on the part of major unions -- NYSUT, CSEA, and others -- to kind of subserve themselves within the state federation umbrella and not say -- we're going to be in the lead here. We're going to work within the state federation. We're going to compromise and we're going to get this done. And that happened. We had a major rally. We got a permanent cost of living increase. Now what happens? We don't send out our newsletter claiming that we get all the credit -- the NYSUT newspaper, the CSEA newspaper, in all the headlines -- NYSUT wins COLA, CSEA wins COLA -- and that's fine. They get the credit. They're the ones that deal with their members. And everybody knows what the process was but every union newspaper, of course, claims victory for every major thing that there was, and that's fine. So, we understand that that's where the power is, and we have to meet the needs of those political people who vote for us, keep us in power -- and we're not dictating to them telling them what to do.

Our job is very different of trying to facilitate a common agenda and then promote it. We've done it in terms of defeating governor budget proposals, defeating the constitution convention in New York. We have a $5 million budget in the New Your State AFL-CIO. NYSUT has $100-and-some-odd million-dollar budget. You know, we're not able to generate those resources, but if we say there is a constitutional convention proposed and that has the danger of taking away the constitutional guarantee that you can't mess with public employee pensions, you need to do something. So, what we do is with Suzy Ballantyne, our political director, we're working with experts to pull all the political directors together, put a plan together and bring in Mike Sheehan from Washington. I don't know if you know him, but he's really an expert on putting these things together. Put together a plan that's got an organizing plan, it's got the PR campaign, it's got an advertising campaign -- NYSUT throws in a couple hundred thousand. CSEA throws in whatever they have to throw in -- they throw in to one pot, under Suzy's direction, under Denis' overall direction, working with the political directors. And we do television spots, radio spots, newspaper -- we could not do it by ourselves or they couldn't do it. Well, they still have their own campaigns and their own issues, PEF's

campaign on privatization and so on and so forth, but the issues that effect everybody -- we're able to do that. If its endorsements, it's the Spitzer race or Hillary's race and so on. We do the same thing. People -- we are big and powerful unions. We're a very powerful political directive. Alan Lubin, one of the most powerful political people in the state, NYSUT's political guy. Well, he works with Suzy. He works with the others, and in a way that strengthens the entire labor movement. So, NYSUT being the biggest and the most powerful and the wealthiest can see now its decision to work with and through the AFL-CIO has immeasurably strengthened the state federation in the state but also it strengthened their own union by making sure that we can deliver things they need for their members. That's pretty unique, and in a place like New York -- the nature of the labor movement here, one would think that they we would see increasing warfare all the time, and we just have not had it, and I think a lot of that credit goes to the quality of the people like Denis Hughes and the Tom Hobarts and of Danny Donahue and other leaders who have understood how a system should work. It's not true in every state, and it's certainly not true nationally. So, I'm a cautious activist.

DG: I think that's a good place to stop. That's good.

[break in tape]

DG: Why don't we continue to talk about the democracy committee of the AFT.

PC: I was telling folks, I think it's one of the greatest untold stories of the labor movement, both the AFT and the AFL-CIO, and that starts with a fundamental principle that if you start with the concept of the dignity and worth of every human being, and universal declaration of human rights and how to guarantee those -- the labor movement in this country, the AFL-CIO historically and the AFT have said that those rights are best protected in free and democratic societies. And in order to have free and Democratic societies, it's more than just elections, as we are just seeing now. You have to have free and Democratic institutions that have to be part of those societies, and key among those institutions is a free and Democratic trade union movement -- one that's free of government interference, that's unlike the old Communist unions, that's not part of the government structure and takes its orders from the commissaries but truly represents the workers.

The AFT and the AFL-CIO have historically had a long commitment to promoting free and Democratic trade unions

around the world. Going back even to World War Two, when Irving Brown was the AFL-CIO representative in Europe, went in to make sure that this battle after the end of World War Two between the free trade unions and the communist unions over who would control the labor union in those countries, and therefore maybe even the destiny of those countries, worked very hard to make sure that the unions in France and Germany and elsewhere were free and Democratic unions, were in the Communist efforts were to try and start unions, and, for example, to undermine the Marshall Plan. So, that the economies would not grow and be successful. It's a wonderful story and one that people don't know about, it's that the reason why Europe was so successful in recovering from World War Two was because they were flourishing democracies and economies, but they would not have been so without strong and free and Democratic trade union movements, with the American labor movement to help and work on.

The whole story of Solidarnosc -- Solidarnosc would not have been successful without the support of the AFL-CIO and the AFT. They provided simple things, like copy machines and paper and other kinds of things so that the Solidarnosc movement would have the institutional wherewithal to be

successful and to be stable and to work with them. Plus, in the world forum, promoting the rights of those workers and rejecting recognition of any union that was from the Soviet Union and China and elsewhere and really were working with the dissidents who wanted to be leaders of free trade union movements. The success of Solidarnosc was a result of support of the American labor movement.

The freedom in South Africa, the ending of Apartheid in very large part you could argue, was because of the role of free trade unions there which were supported by the American Labor Movement.

I, myself, was an observer, along with some other AFT people in Chile when they had the Plebiscite, what they call the NO-vote, when the dictator wanted to continue in office and the vote was to say no, that he couldn't continue in office. We were invited down by the Chilean Teacher's Union to observe that election. A number of us went down there for that to promote freedom and democracy in Chile by having made sure that the teacher's union, among other labor unions, were free and Democratic so they could help stabilize the democracy in that country.

After the education international conference in Thailand, I was asked by the International Affairs department to go up and meet with Burmese refugees on the Burmese border on upper Thailand, members of the Karin, who were being slaughtered and being murdered in Burma, by the dictatorship there, and they had set up a camp, a refugee camp, and I went in with Helen Toth of AFT international department and visited their campsite, which is really mud huts on the side of a hill, and spoke probably to 2 or 300 teachers who had set up a school system there to talk about how important their work was and how we could support the teacher's union, in this refugee camp, and how important it was to educate their children about democracy and how we're working someday to make sure the military dictatorship in Burma falls and these people will be able to go back to Burma and they will be educated and prepared to assume leadership roles in their political system and in their economy. It's very rewarding. It's very frustrating on the one sense because they're still there and its not successful, yet. But to have that opportunity.

I had the opportunity to travel to Tanzania and work with the Tanzanian Teacher's Union to train teachers in three or four locations -- there were two of us -- I did the

Southern Part of Tanzania over the period of two weeks -- to do training sessions for teachers in Tanzania and how to teach their students about democracy, because Tanzania is moving toward a pluralistic, democratic society, but the teachers have not had a lot of experience about how they could do that, and so giving them strategies of how to engage students in democratic decision-making activities in the classroom, and to train a cadre of teachers, or to train trainers to go back to other communities to train other teachers.

More recently, coming back from Beirut and Lebanon of all places, where we met with the private teacher's union and the public teacher's union, on the kind of training that they need to be more effective and to be more democratic unions, and also, again, if they are one institution in a place like Lebanon that are democratic and themselves, and want to promote democracy within Lebanon to strengthen them institutionally and to help them become more effective and in being a good union, but also in being more of a voice in providing education reform, its going to help the democratization process in a place like Lebanon.

So, there are all these activities and serving on the AFT Democracy Committee where we're working with teachers from the Republic of Georgia or from Bosnia or in other places to do what we can, and now even in Iraq, to work with teachers, mostly meeting with them outside of Iraq because of the dangers there but if Iraq is going, despite all of our problems with the war and how the war started and all of the follies of this administration, the fact is that if there's going to be any chance for democracy in Iraq, they're going to have to have free and democratic institutions and that means free and democratic labor movement and key among them, because of who they are, teacher's unions. So, work with the Iraqi teachers on building an effective and free and Democratic teacher's union, so there is some hope there.

The program we did in Beirut, we hopefully will invite other Arab and Palestinian people to come in to see. Maybe we can build some bridges there as part of an overall effort to reach out and the reception we had over there was pretty amazing, because when you meet with people like that, you understand that they really do have a desire for democracy, especially teachers, and they have a desire to have an effective and democratic government, but also an

effective and democratic union, so hopefully from that effort, others will come in and look at the program and maybe we'll move in some others.

Long-range plans? I don't think its pie in the sky. It's very hard work and tough work, but it's something that has to be done.

Herb Magidson for years, the AFT vice president, has led the democracy committee and I can never heap enough praise on him and for the work he's done, initially it was by the vision of Al Shanker, and his commitment to human rights and democracy. You know, people view him as this tough and militant trade union leader, which he was, and as an education reformer, which he also was. He transformed from what people saw as a militant trade union leader to really the leading educational statesman in the country. People recognize that because of his New York Times column and the other work he did, but less known about Al is his really strong commitment to our freedom and democracy around the world and his support for free and democratic trade unions, and was at the forefront of the AFT effort and also the AFL-CIO effort. That resulted in Al Shanker believing that leaders of the AFT ought to have every opportunity they

come to travel internationally, to begin to absorb some of these ideas and lessons. So, I, along with other AFT vice presidents, have done extensive international travel.

Early on, there was a program at the Labor Desk -- the United States Labor Desk -- where they sent groups of young trade union leaders to Europe and I went on three of these, first as a participant and second as a leadership role, where they would take a dozen trade union leaders and send us to Europe. We would go to France and Belgium and maybe Germany and the UK and meet with the labor movements there, meet with each of the political parties there, and try to understand, how they were organized, what they were doing, and if you take all of those experiences, you can better understand what their views are, what their traditions and ideologies of European Labor Movement versus the American Labor Movement -- it can only help you better understand what your movement could be, and should be, and could not be. I had an interview with a reporter once, and I don't know how she got my name from a French newspaper, about a week ago, she wanted to talk about the American Labor Movement and she said she wants to call back, because there is this fundamental difference in the European trade union and here. You just went through a huge general strike, in

France -- of unions and others -- and that's just not the tradition of the United States, so it's important to kind of explore that. Our traditions are rugged individualism and our capitalistic system and the nature of the movement here and there's never been a class culture developed in this country. Well, you have class culture there. Class culture means, probably to oversimplify, you're in a role and you're probably going to be there in the role -- you need your class to do what it can to improve the class. Here, again, to oversimplify, people think, well, this is transitionary. I'm going to move up. So, they don't view themselves as a class, they see this rugged individualism. So, there are very fundamental differences, but to understand those, and to view the roles of those it can only help in not only understanding our own labor movement and labor movements from around the world, but it comes back to this idea of education and how education can be improved and what will teaching about labor movements, because when you're talking about the American Labor Studies Center, one of our goals, eventually, is to help students in, the ninth and tenth grade, with global studies, to understand labor movements elsewhere. I've already got a box of material from the Canadian Labor Congress. If they want, we'll be able to do the same thing

with Ireland. But it's important for kids to understand these issues. If they look at a contemporary world, and they say, you've got an election here and here and that means a democracy, without really understanding that democratic institution building is important and that unions are important in promoting democracy and protecting human rights around the world.

End - AFT Oral History Project - Paul Cole