AFT Oral History Project

Louise Sundin

Q: This is Dan Golodner, Wayne State University, AFT Archivist at the Walter P. Reuther Library, with Louise Sundin, April 30, 2007, conducting an AFT oral history project. Thank you for participating in this Louise.

A: Well thank you for your interest. I think it's important that the AFT and Wayne State both have some memories that we can conjure up, to instruct maybe, or at least inform the next generations of leaders.

Q: That's what we're looking for. Why don't we just get started, from where you were born and a bit about your family.

A: I was born in Ortonville, Minnesota, and Ortonville, Minnesota is on the South Dakota border. It was my mom's home, and my mother and father were teachers. They were teachers in Willmar, Minnesota at the time, and my mom went home to have me during summer break, summer vacation. Some vacation. And so I was born out there, though I'd never lived out there. We were living in Minneapolis at the

time, because they had moved from Willmar to Minneapolis so that my dad could teach in Minneapolis. At that time, it was a better pension, because Minneapolis had a separate pension fund, and it was better salaries than out in greater Minnesota. So he was trying to move up in order to support his family.

My mom decided that she was going to quit teaching while they had to raise their children. My brother John came along four years later, and so she was a stay at home mom, raising us. That meant my dad, on a teacher's salary of about $1,200 a year at that time, had to moonlight a lot. During the calendar year, he had, at various times, three or four full-time jobs. He would teach a course all day long, and then he would go over to a large machine shop, where he was a tool grinder, and do the second shift, which would go from like 3:30 to 11:30 at night. Then in the summer, when he wasn't teaching, during the day he was a Brinks armored car driver.

One of the stories, kind of our family stories, is that we'd always take at least a couple week breaks during the summer and go on a family trip in the car. One time we went to Detroit, which was the headquarters of Brinks Armored Car Service, and Brinks in Detroit was unionized. The Brinks drivers were unionized, and so my dad stopped

there and talked to some of the people there, and he had asked questions about their being unionized. By the time we got back from vacation, that message had gone to the Minneapolis office, which was not union, and my dad was no longer a Brinks driver. I still have his gun. When he first came to Minneapolis, he was also a cab driver, and so he just did a lot of things so that my mom could stay home and raise us.

My brother and I both figure skated. Actually my dad figure skated for a while. My dad was also President of the Minneapolis Figure Skating Club, so we did a lot of family activities together. I remember the streetcars fondly and would love to see those come back.

The reality of a teacher's salary is not being enough to live on was real for me from the very beginning. The other thing is that, I think it was about six years after my dad began teaching in Minneapolis, they had a shortage of money. It was at the end of the year, and the school board simply said well, teachers sorry, we don't have enough money to pay you, and so we're going to cut you twenty-five percent. Well when you have that small a salary in the first place, and then you cut it to twenty-five percent -- and by that time they were looking to buy a house and all kinds of other things -- it's pretty

devastating. So I always kind of say I was radicalized through genetics, (laughs) because I also had a Swedish grandfather, who was an activist in the railroad engineers up in Duluth, Minnesota. He was with DM&IR, a railroad; Duluth, Messabe and Iron Range Railroad, and so he was an engineer on a train that went up to the iron mines and then took the ore back down to the docks in Duluth, and of course all through the Great Lakes. He was a Grievance Chair, and so there again, I think I came by my union work honestly. He instilled that in his son, that was my dad, and my dad always instilled in us that unionization was the way to help workers succeed. And also I got from him, the basic social justice passion.

My mom and dad also were, I suppose you could say victims, of the rules or the unwritten rules or the expectations of teachers in those days, and that was that men were paid more than women and high school were paid more than elementary, although both my folks were high school teachers, and that women were expected to be single. If you were married, they assumed that you would immediately get pregnant, and then you got fired. So when my mom and dad were in Willmar, Minnesota, they decided that they wanted to get married, so they went to South Dakota, to an Indian reservation, the Sisseton Indian

Reservation, to get married, so that it wouldn't be a record in the Minnesota records. That only lasted, of course until she got pregnant with me, then it became pretty obvious. I just thought that was kind of interesting, that those rules were -- they tried to get around those rules that we of course did away with many years later, because of the union.

In the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, we had several cases early on, where women had been fired because they had become pregnant. It was one of the many legal cases that we won on behalf of teachers, and many women got their old seniority dates back because of our action.

Q: I assume your father was part of the MFT?

A: He was. At that time, he was in a junior high school and he taught 9th grade civics. The junior high was the hotbed of the federation, although Local 59 was chartered by the AFT April 2, 1919, and Local 59 of course, is a pretty prestigious number in the AFT, because the locals were chartered sequentially. I think that Local 28 in St. Paul and Local 59 in Minneapolis, are probably the two oldest -- or at least I heard this one time, I'm not sure it's true or not, but the two oldest locals that continuously paid their dues all those years. Others, for various reasons, you know had a fit about something or stopped paying their

dues for a short period of time or whatever. So out here on the prairie, it always took us a long time to get the message about various things, so I guess we just kept paying our dues. (laughter) Local 59 has a really rich history, and so when he joined, immediately upon becoming a member of the Minneapolis Public School staff, he was in good company in those junior high schools.

When I started teaching, I also was in a junior high school. I taught 9th grade English my whole career. English because of my mom, because she was a high school English teacher, and I think the 9th grade because of my dad. When I got into that junior high, the very first day, of course the guys who were the shop teachers, all cornered me and said, "Well, you have to be a union member. Everybody in this school is a union member." And I said, "Well actually, I already am." Because I had joined as a student teacher. So I one upped them, and I never let them forget that. They were a pretty powerful bunch of guys, and they were great union supporters. We had great times.

Q: What was the environment at the school at the time; working conditions?

A: The working conditions, when I came in, in '67, I started teaching, were good because it was growing. The population was still growing. There were 66,000 kids in Minneapolis

public schools when I started teaching. There are now 33,000, exactly half that. But of course as we got into the late 60s, in '68, '69, '70, the students were all riled up of course, because of the social conditions and the protests. I think it was very shortly -- it must have been about two or three years after I had been at Ramsey Junior High, there was a riot, a student riot. So the first thing that I thought of is that I looked out of my window, and on the sidewalk there was a double column of Minneapolis Police in riot gear, with helmets and nightsticks, in formation, ready to head not into our building but over across the football field to the high school, because at the high school, there was a young man whose father I had worked with a lot on desegregation, purport plans and human relations activities. His son had backed his car up to the school parking lot door and opened the trunk, and it was full of baseball bats. And so he was handing out the baseball bats, and there was also a big fight out in the street, in the middle of the street, which was a busy street. So the police went over there with dogs and riot gear. I remember so clearly, looking out the window and seeing this double column of police officers thinking, "well now what do I do," because they didn't exactly cover this in my education classes at the university. So I took

my teacher's desk and I shoved it over in front of the classroom door, so nobody could get in. Afterwards, my colleagues kidded me a lot, because they said, "Well you darn fool, you probably would have liked an escape route." But I think what I did was instinctively correct, because that's how they train teachers now, is to barricade yourselves in and turn the lights out. It's just unfortunate that that was kind of a precursor of what a lot of teachers do have to be trained in now. It was a pretty exciting welcome to the teaching profession.

Q: Yeah. (laughs)

A: The other thing is, on April 12, 1970, we went on strike. So I was still a probationary teacher, hadn't passed probation yet, but it was a strike that had been brewing for quite a while, and it was a strike that bound to happen. Everybody who went on strike knew that we were going to lose our jobs, but jobs were plentiful then. They were hiring teachers, many teachers ever year, because of the growth in the population. At our middle school, or our at that time junior high school, it wouldn't be unusual to hire twenty new teachers a year.

Q: Really?

A: In fact, our population was so big at that junior high school, that we had some classes over in the high school,

and the kids would go through a heating tunnel. Underneath the football field, there was a tunnel, because it was the same heating plant, and so the kids just thought that was the best thing in the world, is to go through that tunnel, to go over to the high school to have classes. Anyway, we went on strike in April, in 1970. It was the third teacher's strike in Minneapolis Federation of Teachers history. The first two my dad had been in.

Q: So he was with the '48 strike?

A: He was with the '48 and the '51. In fact, in one of those strikes that he was in, it was in the middle of winter, and it was very cold. It was like you know, 35 below zero. So he went down to the Minneapolis War Surplus Store and he bought a complete flight suit, where the Air Force had been in the Aleutians, including the boots and the hat and the whole thing, so that he could be out on the sidewalk and do picket duty. So he did double picket duty for particularly the women, who just got too cold or didn't want to or whatever. I still have that flight suit somewhere. He had his picture taken in that flight suit, that's a prized picture of mine. He also, on those early strikes, I can remember at least on one occasion -- I was pretty small. I don't think I was very much higher than the table, but he took me down to the Minneapolis Labor Center -- it was

called the Labor Temple at that time, which is gone now -- to work on mailings and make signs and things like that. So he introduced me to that activity pretty early in my life. So he was in the first two.

Actually, Local 28 in St. Paul was the very first teacher's strike in the nation, and we weren't very far behind in ours. Theirs was in '46, ours was in '48. So it was at that time of course, when there were quite a few men teachers, who were coming back from World War II. They got their teaching degree and license on the GI Bill, and they were coming into education and you know, feeling that they were pretty powerful and wanted more power and didn't like the school board telling them that, oops, we don't have any money.

Q: Right.

A: So it was an activist time, and then in 1970, when we went out on strike, my mom was also on strike. The school that she was at was a high school; it was the high school that I graduated from. She waited until my brother and I graduated from that school and then she went back to teaching, and she was head of the English Department. What I remember so clearly, she'd come home and she'd laugh because all of the coaches at that school were all members of the MEA, the Minneapolis Education Association. We had

just won bargaining rights at that time, and the MEA still had a presence, and so she just laughed about how all of six of those "big galoots" she called them, would all go to one of their houses; there was one of them who lived really close to school, and they'd all climb in one car and all cross the picket line, all in one car, all together. And she said, "I was the only one out on the picket line, so I don't know who they were afraid of." I got really energized by that strike. I had my little kit bag packed and was actually hoping I'd get arrested. You know, I was young enough to think that that would be kind of a badge of honor. I never did, although I spent a lot of time standing in the driveway, stopping Teamster trucks. We stopped a lot of trucks from delivering, and we had some of the folks at Ramsey Junior High crossing the picket line. We took pictures of them and we did all those things. I remember somebody threw a pair of shoes at somebody, and I don't remember any more of that story. I'm going to have to ask somebody, because that pair of shoes was a big deal. They made me park my car a block away from school, because at that time I was driving a used El Dorado, and they figured that was not a great symbol for teachers claiming poverty, being on strike. So I always parked it a ways away.

I also did extra picket duty. I went to elementary schools and did picket duty in the neighborhood, where they didn't have enough picketers. So I did double and triple picket duty. I always say I was in the best shape of my life, because I just walked all the time. We had a strike headquarters on our end of town, at a church right across the street from our school, St. John's Church. They opened their lower level to us, and that's where we made coffee and had donuts, and we all gathered. So we were always appreciative of that neighborhood church being sympathetic, and it kind of was an early sign that we now have the inner-faith coalitions with labor, and how important it is to have the faith community on your side. We have actually today, some of our brothers and sisters in some of the other unions, actually use the faith community a lot better than we do, because I think we went way too far over in education, over to the side that said you know, you can't even say the word faith or you're going to be unfair to somebody. So the hotel/restaurant workers and SEIU and folks like that, do a lot better job of using the faith community. Although I do go, on Labor Day, to speak in pulpits, through the Labor Faith collaboration.

Q: So the strike was victorious?

A: The strike was victorious. I think there was a question. They tried to keep the schools open the first couple of days, but that was hopeless. As the strike went on, of course the politics got involved, and it finally, I think became obvious to the city leaders and also the community leaders who were on that school board at that time, that they had to do something about the issues that we were bringing to the table. Those were very different school boards back then. Those were school boards of people who were high in the community, leaders in the community. One was Reverend Price, who was the leader of the Lutheran church. There was one who was a labor leader, but there was another one who was a big business guy in town. So they weren't the kind of parent activists, you know coming up through the ranks of parent volunteerism that we have now. They were very different, and of course they were all pretty conservative. So we didn't have a lot of friends on that board, we only had one. But finally, they decided that they would meet down at the Minneapolis Club, which is the "in" club for business types, downtown. They were going to bring the negotiating team down and they were going to meet with the board at that time. And it almost fell apart right from the get go, because one of the strong leaders in the union was Colleen Schempton, an elementary

teacher who was, I think elementary vice president at that time. When they went to the Minneapolis Club, she was told that women can't come in the front door; women have to come in the side door. (laughs) Well, you can imagine that Colleen, being the kind of person she is and still is, and the kind of leader, that almost killed it right there, but they finally did make concessions.

Colleen played a very strong role also, in that the staff and the board's representatives, brought a tentative agreement to the negotiating team, and it did not bring anything to address the main issue that the elementary teachers were concerned about, and that was Elementary Prep time. The elementary teachers at that time, did not have comparable prep time to high school teachers, because secondary teachers had a full, you know 55 minutes of prep, elementary teachers did not. So that was probably the main issue that the majority of elementary teachers were out on the sidewalk and carrying that sign, "Elementary Prep Time." Well that first settlement offer didn't include anything to do with Elementary Prep time. So there again, Colleen played an incredibly important role in that she had a fit and said she wasn't going to approve anything that didn't include Elementary Prep time, that's why she was on the street. So I think they went back and revamped it, but

of course that was an incredibly important concept. It was way ahead of its time, that elementary teachers would have comparable prep time. And so what it did also, is that it increased the numbers of teachers, because that meant that the school district had to hire Elementary Prep specialists, who would take over the kiddies while the elementary teachers were preparing.

So we gained this whole new echelon, or new group of professionals, who at various times are either Phy Ed, art, music, science, and now they've added technology, and those are teachers that are considered prep providers. They go from class to class or the teachers bring the classes to them, and they're the ones that provide the preparation time in the class schedule, so that the teachers can have prep time. So it also increased our ranks. There was substantial salary increase and some other goodies in that settlement, but it was a real -- it was a time that really kind of defined what I wanted to do in my career, and that was get involved in the union.

Q: So this really sparked you then.

A: It did.

Q: It cast a spark.

A: It did.

Q: You saw that you could do more with the union than just basic bread and butter.

A: Absolutely. And another thing that people always kidded me about too, is that at my junior high school, the Phy Ed teacher and I had the thickest files of anybody on the staff. God bless him, the principal at that time, Russ Brackett, was not too tolerant of those of us that didn't follow rules and regulations, and didn't have our shades all even, and weren't always in the right place at the right time and weren't standing by our doors during passing time. Sometimes, which I regret now, I was down smoking and things like that. So there were -- and the Phy Ed teacher had been there for years ahead of me, so I caught up really fast, in having these memos in my file. So I decided then too, that this was something that I needed to be involved in the union, because these files were just silly. It was all silliness. It had nothing to do with being a professional and nothing to do with your teaching, and nothing to do with whether the kids were learning or not. It was all your paper on the floor and shades at the right half mast.

Q: Right.

A: So I also led, I think every protest at that school that there ever was of course; got teachers organized around

issues. The next principal we had was the world's nicest man. He couldn't say no to anybody, so if a teacher went to him and asked him for money for something and he didn't have it in the budget, he'd take it out of his own pocket and give it to them. But he wasn't a very effective administrator, and so I led the big march down to the school board meeting and made the speech that you know, they had to get us a principal that was effective. I think some people who loved him never forgave me for that, but it was that kind of activism also, that spurned me on, that you can organize people and get them behind an idea or an issue and they'd follow, and you could actually do something about it.

Well, the very first time that I was going to get involved, was that one of my colleagues, Gary Rogers, said, "Well there's an opening here for the Re-licensure Committee. Why don't you run for the Re-licensure Committee?" Well I was naïve enough at that time, to think that there was really an opening, but I didn't realize at that time, that there was an incumbent and everybody would vote for the incumbent and you know, forget it. (laughs) So I didn't win. So my very first shot out the bag, which was I think

five years into my career, I didn't win, but that kind of inspired me to go on.

This is a leap forward, but I'll tell you while I think of it. The only other one I ever lost, until the end, was somebody at the AFT also called me and asked me to run for the National Board, you know for the National Board, Certification Board. I did that twice and I got defeated twice. Finally the third time, I started asking a few questions, and they said, "Well, you're running in the same category as Al." And I said, "Well, why didn't you guys tell me this? I wouldn't have felt so bad." Well we just needed a name. Well, thank you. (laughter) So anyway, I digress.

Well, one more thing about teaching at Ramsey Junior High, is that it became, because of the desegregation plan in the city, it became a whole 9th grade center while I was still there. So we had nothing but 9th graders, because there were three junior high schools that were put together, and the other two, Bryant and Anthony, were 7th and 8th grade schools. All the kids would go to Ramsey, my school, for 9th grade. So we had over, I don't know, it was about 1,200 ninth graders, all in one building, all at one time. That was one of the best times that we ever had, because

all of the teachers that we had at that time were really good teachers. We were sure that we didn't ever let one single kid fall through the cracks, we all liked each other and we partied together. I was the Social Chair. We had great parties and we had -- it was just a good time in teaching. Now, I would say that the majority of those teachers, many of whom were young men, left to do something else, because they just again, weren't making enough money.

And so a couple of them went into real estate, a couple of them went into selling stocks and bonds, to be stockbrokers. I always felt so bad about that because well, we've stayed in touch, but they were just such good teachers. By the same token, they were also very good real estate salesmen and very good stockbrokers, so they're doing really well now, but it was a loss to the kids because they were really very good.

Q: And the majority of the women stayed?

A: There were some women who left, but the majority of women stayed. What's happened now is that the number of men in teaching in 2007 has gone down dramatically, for the same reason; people can't make a living at it any more. So, eventually the 9th grade center was so successful, the district closed it. The population had started to decline

at that point, and so in the early 80s, '79 to '84, there was a precipitous decline in the number of kids in the city; partly it was because of desegregation and families moved out, partly it was because of a decline in the birth rate, but there was a precipitous decline and in order to keep the high schools open, they wanted those 9th grade bodies. So they moved all the 9th grade bodies into the high schools, and our 9th grade center and our building was closed.

Then I went to Central High School, was one of the stars of the Bright Lights in the desegregation program. It was a Magnet High School and it was a great high school. People who had been there a lot longer than I had just loved it, stayed. I chose that school specifically because it had windows, because I'm kind of partial to windows. There are some other high schools in town that were built at times you know, when they were built without windows.

But anyway, Central was then closed. Dr. Richard Green, who eventually went to New York to be Chancellor, had to close schools, and what his goal at that time was, was to close center city schools and to force the kids and the families into the schools that were sort of around the outer ring of the city, as another desegregation move. So

when he closed Central and West High School and University High School, and some of those beloved high schools, it was awful. He closed seventeen or eighteen schools all at once, and it was wrenching. The worst part I think, is that in order to sort of take the evidence away from the landscape, so people couldn't see their anger any more, he had them bulldozed. Central High School was the most beautiful school and it was the oldest, but it was just beautifully built; birds eye maple flooring and marble stalls in the bathrooms and brass railings. You know, it was just, it was heart wrenching.

But then of course, after all those schools were closed and were either sold, made into condominiums, bulldozed, whatever, then of course we got to the next eventually, needing school buildings again. The population went back up because of immigrants coming in, and then they wanted to -- Dr. Carol Johnson, who was superintendent at that time, and Sharon Sayles Belton, who was the Mayor of Minneapolis, those two African American women believed very strongly in having kids close to home, in neighborhood schools. Well, where the majority of the kids were, there weren't any school buildings any more, because they'd all been sold or bulldozed or turned into condominiums. So then that was a whole different strategy. They had to

build all new buildings and now, it's going back the other way again. So these cycles are very heart wrenching for communities and we're going through it all over again.

Q: Yeah. That seems like it's repeating itself over and over and over.

A: It is. When Central was closed, then I had to leave there. So people were starting to think it had something to do with me. So then when I went over to Southwest High School, which was the high school where I graduated from, my brother graduated from, my mother had taught -- she had retired by that time -- I had always kind of resisted going there, because I just thought well, my mom was such a good English teacher, I'd never be that good an English teacher. I'd pale in comparison. But I finally went back to Southwest, and that's where I taught, in decreasing amounts of time, as I phased out of teaching to my thirty years and then phased into the union work. I was elected in 1984. Well first of all before that, I was elected to the AFT Executive Council.

Q: Yeah, I was wondering about that. (laughter)

A: I think it must have been like '81 maybe, that I was elected to the AFT Executive Council. In retrospect, I defeated a -- well, I was chosen by the powers that be in the AFT, to be the Minnesota vice president, over the women

who had been in that position. But by that time, I had a pretty good resume and I had a pretty good record of activism. So I just decided that it was my turn. I think that was difficult for some people, because it didn't feel that I was being very loyal at that time.

Q: But you were asked, so you served.

A: I was asked, so I served. Well I applied and got asked, and I served. So I was on the AFT Executive Council. I was very active in -- I think I was Strike Chair in the Local, in '82, '83, when we almost went on strike. We almost went on strike because the contract that was negotiated at that time, was negotiated with a director of finance and a director of labor relations, who basically, after the settlement, went back on their word and betrayed the guy that everybody really revered in the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers. His name is Norm Moan. He was the staff guy who was negotiating the contract. It was really hard for people to see that after the contract had been settled, that there was betrayal. So that was part of what was going on. We went to the brink in '83, did not go on strike, but by that time, I had kind of made a name for myself in speaking to the assembled masses in those strike rallies. A couple of guys remind me always, of my chicken speech, that I called the school board chicken in one of

those big speeches for the -- I don't know, there were a couple thousand teachers at the Leamington Hotel, which is now gone. So it was those rallies I think, and my ability to organize and prepare for the strike, that caused some people to then ask me to run for the local presidency. So I ran against an incumbent, and that hadn't happened. I don't know that it had happened ever, since Local 59 had been bargaining agent, and so we were always pretty peaceful out here on the prairie.

Q: Yes.

A: But they wanted a president who was active. The president at that time was -- his real love was the classroom and he spent all his time in the classroom, and spent very little time being president, and really basically gave carte blanche to the staff. The members of the Executive Board wanted a more activist president, somebody much more involved.

Q: Well this was the time to be an activist leader.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Especially with *A Nation at Risk* coming out.

A: Absolutely. So when I was elected in May of 1984, the timing was perfect in some ways, to have a leader who had the background of being a part of the discussions on the AFT Executive Council, of sort of knowing what to do and

how to respond. In 1984, the very first thing I did as president, is that I started meeting with the superintendent and the Board Chair, and the superintendent was Dr. Richard Green at that time, and the Board Chair was Buddy Davis. And we just decided that we just couldn't continue providing what we needed to provide for teachers and kids and families in the city, by having the open hostility and feuds and open fighting between the union and the superintendent and the board. So we made a pact with one another, that we'd start trusting one another.

Q: Was this the Committee for Professional Teaching?

A: Well that's what came out of it -- that was our first activity. So the superintendent and I then decided that we were going to jointly try to lead an effort to professionalize teaching. So it was, you're right, the labor management committee to Professionalize Teaching. The superintendent appointed half, I appointed the other half, and he also paid for .4 of my salary at that time, so I could be released from the classroom .4, to staff that committee. And that committee started doing a lot of things, but I think our first accomplishment was the Mentor Program. So we created the Teacher Mentor Program, and it's gone through several changes and several title changes and iterations, but it still exists.

Q: You guys changed so many names.

A: I know it. So many acronyms.

Q: Did you base this on Toledo's Peer Review, in a way?

A: Somewhat, but our Peer Review system came later, and it's a different Peer Review system than Toledo.

Q: So the Mentor Program though, is --

A: The Mentor Program was, at that time, meant strictly to assist new teachers in their induction into the profession and into the city. That of course was something that I had become familiar with, because of my activities being on the AFT Executive Council, and of course Al Shanker would bring in all these wonderfully provocative writers and speakers and researchers, and we'd have these great conversations around the table and debates. They were pretty heated sometimes, because the hardliners or the traditional trade unionists around the table were not exactly ready to embrace the professionalism agenda.

Q: Who was that? I'm just curious. I mean I've read the transcripts, but I can't place a name.

A: Well, I think it took Al Fondy an awful long time to kind of get there.

Q: I was about to say Al.

A: Yeah. And it took the -- what was the name of that guy from Albany, New York, the president of Albany for years and years? He was always a thorn in Al's side.

Q: Oh, I can't remember his name. I'm blanking on the names right now.

A: Yeah I am too but maybe we'll think of it. Of course he was mostly upset because of the lack of process and approval that Al never got from the Executive Council. Before Al would go have a press conference and make these pronouncements about you know, what the AFT was going to do and what it believed and the projects it was going to do, and then a month or two later then, we'd have an Executive Council meeting and he'd say, oh by the way.... You know. (laughter) Oh, I almost had the name there. He'd just have a holy fit. But being around that Executive Council table of the AFT was not just an education. It was also kind of an in depth -- created an in depth discussion of those of us who were around the table when the meeting was over. During the meeting, but then when the meeting was over, when we met in other venues, when we had local presidents conference, we'd talk about these issues all the time, and what we were trying in our locals, what we should be trying in our locals, what wasn't working in our locals, what was working; and so this rich, deep conversation. And

actually kind of in a way, leadership one-upmanship, see who could -- after every council meeting, we'd all scurry home to our locals and see who could you know, start, invent, institute what Al had talked about, faster than the other one.

Q: Right. Good healthy competition.

A: Oh yeah. Then of course, who'd get credit for it, that was even stronger. I will say that those of us out here on the prairie never got much credit for anything, because our moms always told us that it was a sin to brag, so we always kept our accomplishments under a bushel basket.

Q: So the Mentor Program, how did your membership react to it? Positive, questioning, hesitant?

A: Well there wasn't much to be fearful of with the Mentor Program, because the Mentor Program at that time, was Peer Assistance, and the review part hadn't started yet. So people were really glad to get the help. We had had an old helping teacher model that some of the old timers remembered fondly, as that there was always a helping teacher that would come and help them when they first started teaching. Well that sort of had, in the interim, had gone away, and so in a way, it was a recreation more formally and with training, of the old helping teacher model. It also caused us to start training teachers in

peer coaching. So through the beginning of our peer coaching training to today, we have trained thousands of teachers in peer coaching, so that they'd have the language and the skills to help each other, which I always say we don't pop out of the womb with skills to help each other. We pop out of the womb being individuals and you know, not wanting to share our toys or our knowledge or our skills.

So you really have to help teachers have the skills and the know-how in how to go into someone else's classroom, have a discussion with them, have that person help that person see what's going on in his or her own classroom, help them you know, articulate what they would like to improve, all that kind of stuff. So we've been very diligent in trying to help teachers have those skills.

Q: Now was this put into the contract or was this more of a policy set up?

A: It was put into the contract eventually. I think everything that we can point to in Minneapolis that was our entire professionalism agenda, we all started with a labor management committee. And it all started being implemented through the guidance and development and leadership and implementation first; working out the bugs, working out how it was going to be implemented. So it was always Labor

Management that did that first. We'd put it in the contract after we'd sort of figured out how to do it and what ought to be in there. So that was different than some locals did it. Some locals would rally the troops and put it out there and say, should we start to try this or not, is it a concept we ought to embrace or not, and have a big vote on it. It's harder to do that, because it's hard to embrace a concept when you don't really know what the details are, how it's going to be implemented, what it's going to mean for you. So I just always thought that it was more important to sort of get it going, and then it would garner supporters as it rolled along, which I think has proven to be true.

Q: It sounds more like more of a chore angle of instituting education reform in the new unionism, as opposed to old unionism where, as you said, rally the troops, get them behind you, work on that, work on that. And usually, you had that ten percent that says no all the time.

A: Right. But then if you've honed the language and the processes and the procedures and the personnel and everything, and then you by that time got it written up in a memorandum of agreement, and then if that's working pretty well, first of all you'd get it approved as a memorandum agreement, printed in the memoranda section of

the contract. Then you put it eventually, into the contract itself. It's gone through several votes and it's less likely that a contract will go down because of a memorandum of agreement in the back of the book.

A: So it has gone through votes.

Q: Now is this where the idea started with the Five to Five?

A: Yeah.

Q: And it developed more into the professionalism that is now?

A: No. Actually it started with the professionalism. Early on, Dr. Green and I had hosted some meetings with leaders from the school sites. So for instance, we co-hosted a meeting one time, in which we had a dinner at the Calhoun Beach Club, which was a pretty fancy club.

[END OF FILE 1]

A: We invited the Building Steward, the union steward from each building, the principal, and I don't remember if there was anybody else from that building or not, maybe leadership teams? No, we didn't have leadership teams at that time, so it must have been the principal and the union steward, to a dinner. We invited Al Shanker to come and speak. And we also did that one time when we had the entire staff of the Minneapolis Public Schools at the

Metrodome, at the opening of school, had Al come out and speak. The Metrodome was not a great venue in which to try to speak, by the way. (laughter)

Q: I can imagine.

A: And I'm not too sure that the entire staff, including the janitor, engineers and the bus drivers, totally appreciated it, nor all the teachers. Anyway, Richard and I kept you know, kind of plugging along with this, with this labor management committee, and one of the activities was going to be a -- we had started to work, this is about 1985 now. We had started to work with the Panasonic Foundation. The Panasonic Foundation had offered for us to be one of their sites for their assistance. So we became a Panasonic partner, and one of the first things that I had -- well it might even have been before we had been approved to be a partner. Anyway, I had called David Florio, who had previously worked at the AFT and then moved to the Panasonic Foundation, and said we want to have a kind of a day long seminar for principals and union leaders and teacher leaders, at Scanticon, a conference center, and we want to talk about professionalizing teaching and all of its aspects, site based management and all that stuff. So could you bring in Phil Schlechty in for us, because I always loved Phil Schlechty, still do. In addition to the

sort of common sense in all of his books on professionalizing teaching, he's also just a really kind of fun, common guy. He'd always come up to Minnesota to fish because he loved fishing. But you know, he always was an interesting speaker and kind of a rugged, interesting guy, so I thought well, Phil would probably go over pretty good. They brought Phil in, we had the day out at Scanticon, and Panasonic also brought in some principals from a couple other places in the country, who were kind of pioneering this work. After the speech in the morning, everybody was supposed to break out into role a like groups. The teachers went in one room, principals in another room, and board and administrators in another room. So the principals went in their room and locked the door, and wouldn't let Phil and the guest principals in. They locked the door and stayed in there for a long time. When they came out, they had made the decision as a group, that they weren't going to cooperate with any of this professionalizing baloney, and they were going to resist it. That was not a good sign.

Q: No, not at all.

A: So what happened after that then, was the group called 5 with 5.

Q: Oh, OK.

A: As a result of that. So we thought well, this isn't good, we've got to do something about this. We decided that we were going to start with a little group of principal union leaders, because they were unionized at that time. They were actually members of the Teamsters at that time.

Q: The principals were Teamsters?

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh, that's good.

A: Well no, it was not a match made in heaven.

Q: No, that was not.

A: They had become Teamsters because Richard had not given them a raise for four years, and they were obviously angered by that. So they thought if they became Teamsters, that the Teamsters would beat them up or kneecap them or something, I don't know. So anyway, five members of the Principals Union and five members of the Teachers Union would meet regularly and try to sort of iron things out and learn how to work together. So it was first of all called 5 on 5, so you can guess who was the you know, the underling and who was the...

Q: Yeah.

A: And that first meeting was rather interesting, because we were in a conference room at the school board office, and five teachers from the Teachers Union, we were on one side

of the table, and the principals were on the other side of the table. And about twenty minutes into the discussion or the attempt at having a discussion, the principal's, I don't know business agent or whatever they called him, who I always called the junkyard dog, he said, "We're going to stop. We want a caucus." And I thought, Caucus? We haven't even been in the room for twenty minutes yet. I don't remember if we left or they left or whatever and caucused. When we got back together again, the issue that they had to caucus about was my body language. They had been upset because I had been sitting there with my arms folded, and that that was signaling to them that I really was not open to having an open discussion, so that if I was going to be a part of this -- if this group was going to go anywhere, I had to have more positive body language. I thought, "Oh, this is going to be a long activity." (laughter) So, that was its inauspicious start.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: But after I don't know, maybe a year or so, it became 5 with 5, after we had developed a little bit of a relationship, and we decided we were going to recognize each other as equals.

Q: That's very nice. You're playing nice together.

A: Yes, we tried to play nice. Then about well, some years later, it must have been like five years later or so, then it became the Professional Leadership Team, when Peter Hutchinson was around. So it involved from 5 on 5, to 5 with 5, to the Professional Leadership Team.

Q: Do you think the principals were against all this because they weren't really told what was going on? It was the Teachers Union and the administration talking and bypassing principals?

A: Well, I have a hard time being charitable in this discussion, but I think they did feel that they were being left out. I think it was very obvious that the superintendent and I were leading together. It was very obvious to them that it was our agenda. It was very obvious that we had national opportunities to have national leaders come in to have a national voice, to become knowledgeable because of the national connections, and I think that they did feel left out. But, there has never been a time -- well never is a strong word. Well, there's never been a time in which, in the last twenty-five years; in the twenty-five years that I tried to lead that professionalism agenda, I never once saw the principals take it upon themselves to go to a conference, to go to NSDC on their own, ASDC. We occasionally would invite them

to AFT things and they'd go if we paid for it or if the school district paid for it. They don't seem to have that national leadership that leads them anywhere. So they are sort of -- they view themselves as victims in the middle and they act as victims.

Q: Right.

A: And because of that, they can't ever stop being victims, because they can't kind of pull themselves out of that swirling. The problem with not having any agenda of your own, is that you're always just either cooperating with somebody else's agenda or going against somebody else's agenda. You know at some point, if you're not strong enough to go against the prevailing agenda, you're just sort of SOL without one of your own, which they don't have, still don't. So it's been very difficult, because they see it as power, either loss of power or a gain of power. They still, in the old hierarchal structure, they still view title as privilege. There's a real terrible lack of leadership among the principals now, and in some ways, the advent of having Gen-Xers move up into leadership roles has made it worse, because they're unabashedly in it for the money and the title, and to heck with the skills. I just still, to this day, don't have any really good feeling about where that's going. So at various times in our

agenda, we have either -- and at various times in my own thinking on this issue, I've either tried to do them in altogether and eliminate the role, or tried to help them develop one and get better at it, and neither one has worked. So we're back at this point, to advancing the issue of self-governed schools, where the teachers can basically govern themselves in small schools. We got a little bit of a language and grant at the legislature, the last session, to try to do that, but that certainly is not going to change. At other times I think well, I know it's history that the AFT pulled away from the NEA because the administrators were running everything, and superintendents were telling everybody and leading everything, but maybe it's time we take another look at the British system or the Canadian system or the Scandinavian system, where the principals really are principal teachers, and they're in the same organization. Maybe that would stop some of the hostility and the hierarchy. I don't know.

Q: Sandra said the same thing, when I was talking to her about the same issue, what they were doing in New York. She said one of the, not the worst things, but one of the sad things that they did was not allow the principals in when they were organized. They should have let them in. We wouldn't have had a whole lot of these problems.

A: Yeah.

Q: Then she pointed to the Australian system and the English system and all them.

A: And I did have some what we called fireside chats, with one of the leaders of the Principals Union some years ago, and I don't know whether he shared them with anybody or not, I kind of think not. But at that time, we sort of talked about it, and we talked about it at some length on several occasions. But then he retired and then nothing happened. It may be too late now, I don't know, but we started a leadership training program with the Principals Union, with a higher ed institution, with Minneapolis and St. Paul federations and Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, and all those people in the room, and we thought we were creating a wholly new leadership program and training program and licensure program, where the folks that would graduate would have those skills. We'd know what skills they had, we would have observed what skills they'd have, and that they'd be ready to hit the ground running, and for various reasons it didn't work. So if we're ever going to try it again, I hope we learned something and maybe we can try it again, but it's very hard because there aren't any inclusive processes any more in the district, and how you choose how people get to be an intern, assistant principal,

how they get to be an assistant principal or how they get to be a principal. There used to be processes and committees and things that you did. Now it's just all in the hands of a couple of downtown administrators, and they make all the decisions.

Q: Right.

A: And it's crazy. For one thing, they don't know.

Q: Right. You don't know who you're getting, and they don't know.

A: And it's based on issues that maybe it shouldn't be based on. And also, the administrators have, as their set of standards, twenty-three indicators, twenty-three sets of indicators as to whether -- that they are supposedly supposed to pass in order to be an administrator and in order to stay an administrator. Twenty-three standards is too many, and as a result, people sort of don't get good at any of them, plus collaborating and leading other leaders, collaborating with teachers and other professionals isn't one of them.

Q: Right. Right, of course not.

A: Of course not. So they're being prepared for actually a job that doesn't exist any more. So they still spend a semester sitting in a class about school law. There is no reason why they have to sit through a semester class on

school law, because they're told by the district, if anything happens in your building, pick up the phone and call the attorney.

So they spend a semester in a school law course, knowing all kinds of stuff that they probably could have had in a seminar, and they spend all these classes doing I don't know what, but instead of sort of getting these skills on how you lead a group of highly skilled, highly educated professionals, and get them going in one way. How do you lead them into a process about developing the school goals? How do you lead them in a process to decide whether you're achieving your school goals or not? How do you lead these professionals, the majority of whom have masters degrees; they're skilled in their grade level and in their subject matter, and the only thing they revert to is power and authority and threatening.

Q: They still want the blinds even.

A: Well, the most often thing that happens now, is the kind of intimidation where if a teacher has been teaching kindergarten for sixteen years and a principal wants to get rid of them out of their building, they move them to sixth grade the following year, and say if you don't like it get out. And there's lots of unhealthy things like that that go on.

Q: Let me just stop real quick. OK we're back.

A: And I forgot to say that also, the other reason why I became president in '84, is that the teachers were really upset by the betrayal of the contract, and they really didn't -- you know, teachers really want to teach, and they don't want to have the constant roiling and broiling and all of the hostile back and forth. The majority of them just want to teach and not be sort of constantly upset by all of the external things from their classroom.

When Shanker made his 1985 press club speech about *A Nation at Risk* and how we should respond, and all of the components of a professional model that he outlined in that speech, it's really amazing when you go back and review that speech, about all of the parts of the professional agenda that he hit, that we actually accomplished. In it was the national board certification and standards and all the rest of that stuff. So we developed our own set of our own professional agenda. We didn't have it all laid out at the beginning, but we in some ways, systematically kind of ticked off and developed a labor management committee on first the Mentor Program, and then we did a professional practice school at Henry High School, because I had been part of an AFT taskforce on professional practice schools.

When we got a grant from the Exxon Corporation, to try out, in three locations, a professional practice school, we got one of those grants, and that's been going on ever since at Henry High School.

Q: It's still going on?

A: Still going on.

Q: Can you explain what a practice school is?

A: Gasping, but it's going on, because it's obviously easier to induct people when you're hiring than when you're laying off.

Q: Right.

A: But a professional practice school is an induction, kind of a full scale induction activity in which you bring in pre student teachers, student teachers, we call them baby teachers, and the teachers who are student teachers, and the intern teachers from the university, and the first year teachers, all the probationary teachers, and then some of the career teachers and then some of the on site mentor teachers, and they all have this kind of wonderful professional discussions and community. As I said, there were lots of them when we started the induction program. One of its keys is that for the very first year, they are a resident teacher, and it's modeled of course, after the medical model. The first year of your teaching, if you're

a resident, you teach eighty percent of the time and you continue your professional development twenty percent of the time, under the tutelage and assistance and coaching of a really good mentor teacher at the site. So you meet regularly, you work on your portfolio, you work on the skills in your classroom. You work on all of the things that it takes to be a really good teacher. After that year of residency, everyone, including the principals who have been a part of professional practice schools residency sites, say that those teachers are the best teachers that you can possibly find, because of that year of induction. Now we also expanded that to be district-wide. We started the achievement of tenure process, and the achievement of tenure process, I'm going to go back to and you may have to remind me. But the next part of the professional agenda was the Peer Review process. In Minneapolis, I guess I made the calculated decision not to ever call it Peer Review. So we called it the professional development process, or the PDP. We started it in '89, as a little memorandum of agreement that said; we're going to have a joint labor management committee that will include district administrators and teachers and community people, to evaluate the current teacher evaluation system and to make a report and come up with something new. So the one thing

that I think I did really well in most cases in my career, is find really good teachers to lead teacher programs. I was lucky enough to find Lynn Nordgren, who developed, researched, brought that committee to then develop the what I call a pervasive Peer Review system, because it's a Peer Review system in which following the systems of quality management, is ongoing. It's constant, it's all the time. It's not every four years whether you need it or not, somebody pops into your classroom and takes a look at your best lesson and pops back out again. This is a constant conversation with your colleagues. You do an action research project every year, you reflect on it. You have colleagues come in and observe your classroom, and that's all this constant activity. We then decided that the probation years needed to be beefed up somewhat. I happened to have been at Queens College, and the Queens International School in obviously Queens, New York, observing one time, and they were talking about their plan at the Queens International School, to beef up the tenure process. So that got me thinking, and I came back and we laid on the negotiating table, we brought to the negotiating table, what became the achievement of tenure process. I'm the only one on the face of the earth that

insists that the "A" from achievement and the "F" of of, and the "T" of tenure all be capitalized. AFT, get it?

Q: Yeah, all right. (laughs)

A: So I think it's probably going to be a lost cause now that I'm gone, but the achievement of tenure process.

[END OF FILE 2]

Q: OK, we're back. We were talking about the development of the tenure process, beefing it up.

A: Right. The achievement of tenure process now, that we created and as I mentioned, we were the ones that brought it to the table, is a process in which the three years of tenure, teachers have the assistance of a mentor. They have contractual requirements for peer coaching training, for doing surveys and input from parents and students about their work. They do action research, they develop a portfolio, and at the end of the three year process, they make a presentation about what they've learned about their work and about the profession, to colleagues at their school site. Their colleagues then, much the same as in higher ed institutions, make a judgment about whether they are indeed ready to become a more permanent member of the profession or not. So we in the profession then, have taken over the decision making about whether teachers are

going to become tenured or not, and not just have it be a click of the calendar or a click of the clock. It used to be that if you were employed for three years and then came back for the fourth year, it was automatic you were tenured. I used to think it was really kind of disappointing that teachers would call once in a while and say, "Am I tenured? I have no idea." Then you'd have to ask them, "Well, have you been employed for three years and were you..." And so on. So it made no sense and it was certainly not professional, and it certainly didn't mean anything, because just being a click of the clock and having you stay under the radar and no one went after you in the first three years, didn't mean that you were -- it didn't symbolize anything. Then if your colleagues then, judge that you have done the work and are OK to become tenured, then they have a celebration, and they have cake and balloons and a certificate. The union provides that, and it's something -- that kind of celebration is a passage that we really don't have very much of in this profession. Those kinds of things are symbolic and they're important.

Q: Right.

A: And so I think that has helped. We've also tried to turn the new teacher orientation into a more formal passage introduction and induction into a really true profession.

We, in some ways, modeled it after the medical, white lab coat ceremony, where interns are given their lab coat. Except of course, we don't unfortunately have lab coats, but we give them their lanyards for their keys around their necks. But we have a ceremony after we do either a two or a three day induction, and tell them what they need to know about the union and about the district and about what the expectations of them are. And then we have them stand and read a pledge, which is also I think, probably unique to us, and then they come up and get their lanyard and a handshake, as kind of a welcome to the Minneapolis schools, the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and to the profession. So we've tried to elevate not just the negative activities of what it takes to be a profession, in deciding who gets to come in, how people are treated in the induction process, how they're treated throughout their career, and then making the hard decisions about who has to leave, but also doing the next level, which is the symbolic level.

Q: How does that resonate with the younger members, the new teachers, the 20-somethings, 30-somethings?

A: The younger members like it a lot. They like it because it's more of what they sort of expected I think, and think is appropriate. It took a long time for the few older

traditionalists to accept it, and what turned it around in most cases, were the presentations that the achievement of tenure people were making to their colleagues at the school sites. The presentations blew them away, because the experienced teachers thought wow, this is good stuff. This is way more than I'm doing, or I ought to know some of this stuff. Because up until that time, there were experienced teachers who thought oh, that's too much work for those people coming in the door. They shouldn't have to do that work. We didn't do anything. They shouldn't have to do anything. And it's when they saw what it was, they saw the results, that they really accepted it. The new, younger ones say look, if we are expected to be professionals, there ought to be some expectations of us. So they were, at least the Xers, were more open to it.

Q: I want to flip that around. You said you got the accomplishments, the new teachers getting recognized, going through the process of tenure, and getting tenure. But what happens to the teachers who are reviewed and they're not meeting up to par?

A: The recommendation is made to the district, human resources department, and they are not renewed. Their contracts are not renewed.

Q: So there's no second chance of, you have one year to shape up?

A: No, because the law is pretty clear in Minnesota that it's three years, period, and there's no provision in the law for extension. It also means however, that a person can achieve tenure under the law, by just surviving the three years. So it just means that they can't teach in Minneapolis, if they don't pass the achievement of tenure process in Minneapolis. It is possible for somebody to spend three years in Minneapolis, not pass the process, and go and teach some place else in the state.

Q: So it's a kind of balance. You have the contract here but they still, under the requirements of the state, they can go elsewhere.

A: Then the requirements of the state are pretty minimal; not do anything illegal and stay employed, and a couple of principal evaluations along the way. The AFT and the UFT, but mostly the UFT at that time, back in the mid-1980s, late 80s, early 90s, had -- and I think they still do -- have money from the state of New York for teacher centers. I'd heard so much about the New York teacher centers, and also we had heard a lot about -- well, I'll stick with the teacher centers. We should go back at some point, to the visits to District 2.

Q: District 2?

A: Yeah. But the teacher center model was one that we were pretty enamored of, in that the union would train the teachers that were selected by the site, to be on site staff developers, and then the teacher center folks would make sure that those site staff developers were continually updated and their skills were updated, and that they would continually get the new training. And so we liked that a lot. There was an opportunity. I had some friends at the Minnesota Department of Education, and they had some money left over one year from the feds, and they didn't want to give it back. And I said, "Well, we can use it. How about if you give us a grant to start some teacher centers in Minneapolis?" So they did that. We got, I think it was maybe $365,000 or something. It doesn't seem like very much money now, but we made it last a lot of years. And so what we did then is make the offer to schools; if they wanted to have the opportunity to develop as a teacher center, have some on site staff developers, on site mentors, and start tying some of this stuff together at school sites. And so there was one high school and I think a couple middle schools and some elementary schools; that became teacher centers then. Of course it sounds like it happened over night, but it happened over a pretty long

period of time. There again, I had a teacher who (inaudible) it and led it, and it meant monthly committee meetings of people from the site, and it meant bringing principals along to being open to having this professional activity at their school site, and to putting matching funds, to take site funds to match the grant funds so that there could be site staff developers and site mentors. Those site mentors then, would take over the leadership of the achievement of tenure process and the mentoring of new teachers, and in some cases the residents. I think at one time we probably had about maybe twelve teacher center sites, but because eventually that money ran out and there wasn't anything else, the sites that really believed in it kept it going themselves.

Q: Volunteer type?

A: No. They took site budget money and earmarked it for keeping it going out of their own budgets, without the match. So there are still a couple that are doing that. I should go back and say that in the residency program, at one time there was probably twelve or fifteen residency sites also. It was always more difficult to have elementary residency sites than it was high school residency sites, because high schools, you could have

teachers teaching eighty percent of the time, by teaching four classes a day instead of five.

Q: Right.

A: But in an elementary site, you can't teach an elementary classroom eighty percent of the day, so it was much harder to do at the elementary. But I think we had maybe fifteen at one time, and then as we stopped hiring teachers and stopped the need for serious induction of teachers, it has slackened off. We have a little bill in the legislature right now, to revive the residency funds and the residency language, earmarked for new persons of color. So we'll see. It's still alive but we'll see what happens to that.

Q: So what was your visit to District 2?

A: Well of course we heard again, around the AFT table and other places, about how Alvarado and the District 2, over a decade, had made more progress with kids, in focusing on literacy, than any place else in the country. So Tony Alvarado really was kind of the godfather of focusing on literacy and making it intentional, and having the teacher center train all the teachers in District 2 on the same strategies, teaching strategies. He eliminated about sixty percent of the principals and got new principals in who believed in his strategies and agreed to follow them. He reduced the size of his District 2 central office and he

put twelve percent of the District 2 money into school sites for professional development for teachers, which is much closer to the private sector investment in professional development. So he did all these wonderful things, so many of us around the country, including me, said we want to come and see, so that our folks can see in operation, so they can internalize it. So three times, I took teams of Minneapolis teachers, union leaders, principals and district folks, to District 2 in New York, and on all three occasions we saw very interesting schools; schools that looked a lot like ours, many of them, and we sort of saw what was working. I think it had an effect on what went on in Minneapolis. It never got to the point however, in Minneapolis, where -- Dr. Carol Johnson got close to saying, this is the way we're going to teach reading and this is the way we're going to teach math. But there's this very strong, strong tradition in Minneapolis, that the district doesn't tell anybody what to do, that the teachers you know, sort of are individual entrepreneurs in their own classroom.

Q: Right.

A: So it took a long time to get over that, and to really realize how important it was to have teachers teaching, using strategies that are proven. Those were important

trips. I think that it also elevated the union in the eyes of the district and the principals, because in District 2, the chapter chairs at the school sites are integral to everything that goes on, and they're professional leaders and they are in total collaboration with the school principal in leading that you know, professional endeavor at the school site. Those were all good lessons that I wanted people to actually see and absorb and feel.

Q: Was this the kind of change that was going on in MFT, that members really wanted to see these things and enact these things, and taking on their own roles?

A: We were writing a lot and I was speaking a lot. I'd go around to school sites every year, talking about empowering teachers and how important it was for us to think of ourselves as professionals, to behave like professionals, to take on the responsibilities of professionals, to take on the trappings of professionals, because if we didn't do that, we had already bumped up against sort of the highest pay scale of an auto worker or a machinist. So if you want to be a blue collar worker that's fine, but then we can't expect the $100,000 and over that a professional ought to be expecting. Professionals take more responsibility. So that was kind of our message. Our message to teachers also was that, they were the instructional leaders, they were

the ones that knew about what worked best in classrooms, and that they ought to be collaborative with their principals. I used Shanker's line. I can't tell you how many hundreds of times I used Shanker's line about the hospital administrator never walks into the operating theater and says, I think you ought to cut a little to the left or cut a little -- surge a little more to the right. They'd get thrown out.

The role of the hospital administrator is to resource the ones who are doing the work, and make sure that things run effectively, make sure that the scissors are there, and make sure that things work well, that the support staff and everything works well. Well of course that's still a message. And then Dick Elmore wrote the book about District 2 and about the distributive leadership. Then we had Peter Hutchinson come and talk about his brand of leadership, a servant leadership, and all of these theories of leadership that we talked about so much, were somehow just never, never ever embraced by the leaders.

I think we should back up just a half a second too, and say that at the same time as all the professionalism, and we're not done with the list on professionalism yet, but at the

same time all that was happening, beginning in 1985 I believe, I started a labor management committee on benefits. Because we'd end up arguing at the negotiations table, about the nuances and the details of the health plan and the dental plan. Both the district and the union, we had some experience, or at least I had some experience with the Minnesota Coalition on Health, and we had been advised by the Minnesota Coalition of Health. We sort of figured it out on our own, that most of those conversations would be better had around a labor management committee table, and we could do all of the detail stuff at the Labor Management Benefits committee, and then we'd bring that back and the only thing we'd argue about at the negotiations table was how much the district was going to pay; how much the district was going to contribute towards it. So ever since '85, that committee has been in effect every month, all those years.

Q: That eliminates so much bargaining.

A: Yea, it eliminates a lot of the hostility that was created at bargaining. After that, the first couple of years, it was just the teachers around that Labor Management. We were the only bargaining unit; teachers and the educational assistants. But then the rest of the union sort of figured out that this was a good idea too, and so they wanted to

expand it, and so now it includes all the bargaining units in the district.

Q: Wow.

A: There used to be twenty-two. Now I think we're down to fifteen. And that's where they develop the bids to go out. They're bidding on health insurance now, for the next four or five years, what the benefits are going to be in the dental plans, since it's a self-insured plan. What are you going to cover? Then at that same time, I wanted to offer a new kind of -- I wanted to offer a district match into the teachers' 403-b or their deferred compensation account. The state had made it illegal in the interim, to offer a match to the 403-b. And so I went to a Senator, who was at that time considered an enemy of public employees and public employee pensions. Every employee group hated the guy. He was the brother of the Senate Majority Leader. But I went to him and I said, "Will you help me figure out how to do this?" And so he said, yeah I will. All I want you to do is we'll write this so that it has to be in a program that is governed by the state officers, so it has some state oversight, so we'll put it in a 457 plan, which is another kind of plan that it is indeed governed by the state constitutional officers. I said, okey dokey. So I got that little piece of legislation changed, so that we

could then have a district match into the deferred compensation plan. So that was kind of a big deal. It kind of happened under everybody's radar, because since nobody else would talk to the guy, I had his ear. (laughter) I've always believe in you know, you've got to make use of who you've got to make use of.

Q: Exactly. You brought up paraprofessionals, and they're part of the MFT right?

A: They are.

Q: How do they fit into the equation of all this professional development? Were there any special programs for them, career ladder steps?

A: Yeah. Well as a matter of fact, they've done a pretty good job. It's been difficult for them in the last five years, as it has been teachers, because there's been some downsizing and not quite as much investment by the district in the work. But as soon as we got the Peer Review plan up and going, they were pretty interested in that. So I think we're you know, one of the few ESP -- what does that AFT call them now?

Q: Paraprofessionals still, or have they changed that?

A: No, they changed it but paraprofessional is good enough I guess. They've gone through several iterations of names

too, from paraprofessionals to educational assistants to education for support professionals.

Q: I think it's whatever Loretta wants to call them.

A: Right, it is. So they thought that Peer Review sounded pretty good, so they have a similar Peer Review system, as to ours. They also have a mentor program that was patterned after ours. You know, it always comes a little bit later. They also have a good professional development program, in that they do collaborative professional development with educational assistants, with the district.

Q: So they are mirroring.

A: Yeah. And so it has been beneficial to them I think to be in the same office, to hear the same conversations. They also, during the highly qualified time period over the last three, four years, when educational assistants have to be highly qualified under NCLB or lose their jobs, our local educational assistants group took hold of that and developed partnerships with several higher education institutions, to first of all get some of them needed just basic degrees; either two year degrees or some of them wanted four year degrees. Some of them wanted to go on and get a teacher licensure, and then some of them needed basic skills. And so they had classes in our union office for a long time, helping first get the basic skills, then get the

classes, then get the two year degree and then on from there. A lot of partnerships. One was with a Native American higher ed institution and one is with the Minneapolis Community College, and various interesting institutions. So they really took the leadership on that; NCLB helping their members get deemed highly qualified so that they could pass the test. Now they lost a few who never could quite make it, but had they not taken that leadership, they would have lost a lot more than they did.

I think that we also could talk about the -- as far as our professional continuum is concerned, along the way we started rewarding -- well, we started following the tenets of quality management, and we called it EQM, Educational Quality Management. Because there was a period of time back in the 90s, when we were spending a lot of time trying to mirror the private sector's focus on quality. I always thought and still do, that the public sector has missed the boat on what quality management really meant, because quality management and the number one tenet that's always listed is value employees, and it's the part that public sector employers most often totally miss, ignore, don't believe, don't know how or whatever. So we spent a lot of time working with the Minnesota Council for Quality, with the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation, got funds

from the state of Minnesota, to use to reward school sites that were using educational quality management. We did that by developing our QPA, Quality Performance Award grants to school sites, and the Quality Performance Award grants to school sites, we divided up $400,000 every other year, to school sites that beat the odds, help the kids beat the odds. In order to do that, we had thirty-three indicators that were not just test, and we still use them, they're still in the contract, the district still uses them; that they're in addition to standardized test scores. We use local standards. We used standards based tests, not just standardized but standards based. We use attendance and mobility and number of underrepresented kids in the various programs.

Q: OK.

A: So the accounting as one of the indicators, the number of kids of color in gifted and talented programs. Anyway, there's thirty-three of them. And then the sites that won those awards got $25 per student, and they could use that money in any way they wished. And then there was an awards ceremony in which the teachers talked about what they did to help kids beat the odds in that school. So there was a lot of learning going around it and it was really a nice program. Legislature eventually eliminated the funding of

course, since it was such a good program. All of the quality stuff that we have in our contract is still there. We have processes for assessing everybody in the district. We have processes in the standards for assessing the effectiveness of the school district, in how it serves the sites. We have standards for assessing how well the sites do, how well individual professionals do, how well the parents do at supporting their kids, and also for the kids. It's all in there. If people would just follow it, it would really be a better world, but unfortunately we go through these cycles in which people either think that that was somebody else's regime or that they just kind of don't advocate or don't push that it's been done and it's in there and it's good stuff. That's been I think, one of the hardest things of the twenty-five years of leadership, is to not let people go astray and not let all of the ten or so superintendents that I survived, totally revamp the good things, the solid things, the foundation, the scaffolding that was in that contract and that was operating in the district. I think for the most part we stayed pretty true to the major goals of empowering people at the sites, professionalizing teaching, focusing on student learning, focusing on growth and not absolutely standardized scores, value added assessment, quality management. All of those

were kind of major issues that we tried to keep every new leader focused on, so that they wouldn't come in and say oh, here I have the magic wand and now we're going to forget all that and do this. So that took some articulation. It also emphasizes why, in the AFT, because we don't have term limits, that in a lot of the urban districts, the union leader is the keeper of reform, of the reform agenda. In those same urban districts, the superintendents come and go and come and go and come and go. We survived them all. In our school district, the school board always hired superintendents by saying that they needed to get along and collaborate with the union. So that was helpful. It was part of their evaluation. But it was the union leader that was the voice and the face of reform that kept the focus. I think a lot of the leaders in the AFT are in that category. It's kind of the face of urban education.

Q: And what about the NEA locals that have -- like Montgomery County and Denver. Do they have term limits at the local level?

A: Denver does. In NEA locals, that's the most successful is Columbus, they do not. I think Montgomery County does. I don't know if Louisville does.

Q: OK. But they manage to do some education reform and kept it going.

A: But in the NEA model, it's the staff people who keep it going.

Q: Right.

A: Usually male staffers who have been there forever. Like in Denver it's Bruce Dickenson. The presidents are important. They're the ones that articulate it and they're the ones that are kind of front and center and take the risks. Bruce kind of keeps the home fires burning, and that's another difference.

Q: One other area that you participated in with reform, was the Public Strategies Group, and was it build your own school?

A: Well, the Public Strategies Group is Peter Hutchinson's firm, that he is the President and CEO of. Public Strategies Group became the superintendency in Minneapolis Public Schools. Peter was, at that time, a parent in the Minneapolis schools. He was also ex-finance commissioner for the state of Minnesota, and also an ex-businessperson in that he was a vice president, I think, of Target Corporation. All of that kind of background gave him a good sense of quality management, but he and his partner, Armajani, put together this organization called the Public

Strategies Group. Its agenda, its corporate strategy if you will, its identity is that it goes around the world helping public entities be really good at what they do. So they have worked in the Middle East, they've worked in other parts of the world. They've worked all over the country, and they help for instance, state agencies, they help school districts, they help various - always public entities - be efficient, focused on quality. That's what they're about. When the school district needed somebody to restore the integrity of the financial books of the Minneapolis Public Schools, they asked Peter Hutchinson to come in and be temporary director of finance in the school district, because he had just finished his term with Rudy as the finance guy at the state. So he had credibility and he had credibility because he was a Minneapolis parent, and a lot of people in the city knew him. So he did that. He came in, straightened the books out, because one of those ten or twelve superintendents I mentioned left under a little cloud of suspicion shall we say. And so he straightened out the books, and then they needed a new superintendent, and they were trying to figure out what to do. Carol Johnson had been an assistant superintendent for a professional CNI, curriculum and instruction, but she needed to finish her PhD. She went out to be

superintendent out in St. Louis Park, which is a first ring suburb of Minneapolis, where it was calm enough so that she could concentrate on getting her PhD done. The plan was then to bring her back then eventually.

Well, they still needed somebody to be superintendent, so one of the more flamboyant school board members and I had a glass of wine, and she loves telling this story, that over the glass of wine, she asked me about what I thought about having Peter, a private sector person, be superintendent of Minneapolis schools, and what kind of accountability or plan could be given him, so that he would be on the same kind of alternative salary schedule so to speak, so that he'd be rewarded for results. So I took a napkin and I kind of outlined what it could look like, to put him on a performance based contract. They did that. They hired Peter, put him on a performance based contract, and he's the one that brought a lot of the quality systems and worked a lot on the systems in the school district. He put the department in the school district that did purchasing, on a pay as you go system, because they had warehouses of stuff that nobody in the schools wanted, and it just sat there and it was inventory and they got rid of all that. Then he told the schools that they didn't have to purchase from the district purchasing department any

more. They could go to Staples, they could go to Target, they could go to Office Max, and they could go to Office Depot. He didn't care; they could go wherever they wanted, where they got the service and the stuff they needed. So that shaped up the purchasing department a little, because they had to be competitive then. What the district purchasing department did is say we will offer next day delivery, just like all of those stores do, and we will also give you a rebate at the end of the year, depending upon how much business you did with us. So that's an example of what he did. He also eliminated some departments totally, which didn't make him popular, but there are only so many ways that you can cut and reorganize and really make a substantial difference. So he got rid of departments like the music instrument repair department and some other departments that he just totally eliminated.

He also then brought in national leaders to come and have a summit on student assessment, because we were in the middle of the assessment wars at that time. Were we going to do value added, were we going to do standardized, standards based, what was better? And all of these research people and all of the curriculum and instruction people were all just at each others throats, because you had the true believers this way and the true believers that

way. So he brought a bunch of experts in and had a dialogue. I remember part of it was down at the Minneapolis Convention Center. They finally came up with the strategic direction for assessment, which the district still follows. It sort of put to bed you know, the assessment wars, and we've had very good assessment people in the district that lead the way in value added assessment. I also helped, to somewhat help the teachers sort of understand and accept value added assessment, that it's valuable for them, because it just shows how they take the kids, where they come in the door in the fall, and then the role that they have in helping them grow and beat the odds, and it takes away all of the yeah buts, and it adjusts for poverty, for mobility, for education of the mother. All of these things, it adjusts for all that, and so what you're left with is the actual amount that the teacher has helped that kid grow and learn. I also wrote a little memorandum of agreement, that if they were going to use value added assessment at the school site, that the teacher and the principal would sign it, so that it wouldn't be used in the evaluation of the teacher, that it would be used for growing and planning.

Q: Right.

A: Peter also, and Public Strategies Group, Peter insisted that it be called the superintendency. So at the end it's got C-Y. The superintendency is a team. So he brought a team with him. He didn't want to be an individual superintendent. He wanted his team to be the superintendency. So he brought some good people with him to advise in various departments. The one again, that they did not have any influence over, was leadership, particularly site leadership.

Q: Right.

A: So as much as Peter did feel that he himself had some influence over some of the district leaders that he personally coached, he is today, very proud of the fact that he has a personal coach. He always meets with his personal coach and he always said that even the best athletes in the world, at the Olympics, have a coach, and when they immediately get off the diving board or off the track, they immediately go over to their coach and immediately look at the video, and so that they grow and get better and learn. And he said, "We all need a coach and we all need to use that process to grow and to get better." So he was big on the coaching and mentoring.

Then we got to negotiations. He thought he was going to put his brand of performance based pay in the contract,

and I said, "Well Peter, we already have some suggestions of our own in the contract discussion." I told him that we weren't going to go with his brand of performance based pay because it wasn't what we believed in. So he was kind of stubborn and was pretty sure of himself that what he had suggested was going to work. So we went to arbitration, and we won in arbitration, so it went back to our version of performance based pay, which we have been building on and growing and making work every since. So he said, he was quoted in the newspaper as saying that when the arbitrator's ruling came out, it felt like he was kicked in the gut. So he always says he learned a big lesson from me, on being too wedded to his idea of how things ought to work.

Q: So you helped him understand compromise.

A: I certainly did yes, with a small "C", after you've been ruled against, yes.

Q: Right. (laughter)

A: It was pretty clear to him at that point. But we had a great relationship. The one thing I feel bad is that Peter Hutchinson didn't have a couple more years in which to really institute his organizational strategies, his reorganization of the district, because what he was doing, for instance is every department was required to survey

their constituents and ask them how they were doing. Now in the public sector, that is not done.

Q: That's a no-no.

A: It's just unbelievable. You're going to ask us to do what? And so he required such departments as curriculum and instruction, and professional development and human resources, and all those departments, to survey teachers and ask how they were doing. Well of course, they weren't doing as well as they thought they were doing, when they got the feedback back from the teachers and principals at the school sites, which was obviously the point. Now as I said, unfortunately Peter wasn't around long enough to have strategies like that become imbedded in the system. So when he left, when they replaced him, a lot of those strategies went with him.

And it was too bad because he was doing good stuff. What they did is they brought Dr. Carol Johnson back kind of in the dead of night, from St. Louis Park, because they were beginning to get criticism from the community about where's the beef, where's the curriculum. And they admitted that they weren't curriculum experts, they weren't instruction experts. They were organizational experts, and so the board got nervous and the board brought Carol back so that

she could bring in the curriculum. But as happens so often, it would have been, I think a thing of beauty, had Carol and Peter and a couple of other people been able to team it. They tried to do that, you know in some places they're trying to do that by now having a chief academic officer, a chief operating officer and a chief financial officer, but in some ways it depends on who they are as to whether it works or not.

Q: It depends on personalities, yeah.

A: Yeah. But I always think that Carol and Peter would have been a dynamic duo. I sat down one time and put the ten or so superintendents on a bar chart, and as to how receptive, supportive and effective they were in the reform agenda. There were one or two that were below the line, and there are others that shot up there. In some ways, the worst six months of my career -- I think it was six months. It wasn't much longer than that -- was when they brought back a much beloved superintendent from 18 years past, and they brought him in just prior to Peter coming on board to again, calm down the community, restore confidence of the community and the staff, in leadership. But bringing somebody back from 18 years prior, to me was about the scariest time period I've ever been through, because he had no clue about first of all, relationships or collaboration

or labor management cooperation or committees. And for all of the superintendents, I had always had a monthly meeting with the superintendent, so that we could go over stuff. For the months that he was there, I'd come in for this meeting because they just kept scheduling the meetings, and he never had any clue why I was there. He just couldn't sort of grasp that this was supposed to be a shared responsibility, a shared culture and a shared conversation about what was going on in the district. He couldn't do it. Instead what he did was brought in his old henchman, the guy from 18 years ago who was the hatchet guy. Had it not been for all of the district folks at the central office, in the district and leadership roles; they just kept working on the agenda as if they weren't there. And thank God, because we didn't lose anything then. Otherwise, it would have been this giant leap backwards, but we all just kept going, kept the labor management committee's meeting, kept the work going, kept the projects going, kept everything going. It was the only time in my career when I lost sleep, because I just couldn't believe how fast things can be lost. Just overnight, things can change so drastically, so dramatically. So thank goodness we got through that episode without too much damage and went on. The only other superintendent who just sort of

couldn't accept the fact that the union was a part of the agenda, was David Jennings, who was there also on a part-time basis. Again, the board thought they needed to bring somebody in to take care of the finances, and he had been formally the head of the House of Representatives in --

[END OF FILE 3]

Start File 4

In the state of Minnesota, the speaker of the house. A republican. You know a guy, a risible guy with a great sense of humor. But he also never could except, would except, could probably except the fact that the union was involved with any of the real meat of what went on in the school distinct and could not except that the union was in it for anything other than just to protecting its members. And couldn't except me as a leader having any other agenda other than just protectionism. He just…it wasn't a part of his experience in business or the legislature. It wasn't a part of who he was and he just couldn't ever get his hands around it. So there again they tried to make him superintended but the community had a fit so he didn't get to be superintendent. However, he is superintendent in a second ring, third ring suburb now.

Q - Ok. So it seems that you have always…or have had the community backing your reforms. Not all the time I imagine, but on a whole you have had community support.

A - Well that is an interesting question. Because you remember that part about the bushel basket and a sin of pride is a sin. The one thing that we didn't do is spend nearly as much time either communicating what we were doing or gaining support in the community for what we were doing. So there was never as much knowledge as there should have been. Partly because I've always thought it was an interesting tightrope as union leaders to communicate things. Because if you only communicate with your own members then of course you don't get the broad community/business support. Although I think the business community knew. The leadership in the city knew. The leadership in the legistlure always knew. The legislature has always been disappointed that the AFT is not represented in this state anymore other than a few of us that are holding on in the locals after the merger. They always liked working with the AFT. Always knew that we had a reform agenda.

But if you talk about parents and the community folks, we didn't do enough with the broad spectrum communication party because if you put things out in the press sort of the way you would like to put them out in the press the teachers read the press and they believe that version more than what you've told them in a union in a union meeting or what you've told them at a school site. So they see their…I don't know if you would say their a better consumer of the public press then they are union press. They tend to believe the public press more. "Well if it was in the daily paper than it must be so." So my union colleagues cohorts would always say, "Louise you can't talk about the number of teachers that the peer review system has wiped out." I would say, "Yea but it sells well." (laughter) They say, "Yea but you can't do that." Or "The process being having teachers, you know, can't or won't get significantly better than they have one foot on a banana peel and they're gonna be out of here. They say, "You can't do that." For various reasons we opted for some sort of the leadership communication became about because I was personally interacting on boards or committees and task forces and everything with community leaders and community politicians and or city politicians or state politicians. They all knew what our agenda was and knew that it was

cutting edge and knew that it was reform but when we communicated with members we weren't quite as vociferous and then when we would communicated with community we didn't do enough of it at all.

Q - You were just hoping for a trickle down.

A - Yeah. Which sometimes worked. Sometimes you get in a community meeting…lately it is very difficult because all of a sudden now you have, almost over night we have consumer parents that want to know everything. And think they know everything and want to have total choice of where their kid, not only where their kid goes to school but the teacher they have and they want to maintain these teachers and get rid of these teachers and they don't want seniority involved. I mean it is a huge deal now. So we started having meetings with parent leadership groups in town and started rattling off all of this you know the whole program and they would say first of all why didn't we know any of this.

Q - So this lead so something else, choice and charter schools. Charters I believe came in 91 to Minneapolis?

A - Well unfortunately they came here before they came anywhere else. And they have also had a more devastating effect on

this school district than anyplace else. Part of the reason that we are down to 33, 000 kids now is because we lost thousands of kids to charter schools. We have also lost 3,000 kids to a settlement deal with the NAACP. Because the NAACP had sued the state of Minnesota for lack of equity funding for urban education in the Minneapolis schools. Rather than have the legislature deal with it straight up with money the state department of education mediated with attorneys with the NAACP and the result of that was that kids of primarily African American kids of the north side of Minneapolis would get free transportation to any suburb of their choice and the suburb couldn't say no we don't have room. The suburb would have to take them. So we…that went on for four years. It was suppose to last four years. During that four years we lost 3,000 kids. Some came back, some stayed out there. It worked for some, it didn't work for some. Then the state department of education thought it was such a good deal that they continued it. So we continue to lose primarily African American kids to the burbs.

I am going to digress just a moment here in that when you look at the city of Minneapolis and our twin city St. Paul, they are very differ rent. They are very different in ethnic make up of families. They are very different in the

leaders of the ethnic communities. They are very different in school district leadership and school district programs and they are very different in unions and you name it…its like the Mississippi river divides this…it is this huge cassum between these two cities that have grown up besides each other. In this town, particularly the leaders of the community of color have always blamed the schools; have always brought protests against the schools; have always tirade against the schools; criticized the schools and basically totally criticized the schools for the lack of graduation rate and the lack of kids doing well on tests and the lack of schools on the north sides passing making adequate yearly progress under NCLB. And having so many kids of color drop out. In that atmosphere the charter schools, which in our town are almost totally single ethnic charter schools, have arisen for every single ethnic group. So we have now the most popular ones are the Somali charter schools, Hmong charter schools, Native American charter schools, African American charter schools and Hispanic charter schools and they are very aggressive in their sales. I just heard this last week that a Somali family just moved into a home that was being sponsored by a church. They decided they wanted to help an immigrant family, so this Somali family moved into this home that the

church owns. And the father said that he gets calls every day almost from a Somali charter schools saying you ought to come with us, we will provide door-to-door transportation. You ought to be in a charter school where the teachers can speak Somali. You ought to be…you don't want to be in the public schools. Public schools are dangerous. Your kids are gonna have to walk. And he says, "I get tired of saying no but I believe strongly in the public school system. So my kids are going to the public school. But then they offer to pay me if I'll take my kids to the school. They will turn around and spend the money that they would have had to spend on picking my kids up. They will pay me if I bring them." So he said that is the kind of pressure that families are getting from charter schools.

And so the entire decade of the 90s the growth of the Minneapolis schools was all recent immigrants. We have one of the second largest population of Somalis, same with Hmong. We have the highest number of Tibetans out side of Tibet in the world I think. The churches have a big roll in bringing immigrants to the area. Part of my agenda always was that I thought that I would like to see the churches playing a little bit more roll once they bring the

families here and to help families then to help them learn English and continue to help them know how to support their kids rather than bring them here and then it's the schools responsibilities. And two I never got around telling the people in Congress about this one either or who ever the Secretary of Education was at the time that I was thought that INS, the Immigration and Nationalization Service, also should play a role, not just helping the adults learn English and learn how to pass the test and become a citizen but also in the same process help the kids learn English and become citizens. And instead of just throwing that all on the schools and they are all yours now. Of course as I said that went absolutely nowhere.

Q: Do the charters have any accountability that is state run?

A: Well not enough. There is some legislation in the legislature now. There is a very strong charter lobby in this state. Now there is some legislation to put a cap on the number now in the state. Oh my goodness, it will be interesting to see whether it stays there or not. They have to take some tests but they don't have to take in special education kids. If they do take special education kids it is our teachers that deliver the service. If we transport the kids to the charter schools,

it costs us…it costs the school district $1,200 a year to transport a charter school kid to a charter school. It costs the school district something like $350 to transport one of its own kids to its own school. It is one of those systems that isn't working. I always worry that this great country is suppose to be the big melting pot and I don't think melting is going on in this town anymore. I don't think there is melting going on in these charter schools. Well the big issue is how do we know. Well we don't know. And that is the other part of the lack of accountability of what goes on, what's being taught, how the kids are doing. As AFT research is shown they don't do any better than the public schools do. But now they want to do it separately and I just think as the public education in this country was not suppose to be a separatist activity so I think it is dangerous.

One of our antidotes to that is that little legislation that I mentioned called 'Self Governed Schools'. And that is why Randi Weingarten is starting the union schools in New York and Philladelphia has the union district sponsored schools and some of the activities of the schools that we can have control over so we can try to attract some of those families back into the district. The district doesn't adjust very quickly to what the parents want. And for some reason or another the district knows

that the Montessori is very popular. We have several Montessori schools and they are very popular. We know some of the other programs are very popular but for some reason they don't replicate them or they don't replicate them fast enough or they don't respond to these consumer parents who want more Chinese emersion. We have one tiny little program in a school for Chinese emersion. The district does not respond to an all girls school or an all boys program. Some of the stuff that they really need to do more quickly. They are like the Queen Mary, can't turn on a dime.

Q: This is Dan Golodner, Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library. It's May 1, 2007. I'm talking with Louise Sundin, part of the AFT oral history. Happy Mayday.

A: Thank you. I think there's going to be some activities around the country this Mayday.

Q: I think they're rumoring that kind of stuff, yeah.

A: All centered around recent immigrants.

Q: So we left off talking yesterday about charters, and choice. Why don't we talk about how Edison -- the MFT got an Edison grant?

A: Well actually yes, but that's a different story. When we talk about magnets and federal grants, back in the late

80s, we were still getting -- and still occasionally get federal grants for magnet schools within the school district. I wrote a federal magnet grant for a teaching magnet, because we thought at that time, we had a lot of recent immigrants from Laos and from Vietnam, primarily at that time from Vietnam, and other recent immigrants coming in who highly regarded teaching as a profession and highly regarded teachers. Teachers are right up there next to Confucius and some other highly regarded folk. So we thought, in order to increase the number of persons of color in the teaching force, we should start a teaching magnet high school so that we could capture young people in middle grades and convince them and inspire them, and stimulate them to think that maybe they'd like to be teachers. So we got that federal grant and we placed it at Thomas Edison High School in Minneapolis.

The Edison High School teaching grant is still going. It's now gone through two name changes since then, as everything else does, but it's still going, and that is the students in the teaching magnet go to middle schools to encourage students to sign up for the teaching magnet at Edison. When they get to Edison, they get the equivalent of a couple of years worth of introductory classes in teaching

and other things, with college credit. Then they get help with going to college. The union gives each graduate a small stipend as an encouragement when they graduate, to go on to college, and then if indeed they get their teaching degree, then they get preferential hiring coming back to the district. So we have some teaching magnet graduates who are now teaching in the district. So it worked to sort of grow out own, educate our own, create out own educators and bring them back into the district.

The other program that we have, that we invented to train and attract persons of color is our Q program, 'Collaborate Urban Educator Program', and that is a program we did collaboratively with the University of St. Thomas, where I'm on the advisory board and where we did our own masters degree program. But the Q program is one in which we do an alternative licensure route for persons of color who are from the private sector, and they're either retiring from some private sector job or many have become jaded with their work in the private sector. We have several attorneys who just plain don't think that attorney-ing or being an attorney is really what they thought it was going to be, and they want to do something in life to give back, and so they think that teaching is the thing they'd like to

try. So we've been very successful. A couple of hundred graduates from that program have gone into the Twin Cities schools, through that collaborative urban educator program, and we've kept that going for over a decade. It's now focusing on special education.

We have tried, in a number of ways, to grow our own teachers, particularly since it's difficult for us to attract teachers of color from other parts of the country, particularly the south, to come up to Minnesota, to the land on the frozen tundra. Since that's a tough sell, we just thought it would be more effective to grow our own. So we have several programs in which we grow our own teachers, some who are previously paraprofessionals. We have several programs to encourage paraprofessionals to get their degrees and then their teaching license, and we have several paraprofessionals who are now teaching in the district, one I think who's a principal in the district, maybe more than one. Those programs, in collaboration with various colleges and universities in the metro area have been pretty successful in bringing persons of color into the district. Now, that doesn't mean that we have nearly enough.

I have one story too. One of our programs to bring students of color from historically black colleges, into teaching in Minneapolis, where we took young people who were doing their student teaching, and brought them into Minneapolis to do their student teaching or internship, whatever they were doing, and that would give us an opportunity to try to convince them that this wasn't such a terrible place after all, and maybe that they ought to stay here. I remember one young woman, actually she went to an historically black college, but she was from Detroit originally, so it wasn't such a hard sell. When she was here, I thought well, I'm going to personally help out. So I gave her one of my cars to drive while she was here, because I thought that would be helpful. The first snowfall, big snowfall, she was going over to the University of Minnesota to take her GRE, Graduate Record Exam. It was on a Saturday morning and the snow was coming down pretty good, and wouldn't you know, she ran into a snowplow with my car. (laughs) So it tested my conviction as to supporting the program. I had the thing put back together again, but I didn't go that far after that, to sacrifice an automobile for the program.

Q: But it showed dedication.

A: Yeah, well temporarily. We were going through our history of reform and collaboration towards reform, and another part of our reform agenda, another piece of the entire reform picture was the professional pay plan.

I should talk a little bit about the professional pay plan, in that we started out back in 1997, thinking about alternative compensation. Again, I was on an AFT taskforce on alternative compensation, and in that AFT taskforce we decided to call it professional pay, because we wanted to symbolize what it ought to be, which is professional pay for professional work, for professionals. So when I started thinking about it and planning and again, we negotiated a labor management committee on that subject. We decided to call it professional pay, and it of course got shortened to pro-pay. So Denver has Q-comp and we have pro-pay, although it went through several, again several iterations of names. It started out as standards based pay and then it went to -- oh, I'm forgetting some of them now, but continuous improvement compensation, so you get a "Kick", C-I-C.

Q: Oh, OK.

A: That didn't work. It didn't work with you, it didn't work with the troops, and it was way too long and didn't come

trippingly off the tongue. So after several years, it finally ended up the pro-pay plan. We believe that alternative compensation…although it's now becoming, in several locations in this country, not alternative compensation any more but the compensation program for teachers… includes some really excellent research, based on excellent research on professional development. The committee examined all the research on pay that they could possibly find, and the literature on pay. They examined pay in the private sector and they examined the history of pay in the public sector. The committee really did an extensive job of examining what was out there about pay. We then included some folks on that committee who were community members, who were administrators, who were other folks who could think about pay, help us think through the whole pay system. We learned a lot from Denver, but we learned most I think, from Douglas County, Colorado.

Q: Really?

A: And that's Rob Wille. That's where Rob got his claim to fame. So when we talk about performance based pay, we talk about professional pay, we talk about alternative compensation, whatever the term, in this state the Governor calls it Q-comp, for quality compensation. The legislature called it alternative teacher professional pay system,

which is typically a legislative term, which is ridiculous. Anyway, that's what it says in the legislation. We thought at the time, and I have spoken around the country about professional pay. A wholly different system of pay is kind of the final piece of the professional model that we have been working on since 1985. So it took until approximately 2005 for us to get some of this stuff up and going with a lot of teachers, about 1,900 teachers the first time around. That took twenty years of developing the professional model. All of the pieces fit together. They were all developed by labor management committees. They were all kept going by labor management advisory committees. They were all kept going by really skilled teacher leaders, who are the ones who maintain the programs, grow the programs, keep the spirit and the philosophy of the programs intact, and keep the programs alive. So we believe pretty strongly, and I learned this from Rob Wille, that if you're going to develop a good professional pay program that is indeed not just tweaking the old salary schedule, that you really need to build that on a scaffolding or on a foundation of all of the other pieces of the professional model that we've developed, because you need teachers who can work together, who know how to mentor, who know how to coach each other, who have

an idea of what a profession looks like, who have gone through a rigorous tenure process, who are comfortable with a Peer Review process, who know what good professional development is, and either experience it at their school site or lead it themselves. All of these pieces of the professional model are made whole by the professional pay plan.

Now the professional pay plan, as I said, I spoke for probably the last eight years as being the final piece of the professional model. I'm changing my tune now a little bit. I think what we still have not developed enough is professional leaderships, and particularly professional teacher leadership. Now some places have done it better than we have. Cincinnati has a much better program on teacher leadership, but I think we need to take it one step further and have teachers leading schools. That's where we are kind of now, with New York City, with Philadelphia, with some of the other cities around the country, who are trying teacher led schools, self-governed schools, union schools, whatever we call them, developing that kind of teacher leadership and teacher led programs, instructional leadership teams and having those be effective at every site. So the instructional leaders, the teacher leaders, are the ones that are actually running the instructional

program at the site. Somewhere in there, teacher leadership or professional leadership, and professional pay are kind of I guess, may be the final two pieces.

Professional pay, we designed after again, I had been a part of a taskforce at the AFT, on union professional development. That isn't exactly the title of it but it's close. We were developing, with Joan Snowden, what union professional development should look like and how it should be delivered and by whom. One of the resource folks who worked with that taskforce was Tom Corcoran from CIPRI in Pennsylvania. Tom Corcoran told us, on several occasions, his research on good professional development and what it looks like. Good professional development, he said starts with learning a new skill, a new body of knowledge, a new set of behaviors. Then the second thing is trying them out in a classroom, preferably in your own classroom, and having people observe you trying them out and coaching you on that. And then the third piece to make it yours and to make it stick, is that you reflect on what the results were. You do action research in your classroom, to find out whether it really worked or not, and then reflect on that with your colleagues. In that three step process, then professional development will be meaningful and it

will be time well spent and money well spent, because the results will either tell you as a teacher, this is something that you ought to incorporate in your instructional kit bag, your instructional modus operandi, or if it didn't work, then it will tell you to try something else or to tweak it or to talk with other teachers and have them try it and observe them doing it. It will lead you into making it your own. School boards often complain and unions and teachers complain also and have for years, about the literally billions, with a "B" dollars, spent on staff development, that is absolutely worthless, and it's like pouring money down the drain because they're one shot, drive by professional development. The teachers sit and listen, and it ends there, and there's no follow up. What usually happens is no matter how inspiring or energizing or motivating a one shot deal is, the tendency is, because teachers are busy people, they take the folder with all the stuff in it, back to their classroom, they put it on their desk, and then pretty soon it gets to be the bottom of the pile and then pretty soon it's thrown in a drawer, because you have to clean off your desk for open house or something, and then once it gets in the drawer or a file cabinet, it's lost forever and that's the end of it.

Q: Right.

A: We decided we were going to design our pro-pay plan, our professional pay plan, around good professional development, so that it would not only inspire and encourage, instigate and motivate teachers to take a good professional development, which is get the skill, get the new behaviors, get the new philosophy, but also would then require them to go to step two. So step one is getting the new skills and knowledge. Step two is actually implementing it in their classroom or at their worksite, having somebody observe and do action research on what happened, and then requiring also, the reflection as to what happened, with colleagues, either through video taping or through actual classroom observation. So that's called the one, two, three plan. Pretty clever huh? (laughs)

Q: Yes.

A: It has been phenomenally successful, because the teachers don't get the increased pay added to their base pay, until they have completed all three parts. They've gotten the new skill, they've tried it out, they've done the action research. Their action research has been looked at and scored by some teachers who have been trained and who have inner rater reliability on what they're seeing in the action research projects, and then the reflection piece.

So teachers can do two of those cycles a year if they have enough time and stamina. Usually they don't. Usually they can only do one a year, if they do a really good job of it. The district and the union are the ones who decide what the new skill or knowledge base is that they want the teachers to get, and so only the approved courses can be pro-pay courses. And then they get $1,000 added to their base pay, after they're completed and it's approved.

Q: So it's a straight $1,000? It's not based on a score?

A: No, it's a straight $1,000.

Q: OK.

A: That has been going on now for about, I want to say five years or so. Then, we added some new wrinkles, and after the pro-pay plan was up and really very successful -- well, before I go on, I should give for instance, one example, is a course called Envoy. This course on Envoy is a course that teachers take in order to gain additional skills in handling student behavior, and it's a non-verbal communication course in what teachers do in the classroom that either set kids off or calm them down. How they should gesture, or all kinds of non-verbal communication that affect kids a lot but teachers usually don't know.

Q: I think all parents should have that too.

A: Amen. So that course has been very successful, and the instructor of that course does what she calls a green chair. She takes a little fold-up chair. After they've taken the course, then she takes her little green chair and she goes and sits in that classroom and watches the teachers implement. It's that kind of instructor follow up in the classroom, giving pointers in the classroom, she can then kind of whisper in their ear with some suggestions that are really the most helpful for teachers, because when you get the observation and the pointers and the feedback right in the classroom, it's just like with kids. When you get the pointer right then and there, that's when it takes. Then they do the action research as to what happened with the student behavior. I mean did it change if they followed up? So they can compare it to a class where they don't use it? Or they can compare it to their classroom behavior before they started it? So that kind of action research with their own kids, in their own classroom, really makes it theirs.

OK. So the next thing that came along that had to do with pay is that we had a state -- we have a governor in this state who was enamored of alternative compensation, thought that would make a name for himself nationally. I think

he's now chair of the Education Committee of the Governors Conference, or he's on the --

Q: Who is that?

A: Tim Pawlenty.

Q: He is in there.

A: He's on the committee anyway.

Q: Yeah.

A: So he thought he kind of wanted to make a name for himself, so he put in his budget several -- well, I'm getting ahead of myself. The first thing that happened is that there was the state of Minnesota got a federal grant to try out alternative compensation. They wanted urban, rural and suburban districts who were trying out alternative compensation, to do a comparative study, since the U.S. Department of Education only does flat out comparison studies now. So they were looking for locals for school districts to be a part of the grant. It was offered to St. Paul. St. Paul union turned it down, and so I raised my hand and called my friends in the Minnesota Department of Ed and say you know, "Send us in coach, we'd like to try it."

Q: You really are different from St. Paul aren't you?

A: Yeah. (laughs) So it happened then, that we were a little late getting in, but we got into the federal grant and as a result of the federal grant, that meant that we would use three of our alternative sites that were already doing the pro-pay, as the comparative group. And then in the new sites, we'd be using the teacher advancement program sites, the TAP program.

Q: Oh, that is what TAP is, OK.

A: TAP is -- we used to say that it was funded by the Milliken Brothers, but now they've changed that name now to be a National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, NIET. The TAP program requires that a staff vote to have everybody do performance based pay, and it includes direct inclusion of the student scores in your own classrooms.

Q: I was about to ask, where is the students scoring.

A: And they also included scored, multiple observations of teachers and they also include scores of the school-wide gains. It all requires value added assessment. The reason I thought that some of our sites would be ready for it, is that we have a really great director of research evaluation and assessment in the Minneapolis schools, and his name is Dave Highstead. He's been doing value added assessment in the district for a number of years. I think I mentioned

once earlier, that the teachers really had grown to trust the value added assessment, at least it wouldn't hurt them. So I called together, the sites who were professional development centers, because those sites would be the sites that would have the professional relationships that might allow them to be able to embrace something as new and as in some ways scary, because you can't start a TAP site at a site where the adults don't trust each other, where there's hostility. That absolutely won't work. We called a meeting of the professional development centers and said, here's the grant, here's the TAP program. Are you interested in having a team of teachers at least spend a little bit of time further investigating it, and then make a decision as to whether you want to offer it to your whole site? Now while they were doing that, we were developing the processes or modifying the processes. We decided that a school site would have to vote by seventy percent of the staff, of the licensed staff, would have to vote to agree to do the TAP program before they could actually implement it. There were several sites that had teams that wanted to present it to their staffs, and the guidelines of the federal grand narrowed it down to size of site and grade levels. So it was offered to several sites and three immediately voted for it, and those three became the new

TAP sites. So we had this TAP sites, we had the pro-pay sites, under the federal grant.

After that, then came the money from Governor Pawlenty, in which he put money into his budget and convinced the legislature, and we helped convince the legislature, that they ought to put some money in the budget to promote what he called Q-comp, which included a provision that required that if you were going to do Q-comp and get state money, that you had to design a pay system that would take teachers off of the salary schedule or the traditional salary grid, and that the traditional salary grid and the traditional steps and lanes, just earning a step because you survived another year and maintained your employment, and moving lanes just based on credit and nothing else, would not be acceptable. So that's when we started trying to put together the pro-pay plan, which was our one, two, three plan, and the TAP schools, and put it all together under an umbrella, under the legislation, which was again, the Governor called Q-comp and the legislation called A-TAPs. We did that and we have continued to get funding for that now, I think we're into the fourth and maybe the fifth year. So we have put pretty close to $15 million into Minneapolis teachers pay, that would not have been there had we just stayed on steps and

lanes and not gotten into any of the professional pay issues. All of that money came from external sources. It all went directly, governed by the labor management committee on professional pay or alternative compensation. It did not pass go, did not end up in the school district general fund and disappear. It all went directly to teacher pay.

Now there is another issue there, probably ten years ago now, our lobbyists started saying to me, Louise we aren't -- because of the population shifts and because of the demographic shifts in this state, the city legislators are eventually, probably sooner than later, are going to lose control. They aren't going to be the heads of committees any more, that suburban legislators are, and once the suburban legislators take over, all the extra money that the urbans have gotten, because we had powerful people in as head of the Senate Education Committee and head of the Senate Tax Committee and head of the House Education Committee, all that extra money is going to be in jeopardy. If you want to get some money into teacher's pockets, you're going to have to figure out some other way to do it. So that's when we started investigating, and I had Rob Wille come in. We started working with the folks

on the AFT taskforce. We had a subcommittee in the teachers union reform network on alternative compensation. So we began steeping ourselves in everything we could find and everything we could figure out on our own, on alternative compensation, and that's why we started it.

So if you think why we started it, what the lobbyists said did come true, and now if you look at, there's $800 million in a categorical fund in the state legislature. It's being used as a political football at the moment, so we'll see if it stays there or not. The legislator is now back in control by the Democrats, the Governor obviously is a Republican, and so they took it out of their budget because they know he wants it in his budget. So we'll see what happens. But it's a big issue. It's an issue that I don't believe is going to go away. It's the parents and the community and the business community, and just plain folks out there who are citizens and workers themselves, believe the logic of having something, some tie between teachers' pay and how kids do in their classroom. It's logical to them and it's, I think futile to try to refute that in some ways. Since the politicians and the public want some connectors, and if you think about it philosophically, we have been like the two rails of a railroad track. One rail

was what teachers do and the other rail was what happens to students. But for the first hundred years or so of public education, there were no connectors, there were no ties, the planks that connected those rails. Now we're finally trying to put those ties in and connect what teachers do with how kids do, and we're doing that through value added assessment and actually being able to extract the how much the teacher actually helps the kids in his or her classroom grow and learn and develop. Those are important connectors that we ignored, railed against and opposed way too long.

Q: Because you're afraid you're going to create a two tier pay system?

A: I think teachers were afraid and still are, that the system would be -- that their pay would be based for instance, on one standardized test, a state test, one shot and that was it. They would also be afraid that it was only, for instance a high school, they see 150 kids and they only have influence over one student for 55 minutes a day. Other teachers have the rest of the influence. In an elementary school, they have more influence over a group of youngsters for a whole day, but there are lots of other folks who have influence over how that student does. Obviously teachers are always worried about how the students come into their classroom. So many are so far

behind, are so behaviorally discrepant, are so unsupported out in the community and at home, that they worry about those things. You have to assure teachers, first of all, that all of those things are going to be taken into consideration and they aren't going to be judged on one shot, one test, one kid, one event, and have their take home pay based on that. Partly it's because they don't trust the people who are advocating for that kind of system, because the folks who are advocating for that kind of system are traditional enemies, who aren't supportive of public education usually, and so it's hard for them to really warm up to having somebody who is not a traditional ally, offer the money. So you know, some teachers who base their whole existence on philosophy, don't want to think it's dirty money to come from the Millikens, the junk bond kings.

Q: Right.

A: They think it's not a good idea to accept money from Eli Broad, who likes public charters. They don't think it's a good idea to accept a plan or money from a governor who hasn't been supportive, and so if you look at it from that standpoint, they just say no, we should not have anything to do with it. But opportunities sometimes come in very strangely wrapped packages.

What we have said from the very beginning with performance based pay or pro-pay or Q-comp or what's the Denver one? Pro-comp. What we know for sure, is that teachers need to be the ones developing the systems. So it can't be designed by somebody else. There are folks who can help. In Denver they had a compensation expert on the big committee that helped develop it. Compensation experts are good because they can help you figure out how to calculate into the future and things like that, but the teachers need to be the ones to help design what it's going to look like. And so my sales pitch to the teachers all along has been look, in this state, Q-comp is going to happen, and the Governor is going to get that funding, and he is going to put it in somebody's pockets. What we don't want is for the Governor to design it, the Governor's staff to design it, to have the legislators design it, to have the legislator's staff to design it, because then we know for sure it would be not something that we would like.

Q: See that's why I see the danger in this. They'll see yours, let's say Alabama sees yours, says we can do that. They have a weak union system, a weak teachers voice, and they'll implement it and it will be kind of like what happened to the charters.

A: Well they did that in Texas and the Texas pay system has collapsed, because it was not created by teachers and of course it wasn't embraced by teachers, and so the system has gone down the tubes. So I hope they learned something. Well, they never learn much in Texas. (laughter) It's just Texas. But if they were smart in recreating it, they would create it collaboratively with the teachers in Texas, and so that it would be something that would be palatable. The same thing happened in Florida. We have evidence, big evidence, because those are big states with big bucks, and they went down really fast. It didn't take long for them to collapse.

Q: And Florida has a strong union voice.

A: Right.

Q: And it still didn't work.

A: Right.

Q: Because Bush was ignoring the requests?

A: I believe.

Q: OK.

A: I'm not totally sure, but I think that the legislator and the Governor sort of just did it, over their objections. That's why we're working very hard in the AFT, and I'm trying to help them out a little here and there, is wherever they're thinking of or trying to implement now, is

the federal TIF grants, Teacher Incentive Fund grants, that are some significant grants coming from the federal government, that were supported of course, by the Bush Administration and go through the U.S. Department of Education. These TIF grants are all around the country now, and those folks who are implementing those TIF grants again, can either do it well and implement it with good processes, inclusive processes, implement it collaboratively, or they can just do it top down and say this is the way it's going to be, and it will collapse again. So that's why we're trying to help out some of those TIF sites.

Now the leadership is still elusive. When I said that I thought that in addition to professional pay, professional leadership is one of the final pieces of the professional model. In the other professions, they have the collaborative collegial leadership designs, so that in a law firm, the lawyers in the law firm are the ones who make decisions about leadership, and they're the ones who have a lot to say about how the place is operated and governed. One of our labor law firms that's in your town, had some interesting experiences with leadership a few years ago. That kind of collegial running of the firm and the collegial decision making and the collegial decisions

about who leads, and what the focus of their work is going to be, is something that we still find elusive in education, possibly nonexistent. But the one place that it has been happening or it happened for a number of years, was at the Patrick Henry High School in Minneapolis. Patrick Henry High School in Minneapolis, that was the place I described as the professional practice school. The staff of teachers who started that professional practice school, expanded beyond that and developed a teacher leadership model at that school site, where they cashed in the assistant principal positions and they had deans who would take care of all the behavior issues, and then they would have what they call PHILs, which are Patrick Henry Instructional Leaders. PHILs were out of the classroom for generally half a day, and they were the ones that led all the professional programs, all the instructional programs in the site. So the principal was one who was sort of like the, I suppose the head lawyer in the firm, but the principal was supportive of the model. The principal worked with the PHILs in the program, but it was not a top down system of leadership, it was not, I'm the principal, I have the title, I'm the leader.

Q: Right.

A: I've taken them all over the country, talking about that teacher leadership model, which is a model that to this day, exists hardly anywhere.

Q: It sounds very hard to do. I mean, you have the principals who still have the mentality that I'm the boss. You have to find the teachers that have a base core, that trust each other to put the leader out in front.

A: Or develop it.

Q: It sounds like a very unique --

A: Well, they kept it going however, over a lot of changes. They actually kept it going over a couple of different changes in principals, and they also have kept it going over lots of changes in staff. The community has been supportive and important also. And it's always reexamined, you know it's being reexamined now.

I use that as an example, because the kind of teacher leadership that creates that kind of trust is absolutely a rarity, as rare as hen's teeth. That's what we, I believe, need more than anything else, is teachers to be trusted. Those instructional leadership teams at the site, and we didn't invent that. We copied that again, from Cincinnati. I should insert here also, that teacher leaders and union

leaders in the AFT and in the Teacher Union Reform Network, always copy liberally from one another, and usually with attribution (laughter) and thanks. It's rare that you find something that you absolutely create out of old cloth. I always try to remember who you know, had the good idea first. But those instructional leadership teams be leading the instructional program at the site. I can't tell you the number of sites where it doesn't happen because of the administrators thinking that they are the be all and the end all and the final decision maker, and I can play around with collaboration a little bit, but at the end of the day I'm the one deciding. I think that happens partly because what we talked about with our being in separate bargaining units and separate unions and separate -- when we separated ourselves out, away, that maybe that wasn't such a good idea. But there also, there just has been not enough will or belief or training of administrators in this district, in this country.

One of sort of the unsung heroes was my colleague from Dade County, and Dade County always, for a long time, had an administrator academy, a principals academy, and principals had to go through that before they could be a principal in Dade County. It was very good. I don't think it exists any more.

Q: I think they scrapped it.

A: Yeah. It was so good they got rid of it. Leadership is sort of the final frontier. We tried developing our own leadership model and our own leadership masters degree program, and when it was all said and done, we could not get sufficiently out of the old training mode of the educational administration training at the higher ed. We couldn't get them out of the mold of sitting and lecturing in a classroom, instead of what we wanted them to do in this program, was to be experiential and actually get out and watch people as they worked in a school. Like facilitating a group meeting or being department head at a school, or running a staff meeting at a school, or doing professional development at a school. We could never blast them out of the university.

Q: They couldn't get out of the ivory towers?

A: No.

Q: To do anthropology type work?

A: No, and saw no reason to do it. So they still wanted the teachers in the class to write the experience up and bring it in, and they'd discuss it in class. It is not the same, it just isn't. You can write anything. You can serve your colleagues, you can do whatever you want, but unless you're actually you know, watch somebody do it, or even simulate

the experience. They could have done simulations. I will admit that part of the reason that this particular cohort, which was the Minneapolis Federations, St. Paul, or the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul Public Schools, Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis Principals Forum. All of those groups tried to collaborate on this, because we all wanted to do a better job of training teacher leaders and principals. The first year was supposed to all be generic leadership skills and knowledge, and then they were going to split off; one group into teacher leadership and the other group into getting their principals license. The first year, the group kept asking me to come back about every other month, saying OK, now if we choose the teacher leadership path and we go that direction, where we really want to go, because we want to continue to be teachers, we want to continue to have the connection with the classroom, but we want to go into teacher leadership roles. What is that going to get us? And I never had an answer, because we hadn't embedded in the contract or in the requirements, for any of the leadership jobs in any of this professional model. We hadn't embedded this masters degree in teacher leadership as a requirement.

[END OF FILE 4]

A: ... or a prerequisite. You know, I'm pretty good at double talk, and so I tried my best, but they saw through it and so the majority of them ended up going into the principal licensure track, or they dropped out after the first year, because we didn't have the actual opportunities that required getting this additional training.

That was part of our own fault, in not having thought that through ahead of time. Now, after that two years, we dropped it and said, this didn't work like we wanted it to work, and I think that if we recreate it, we're going to have to recreate it -- I don't know whether we have to recreate it with a different institution or we have to recreate it differently.

Q: To lock up the needs of younger generation.

A: Right. And oh my goodness, that adds a whole new dimension. (laughs)

Q: Yes, because we all know that they are more demanding and want more things out of it.

A: Instantly.

Q: Yeah, instantly.

A: Also think that you know, walking in the door, that they can do anything. They have a lot of skills and if they

don't have skills, they think they can pick it up on the internet, and they can just go ahead and do anything. I have three colleagues, and we go around the country doing training on the generations in the workplace, about the millennials and the Gen-Xers and the boomers and the traditionalists, all trying to work in the same workplace, and it doesn't work. (laughs)

Q: It's interesting.

A: Yeah, that's how you talk Minnesotan; it's interesting. That's how you talk when your Swedish relatives serve you anchovy potato casserole. (laughs) It's interesting. Well, we also -- you mentioned Edison School. And I think you meant the Edison Corporation.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I'll just slip in a few sentences about that, because that was part of an interesting experiment that I had quite a bit to do with, and I've always wondered whether it should be called Sundin's folly or not. At the time when Edison was much more active in going around to urban school districts saying, we'll take over your schools, I thought well, they were knocking on the door, and Minneapolis was -- they were threatening that either they came into Minneapolis or they'd start charter schools. So I said to the board chair and the superintendent, well one way we can

handle this is we can invite them to be a Minneapolis school. If we bring them into the tent, we've got some control over them.

We can require them to do the same kind of student tests. We can require them to do the same you know, assessments, and we can really know what's going on or not. So the superintendent and the board sort of accepted the wisdom of that, and so we invited Edison to take over a Minneapolis school. Actually, it was a building that wasn't currently a school, over on Lake Street, which is now eventually going to become, I think a parking lot for the light rail system.

We wrote a very extensive memorandum of agreement with the union, about how the adults in the building; who'd they be, what kind of professionals they'd be, because at that time, Edison wanted them all to be you know, like in the first four years of teaching so they'd be cheap, how many paraprofessionals there'd be, and all that kind of stuff. We wrote whose evaluation system would be used, so they couldn't just kick our folks out on a whim. So we did this extensive memorandum of agreement with the union, and then the district did an extensive memorandum of agreement with

them on the governance and the facilities and all that kind of stuff. We all did that and they became a Minneapolis school. The long and the short of it is, that I think they were there for maybe three years, and for all three of those years, they were either the bottom or the second to the bottom in achievement in the district. Finally, Dr. Carol Johnson said you know, we can't afford to have kids at the bottom, and you're not improving any, so I don't care what your sales pitch is, you're out of here. So they did, I think change to a charter school, but I think it's a very small one.

So essentially, our goal in the beginning worked, because had they not been a part of the system and had not had to take the same tests and do the same as the rest of the schools, we never would have known whether they were really, kids were really succeeding or not, because otherwise, you just have to buy their PR, and their PR can make anything sound wonderful. The other thing that they did, I think as poorly as I have ever seen done, was choose leaders. The people that they chose as administrators were, I think they went through about five in the three years they were there, and each one was worse than the next. It was just phenomenal. So anybody who tells us

that private sector people do a better of job of selecting and training leaders, pish-posh. (laughter) It ain't so. So that was our --

Q: That was your Edison experiment.

A: Our Edison Experiment. We also had supportive legislation of much of our reform agenda. So we would, in most cases, as we did with the contract, we'd try it out first and then we would imbed it in contract and in legislation. But we had supportive legislation for, I already talked about the Q-comp legislation, the alternative compensation legislation. The support for site staff development committees getting the funds, the legislature requires a two percent set aside of all district funds, two percent of the entire district budget has to go into staff development. The requirement is that the district committee be a majority of teachers, and that the committees at the school site be a majority of teachers, to spend that money. So that's an empowering thing for the profession.

Q: And they seem to go along with this each year, each budget cycle, that allow teachers to make that decision.

A: Well, mostly. Then Education Minnesota did a project called the tall project -- Teachers as Leaders and Learners, or Teachers as Learners and Leaders, I don't

remember which. That was training the teacher leaders in all of the school districts around the state, 350 school districts, training those teacher leaders on how to do that, because in a lot of those little burghs, where the union doesn't have the masses to be powerful, the school district superintendent just ignored it or said get out of here or whatever, or used the money for something else, to carpet his office or whatever. Education Minnesota did a good job of training those teacher leaders around the state to do it right. We got the residency program, which is that first year, eighty percent teaching, twenty percent continuing in their professional development. Got that in law. The Peer Review law didn't come in until 1995. We started it in '89, so in '95 then, it requires the bargaining unit to negotiate with the school district for a Peer Review option. Site based management and self-governed schools, we got just this last legislative session. We, in this state, have very good language in a Public Employee Labor Relations Act, which came in 1970, with the advent of our winning our bargaining election and our strike. It was part of the strike settlement legislation for our strike. And the Teacher Tenure Act. There's two Teacher Tenure Acts in this state; one for cities are the first class and one for the rest of them.

I should go back for just a second and say that in 1970, as a result of our strike, there are historians and researchers who believe that that was a turning point or a tipping point, of politics in the city. Up until that time, Minneapolis was a very conservative, WASPish, business run town, very different again, from St. Paul. St. Paul was more ethnic, blue collar, but Minneapolis was known as a business town. As a matter of fact, our current superintendent, Dr. Bill Green, is going to write a book, at least he's been threatening to write a book about our strike and how it turned the politics of the city. We're now, it's always liberal politicians, Democratic, Farm or Labor Party controlled. So that very public activity sort of helped illustrate or helped push them over the edge.

Q: So it was a push of consciousness for those who couldn't get into power?

A: Right.

Q: Thanks a lot. (laughs)

A: You're welcome. And I always, as a result of our strike, I said the Public Employee Labor Relations Act was actually signed by the President of the AFL-CIO. The deal was cut with the legislative leaders in his office. The Public Employee Labor Relations Act is intact today, as opposed to some of the rest of you, who have lost yours. And some in

the dead of night. At every AFL-CIO convention there's an AFSCME guy that always comes up to me and falls to his knees and kisses my rings, because he's about the only one that remembers now, but he says, "Thank you, thank you, thank you for the Public Employee Labor Relations Act."

Q: (laughs) Nice.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now all these laws that have been passed, that started out in your contract, do they cover just Minneapolis, or do they cover the whole state?

A: No. The whole state.

Q: So the whole state has Peer Review?

A: Yes, but it needs to be negotiated. So there are lots of districts where they don't want to touch it and don't do it and ignore it.

Q: So it's not a requirement?

A: No.

Q: OK.

A: But if they do it, then they have to do it with the bargaining unit.

Q: Got ya. OK, so I imagine a majority want to ignore it.

A: Well yeah, there's quite a few that ignore it, but you know, there have been times that the legislature has dangled incentives in front of school districts. They

haven't done that with Peer Review but they did do it with staff development one year or for several years, on standards. They dangled $84 per pupil for staff development and everybody bit because they needed the money. If you took the money you had to do development of student standards. Another time was with the performance based pay, or the Q-comp or the A-TAPs or whatever you want to call it. Dangling the $879 or $869 million in front of unions and school districts has worked, because there is quite a number of school districts who are experimenting with it, who are doing it. Now out of the 350 it's probably you know, a dozen are really doing it well and maybe -- I don't know, I've lost track, but maybe 20. So it's not an overwhelming majority but a lot of them are interested, a lot of them are working on it, and a lot of them are writing proposals to see if they can get it approved.

Q: So the two big ones are the standards and pay, that AFT was pushing for the last decade, even almost two decades.

A: That were incented by money at the legislature.

Q: Right.

A: Right. And then you know, for some of the rest of them we garnered money through grants, the federal mentor grant, the Exxon grant through the AFT, for the professional

practice school. The federal money through the Minnesota Department of Ed, for the teacher centers. So you're always scrambling for grants, and I guess it's one of my claims to fame, that over the years I've really brought in several million dollars through grants, to keep the programs going.

The labor management model and philosophy that we practiced and believed in really strongly, and that I started basically back in 1986, by bringing in the Harvard Group, the Getting to Yes group at Harvard, and doing that training and doing the refreshers four different times; the training with pre negotiations training that included the entire school board, the administrative team and the entire union team, and the first one around we also included six surrounding school districts. We did 30 hours of training by the Harvard Group, on how you work together, how you look at an issue and see what the important things are in that issue, that you can work on and preserve together, to work on principled bargaining. They taught us that. Then the group, the name was changed to CMI, Conflict Management, Inc., for the next time around, and now it's Thoughtbridge. Now they've kind of priced themselves of the market so we can't afford them any more.

Q: So where do they go now?

A: Well, I don't know who's paying them, but I haven't found any school districts that can afford them now.

Q: I'm sure they can't.

A: They must be working with somebody who's got lots of money. So they must be working with --

Q: Healthcare probably.

A: Private sector. And we also, I think I mentioned, had the world's oldest living Panasonic partnership, twelve years, and the Panasonic partnership was always, always important because along with the training of the leaders, they always insisted that it be all the representatives of the three legged stool would be together; the union, the board and the administration. So when we'd go to Panasonic leadership training or Panasonic conferences, they would always emphasize that. Panasonic did board training and they also were instrumental in providing researchers and consultants to be helpful in whatever we were working on at the time.

We also were one of the founding members of T.U.R.N., the Teacher Union Reform Network. The Teacher Union Reform Network began as a group of 24 teacher unions who were from both AFT and NEA, locals, who viewed themselves as most progressive unions in the country. I'm now one of the co-

directors of the Teacher Union Reform Network. We, last year, celebrated our tenth anniversary, which most people were predicting our demise after the first year. So we thought that was quite a milestone. The Teacher Union Reform Network has now expanded and we're over 30 locals. It is a place where teachers, union leaders get together, and we share ideas. We have the kinds of discussions that in some ways we used to have around the AFT Executive Council table. They're thoughtful discussions, they're engaging discussions, they're active discussions about things that are difficulties, things that are possible, things that are probable futures, things that are scary futures. We bring in writers and researchers and gurus and you know, big names, little names, to help with that discussion. It's a place where it's safe, it's professional development for union leaders. It's a place where you can get help, it's a place where you can get ideas, and it's a place where it's fun to be, because there are very few places at home, where a union president can actually share discussions with folks in that same role. When you get a few miles away from home and you have other union leaders from primarily other urban locals, who are facing exactly what you're facing, and you face the same political struggles, the same political dangers and the

same larger political issues in the community, with declining enrollment, with charter schools, with conservative politicians trying to eliminate public education altogether, with consumer parents trying to push you in one way. All of those things are issues that the majority of our T.U.R.N. members experience, and so the professional development for union goons is something that we value. We get together quarterly, and the favorite activity of the group is to hear what other people are doing, and to commiserate and to maybe offer some suggestions and say, well we tried this and it worked or we tried this and it didn't work, we can help with this or we've got language in our contract on that. And then in between time, we have a T.U.R.N. list on the internet, so you can post a question to your colleagues in between time and say, I've got this issue, what have you got? There have been several of those that have come across the T.U.R.N. list just recently, from people who are either in negotiations or writing memorandums, or doing something that they're looking for help or looking for contract language. So then we send them what we've got and it gives them a repository of actual things that are live and working in other places. School boards and school board teams or school district teams, are always more open to

things if they know that it's actually going on someplace else and that they aren't inventing something.

Q: What was the initial reaction from AFT and NEA, on creating T.U.R.N.?

A: Well originally, the two internationals were, I think puzzled by T.U.R.N., and I think in some ways -- well it depended on the people, as to whether they were angry or hurt. I think that particularly, the AFT thought, well we already have the Executive Council meetings, where discussions take place, and then we have the K-12 program policy council, where substantive discussions on substantive issues take place, so what's the need? Then of course they immediately leap to personalities and the needs of personalities. I think what they didn't understand but they now do -- oh, they also, I think thought that it was a threat.

Q: A threat on the education issues department?

A: No. I think they thought it was -- actually, some thought it was a threat to membership, that we were going to ask locals to decertify and join T.U.R.N. So we did a lot of reassuring and now, at least with the AFT, with the next generation of leaders, I think there's a pretty genuine comfort in that it's OK and it serves a purpose. Actually, I think there's some blessing to expand the T.U.R.N.

network into international T.U.R.N., which we're going to start at the next meeting, which is in June, in Toronto.

Q: Excellent.

A: And I think some realization that the more in depth discussions are things that actually can't take place at a council meeting any more.

Q: Not in the structure they have set up now.

A: No. Well for one thing it's too big. For the second thing, you've got all five divisions there, and so you have to stick with this sort of generic, political stuff at those meetings, and then just have reports from the various divisions. The program policy council, there really are so many policies now that are in jeopardy and need discussing. An that too, it's difficult when there's 50 people sitting around that table, to get a word in edgewise. So I think that it just fills a niche and it plays a role, and I don't think that anybody's, at least in the AFT, is threatened any more. Some people have sort of denigrated it lately by saying well, it's just people who want to sit around and talk, and they haven't ever done anything, and there haven't ever been any products. So I you know, I think it's all right. I think we have had products. I think there are evidences of our work in lots of subtle ways; in lots of contracts, in lots of discussions, in lots of

districts, that now can collaborate where they didn't before, relationships between union leaders and superintendents and boards. I think if we were to quantify, some might be subtle and some might be overt and some might be dramatic, but we haven't spent any time doing that.

And the other thing is, I just think the opportunity to have that professional development, without the requirement to have a product, is OK. So that's why we've become a self-sustaining network. We don't rely on grant money any more, because they always required the products. And you know that there's a need, because the locals are still spending their own money to come.

Q: It really is a therapy.

A: Well, yes you could say that.

Q: In therapy you don't see like a real physical product.

A: Right.

Q: But it feels good, you're getting better internally and externally and for everybody around you.

A: Right.

Q: So it's kind of like that.

A: And your therapist sort of leads you, through guiding questions, and listens. I think that's probably a good description. Now in the NEA, something different has taken

place, the NEA T.U.R.N. locals, have coalesced and become a group to be reckoned with within the NEA, and have asked for meetings with Reg Weaver and the other officers, on a regular basis, because they have been upset that there isn't more time and attention placed in the NEA, on large locals, on reform issues, on having a place where the large locals can get together to talk about professional issues, and to share. Because in the NEA, the NCUEA, the National Council of Urban Education Associations, is not a place to do that. It's a political entity, and they end up in endless discussions about what their position is going to be on endless new business items at the convention, and it's just not the place where you can have the kinds of staff professional development and support and discussions that they want to take place. So I think they're continuing to have those discussions, and I think that -- I don't really know to what extent you know, things are changing. So I think that's kind of a good thing happening within the NEA.

Q: I can just see it turning into another council or a committee, that NEA loves to create, and get bogged down once a new president comes in.

A: I think that those NEA locals are also worried about that, and also want to try to make sure that that doesn't happen.

Q: It sounds like they're still trying to bring up what Bob Chase started, was new unionism.

A: Right. So then the other thing that has kind of blossomed out of the T.U.R.N. network, is the Institute for Teacher Union Leadership, which has since been renamed to the Tom Mooney Institute for Teachers Union Leadership, because after Tom's death -- he was a part of the team that developed and taught in, and was one of the leaders of the Institute for Teachers Union Leadership, one of the movers in that institute. To honor him after his death and to continue the work in his name, we renamed it Mooney Institute for Teachers Union Leadership. Our first activity was to have a two year cycle of support for a group of half a dozen locals, who were experiencing leadership change or who were anticipating leadership change, who had younger people or people who weren't currently in leadership, that they could bring. For two summers we had week-long institutes. The first one was here in Minneapolis, at the University of Minnesota, and the second one was at Harvard. Those institutes, we talked about what we developed as the three frames of teachers union leadership; the industrial frame, the professional frame, and the social justice frame. It doesn't mean that they are separate. It means teachers union leadership is a

whole thing, but it just means that there are aspects to teachers union leadership, that at one time or another, fit into those categories. And those locals then, we followed up with visits to their locals in their cities. We did reports on what we saw and what we experienced, had discussions with their teams as to where they wanted to go with the information and some plans, so they would develop some plans for the future, for leadership and for their locals. So we kept in touch with those locals at the day prior to T.U.R.N. meetings, because they were all T.U.R.N. locals, and then separately.

So we're at another point now, where we're trying to decide whether to start the next two years cycle for some more locals, and also whether to have a national conference or national seminar or national get together, to talk about what's happening in public education right now, and how to save it.

Q: That would be a different shift, but needed.

A: Right. Because it doesn't seem to be happening anyplace, where you can get sort of a -- I don't know whether you'd say a balanced discussion. There are plenty of conferences supported by the folks who are trying to do us in. But when you get for instance, QuEST conference this summer, and the AFT, that will be primarily instructional in nature. The

NEA convention is the last place in the world to have that discussion. We do think it's needed. So I think our next challenge now, is to see whether we can find enough sponsors and supporters to pull it off.

Q: Right. Would this be focused on issues of public education leadership, or encompass whole issues?

A: Well leadership certainly would have a huge part of it, but I think it probably would be broader than that.

Q: OK. And you mentioned social justice unionism. I know it was dear to Tom, as well as everybody, probably in T.U.R.N.

A: Particularly Tom.

Q: Right. What do you mean by social justice? Is it community level, with the United Way and food banking, or on a larger international scale?

A: Well of course for Tom it was all of the above and then some. Well social justice unionism, I think in my mind, mostly goes to the point that in our T.U.R.N. documents, our T.U.R.N. goals, our T.U.R.N. standards and our T.U.R.N. mission statement, we have in there that it is as much the responsibility of teacher unions and teacher union leaders, to be concerned about whether students learn or not, than it is to take care of our own members' needs. And that's where it kind of all comes together for me. Shanker was quoted with roughly that quote some years ago. I believe

pretty strongly that as a union and as a union leader, we have a dual role. One is to make sure that the teachers who are members of ours, are highly skilled, highly trained, highly supported and successful, and surrounded with the supports that will help them be successful. But at the same time, we have to look really clearly, and sometimes with a really white hot spotlight, at what's happening to kids in our classrooms. We can't assume that because teachers are skilled and happy and well paid and supported, that it necessarily is that the students in those classrooms are learning all that they can learn. So if you take on that dual responsibility, you need to have the cooperation and the ear and the collaboration of folks in the community. I think to some extent, I've learned the most about social justice unionism, from some of the other unions. For instance, hotel/restaurant employees. They do a great job of involving the faith community and the ethnic communities, because so many of their members are members of ethnic communities and recent immigrants. SEIU has a really good record in this town, of involving again, the faith community, the community leaders, not just politicians but all kinds of other community leaders. When you're on, for instance a picket line in front of a hotel in this town, when the hotel/restaurant employees go out,

which isn't very often, but I can remember in front of the biggest hotel in town, that we drove by today, there was a picket line out there when they first opened up, because they didn't sign an agreement right away. It looked like the United Nations. There were Somalis in full garb, and there were Hmong women and there were Hispanic males and there were you know, every part of the world that you can imagine, and all banging on pots and pans. And then there were those of us who were traditional holdovers, German Scandinavians from around here, and it was just fascinating. So as we were chanting and walking around and picketing, I just marveled. And then there were ministers there and there were politicians there and there were people from agencies there. It was pretty inspiring. They were successful of course, because you need everybody. We've been successful in this town, in having a what do you call that?

Q: A living wage?

A: A living wage campaign, thank you, and that was because we had the support of everybody. It is the thing that I think has been most difficult for me as a leader. I was always able to operate really well with a lot of the leaders, a lot of the communities, but what we didn't handle well in the Minneapolis schools, were the negative -- and we have

more than our share -- the negative leaders, primarily the African American leaders in the community, who are always negative against the schools and always willing to blame the schools. I always was jealous that Tom was really good at that and I wasn't. (laughs) I was able, on a personal level, to work with them, but there was just a point at which the relationship didn't work. But, social justice unionism is also being involved with and advertising the letter carriers' food drive, so that our members do that. Being on the United Way board. Now, I've been on the United Way board so many years, they finally passed a new policy that's going to kick me off. (laughter) Because they don't want anybody on there who has been on there more than fifteen years, which is probably all right. Newer, younger people should come on. But you know, there's always a struggle -- and this is where I think it's an interesting struggle, the NEA locals versus the AFT locals. The NEA locals like to say well, we get this new, fresh, young leadership all the time, every four years or at the most six years, and the AFT leaders say yeah, but we're around long enough, so we develop relationships, long-term relationships with politicians, with business folks, with agency leaders, with ethnic leaders, with all these leaders in town, and those relationships aren't built in a day and

they have to be tested over time. I think somewhere in there, between 30 year AFT presidencies and four year NEA presidencies, there's probably some happy medium. But that's of course, the other place where Tom Mooney was a master, at all of that, in developing those relationships. He of course, had the international interest.

I went on several international trips with Al Shanker, which were pretty fascinating, and then he sent me on a few trips on my own or with other folks. I went with Secretary-Treasurer Porter to England, where we did a seminar with the NASUWT. Adam Urbanski and I went to Hong Kong to do a seminar one time, with the Hong Kong Teachers Union, and that was before they became a part of China again and were worried about their leaders. I went to Germany on my own one time, all by myself, doing some staff development, professional development with the German staff developers, who in Germany, the teachers just have to know how to teach, and the staff developers or the professional developers are through the centralized Department of Education, and they tell the teachers what to teach. This was the group that was meeting in the Black Forest, and I was scared because I missed my contact, who was supposed to meet me at the airport, because I was hours late. I don't remember why any more, but hours late coming out of

Minneapolis, and so I missed the contact and I was all by myself, and I thought, OK Louise, now what are you going to do? So I managed to get myself, by train, up to this little siding, was all it was, in a tiny little town up in the Black Forest, and then had to find a cab. Anyway, long story short, I got there and did that. But the other time I was in Germany, I was there with Al. The president of the GEW, German Teachers Union, was a very imposing, tall German, who stood very straight and erect, and he had this gigantic umbrella. I'll never forget the fact that after we had had the meetings, we went on a tour of all of the castles on the Rhine. After a while, I really did believe that statement that you know, you've seen one castle you've seen them all. But oh no, he was out there in front with his umbrella, pointed straight out, all the intricacies of all of the castles. And of course Al was eating it up and loved every minute of it, and I was kind of dragging back thinking OooK.

Q: Was this the trip where you visited the school?

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh, I forget the name of the school now.

A: Gruzumpliun.

Q: Yes.

A: And Anne Ratzki's School. I think I visited Anne Ratzki School maybe twice, and we had Anne Ratzki's come here a couple of times to visit. We have open schools in Minneapolis, which is very much like the Gruzumpliun, except the open school doesn't go in one place, between grades five to ten, as hers did. Having the teachers team and stay with those teams forever, she said it's tricky because teachers really do have lifetime tenure there, and if you get somebody on your team that doesn't pull their weight, they aren't going to pull their weight for the rest of your career. So she said, you better figure out how to help them be a part of the team and pull their weight. It was fascinating to visit her school, to have her come here, and it was really helpful in our discussions about where we wanted to go at that time, about teaming, about the issues of site based management. The issues of a principal who viewed herself as part of the team.

Q: Because they teach as well.

A: Yeah, they do teach as well. It was very good, very good. We still try to do shared leadership at the worksite and site based management, but it's gasping at best.

Q: It's lost its juice?

A: Yeah.

Q: So what other international did you do?

A: Canada. I went to Edmonton, to see the site based management there, and the site based budgeting. It was kind of fun, because I went there with the Governor, Tim Pawlenty, again. We were the guests of the Ghermezian brothers, who built the Mall of America in Minneapolis. They built the Edmonton Mall first, and then they built the Mall of America, and they wanted the Governor's support for some additional roads and financial support out of the legislature, for this huge expansion that they're planning, really big expansion of the Mall of America. So they had a pretty fancy dinner, (laughs) that I was glad to be along and be a part of. The Ghermezian brothers are pretty fascinating.

Q: I bet.

A: A fascinating crowd. But the Edmonton model of site based budgeting is interesting also, and one that a lot of people taut.

I think that one thing that we have thought a lot about and actually chickened out of. I chickened out, and maybe in retrospect I shouldn't have, is that when Julia Koppich and Kerchner came out with their book called *United Mind Workers*, I thought at that time, that we were together enough local, and in control of enough of the teaching

profession, that we could think about being the supplier of the teachers for the district. The district actually offered me, to be the supplier of the substitute teachers as a start. So now, the reason I said no at the time, is that you couldn't find a substitute teacher with a search party, because there was a shortage at that time. I thought well, how are we going to be successful at this any more than the district is? But in retrospect, I think it would have been a good 'in', and it would have been a good way to try it out, to see whether we could be the guarantors of good, professional teachers for the system.

Q: That's kind of like working halls.

A: Exactly. It's a return to the guild and the trades of training and inducting and providing workers for the workplace. So the hiring hall is exactly what it is. I'm still enamored of that. I think the time may have come and gone, but maybe not. Maybe the situation will arise again. Also, I've always been enamored of, recently enamored of Chuck Kerchner's, one of this first books, which had in it, some choices for the work of teaching, what model we ought to be following. After we'd spent the past 20 years on the professional model, then he reminded us the other day, in a rather interesting conversation that was sponsored by one of the groups that brought together, about a dozen people,

both the right wingers and I think there were four or five of us AFT union goons in the room. And Chuck Kerchner started out the discussion by saying we're at kind of a crossroads here, because we still have these options for teaching. One is the true profession, which we've been working on for 20 years. Another one is craft workers, which would be sort of the model if we went to the *United Mind Workers*, hiring hall. We'd take care of all the training and so on. Another one is a teacher as artist, which some people think that teachers are born and not made, and that they are the iconoclasts who don't fit well in a bureaucracy and so on. Then he said there are ensemble players, the ones who do deep listening and do well in cooperatives, because they're willing to be an ensemble player and not a star. But then he said, we still have the semblance of just being industrial workers, and what NCLB is doing, in my belief, is throwing us back to being industrial workers. And so we spent 20 years trying to professionalize teaching, and now we're getting thrown back into the industrial model, because it's top down, it's organized around hierarchy, it's line supervisor oriented. You do the curriculum this way because that's the way we've decided it's going to be better.

Q: The kids are on the assembly line and the teachers are standing there just adding something as it goes along.

A: Right, programmed curriculum. Everybody using the same textbook and all of that. That brought back into my head, and sort of gelled why I'm so nervous about what's going on under NCLB, and the attacks from just about everywhere, because the right wing has now become very overt about their attacks on professionalizing teaching. They now say that we shouldn't be professionalizing teaching.

[END OF FILE 5]

A: One is of course, they don't want to pay for it. If teachers really would become you know, treated as professionals. Two, teachers have much too much autonomy for their taste, as true professionals. Three, the professionals are very much powerful politically. And of course they're still trying to do in the two teachers unions, because we're the only ones left protecting public education. I just thought that in retrospect, it's forced me to rethink what's happening to us in the light of 20 years worth of effort to professionalize teaching, we're putting the final pieces in right now, the pay and the leadership, and it's all a whole piece. It's a whole profession and yet, NCLB and the lack of good site

leadership, is throwing us back very rapidly, into an industrial model. I think it's pretty scary. So those are the struggles that have been going on in my head lately.

One slightly encouraging thing is, that the Wallace Foundation had a small meeting just a few weeks ago, there were three union goons in the room, that were invited, and I think one superintendent, one state commissioner of education, a couple of ex big time superintendents, and then a handful of Wallace staff. It was a good discussion. Oh, and one researcher, Julia was there. It was a really good discussion about what on earth are we going to do about leadership? I think they're going to have some more discussions about that, but I think if Wallace Foundation decides it's going to do something good about leadership, maybe that could be hopeful. If they just decide they're going to reinforce what is and do more of the same, I don't know that that's going to be very helpful. Broad got involved; they have their leadership academy.

Q: So all these different institutions are worried about the next generation of leadership?

A: Yeah.

Q: Has anybody looked back and see what the worry is and what this will actually fix? It seems like they all have their

different theories of what could be the next leader, and how to approach it.

A: Well I don't think they're looking back or at what is, the problems with what is now enough, no. I think they have their ideas. The business people think it ought to be the business model. The researchers think it ought to be -- I'm not sure what they think it ought to be. The existing education leaders sort of are -- just think more standards and more training of the same will be enough. The teachers are just totally frustrated but don't know what to do about it.

Q: The usual spot for teachers.

A: Exactly. I mean their frustration just bubbles and then boils over. There's two school sites in this town right now, where teachers are frightened, they're being intimidated, and they are so scared that the current principal that they are working under is going to be there next year. And if the current principal is going to be there next year, they're going to bid out, because the fear factor, because they operate out of fear and out of stupidity and out of not knowing or caring a twit about the teachers, about having the teachers' backs, about supporting the teachers. They don't know a twit about teaching and learning, and they totally operate out of

fear. Now the reason that's worrisome I think, is that that's what's happening in the private sector workplace. Everybody in this country, in their workplace, is fearful. They're fearful of losing their job, they're fearful of somebody shooting them. They are fearful that if they lose their job, they're never going to find another one, they're never going to find another one with benefits, they're never going to find another one with the kind of salary that they're currently getting. This pervasive atmosphere of fear in the workplace in this country is just debilitating, particularly in schools where teachers need to be calm and understanding, and need to be focused on those kids and their needs. The trick or the, I suppose you could say the challenge, an overused word, but the challenge of a teacher union leader and district leaders, is that our work is two tiered, in that the work of the district administrators and the union, if it's done well, is to work to support the adults at the worksite, so that they are resourced, they have the materials they need, they have the support they need, they have the training they need, they have the space. Then the adults at the worksite are the ones that produce the real outcomes, the real results, with the kids, in their classrooms. So it's this two step process that's always difficult to prove, it's

always difficult to resource, it's always difficult for those out in the public to understand, because you can't just, as a superintendent for instance, you can't just say well, I care about the kids, and every decision I make is made thinking about how it affects kids. Wrong. That isn't what the superintendent ought to be doing. The superintendent ought to be figuring out how the principal, administrators and the teachers and the paraprofessionals at the school site, how he can support them, because he is never going to be sitting in a classroom teaching a kid. So he can't leap over those adults at the school site and say, he's making all his decisions in relation to how it affects kids. He has no clue how it affects kids most of the time, unless it's buses. So we had a superintendent like that one time and it was evident that he didn't have concern for the adults at those school sites, didn't have the understanding that he needed; that those were his span of control, if you will, and that the students were the responsibility of the site administrators and the teachers. He also (chuckles) -- he also had a real difficult time at first, in building a relationship with me, because he just couldn't understand a union leader that really cared.

Q: Right.

A: And because he had come from, I think it was Grand Rapids, Michigan, and he said that the union leader there always told him that if the kids would start paying dues, he'd start caring about them.

Q: Oh, that old Shanker quote, that is misinterpreted over and over.

A: Right. And so he had a hard time at the beginning trusting me, but we worked it out.

Q: But did he communicate that with the community, saying I don't care what they're doing in the classrooms. I'm caring about getting them the funds and the resources they need to teach the kids. Because it kind of sounds like he doesn't care.

A: Well he did care, but he just sort of didn't know how to do it.

Q: Oh, OK. He had the idea.

A: Yeah.

Q: But doesn't know how to deliver, which is a tough balancing act.

A: Right. This is a total digression, but the other part is that he was, what's that -- he was a southern European, short male from, is it an island off of Italy?

Q: Sicily?

A: Not Sicily. Oh, Portuguese, he was Portuguese. That's probably not where it is, right?(laughs) Anyway, I always called him the little Portuguese guy. And I did that after he left. The principals' forum had a party for somebody, and I called him the little Portuguese guy, and they almost fell over on the floor. His problem, being a little Portuguese guy, is that he had that temperament, which is that he would blow up and rant and rave and have a conniption fit and lost his temper and blast. Then for him it was over, and then everything was fine and you know, he'd go on. What he didn't understand is German Scandinavians. (laughs) So the German Scandinavians around him never said a word. They just kind of backed up and let him blast, but they waited and waited, and when he got in trouble with the board, there wasn't a soul behind him. So they got him in the end.

Q: Sort of a wrong fit on personalities and ethnicity.

A: We're known for our thick contract.

Q: You have a gigantic contract.

A: We do. Well you know, some people advocate the thin contract, and I think a thin contract is fine, if you have the kind of relationship with the superintendent and the school district, that's sustainable over time, because a thin contract means you've got to maintain those kinds of

relationships in order to continue to operate. And if things change, then what? You don't have anything embedded in writing anywhere, unless you've got a heck of a lot of memorandums of agreement. So we've kind of gone the opposite way. I always say we're like Prego, it's in there. Whatever you want to know, it's in there. So we've put all the standards in there, we've put the rubrics in there, we've put all the processes in there. We put everything we can possibly think of, embedded in the contract, because as districts and school boards never like to hear me say, that policy manuals are useless. Nobody ever opens them, and they sit on the shelf and collect dust. But the teachers contract is really a manual for reform, and anything anybody wants to know about how things ought to operate, it's in that book. Now the problem comes with if the district ignores it, because there is stuff in there that they ignore. If they would follow it, life would be a lot better, but they do ignore it. But by having it in the contract, we think that it does empower teachers, and they can always go to that document as a bible for support and reform.

Q: Some people think that those kind of reforms should stay with the policy created by the city council to help the union, because it's the community's issues.

A: Yeah, in this town the school board, the city council and the mayor don't have anything to do with the schools here.

Q: OK, so it's a different environment.

A: Yeah. Well, I don't know. Maybe life would be grand if we had a trust agreement, but it also means that you're sort of always renegotiating things in some ways. If it's a living document, nothing ever stays the same, and part of what drives teachers nuts, is the constant churning and the constant change and the change in philosophy and the change in policies and the change in curriculum and the change in materials and the change in books and change in leadership. It's amazing that they survive.

Q: They are constantly surrounded by not only internal, and council level changes, their own union changes, but they are also getting attacked constantly outside of the national press.

A: Constantly.

Q: and even the president attacks them.

A: Right.

Q: So no wonder they're living in fear.

A: Well yeah. The parents are becoming much more powerful, much more vocal, kind of as we talked about, wanting their first choice and their only choice for their kid, as their

teacher and that -- so the big subject in this town right now, is teacher seniority.

Q: Is it?

A: It's the biggest. There's been a television show on it, there's been several open forums at League of Women Voters on it. It's been the subject of the area parent advisory councils and it's just -- it's the big buzz.

Q: This year, or next year?

A: Well this year, and it has been for the last couple, the last two or three.

Q: Just looking at why they have such high seniority or…?

A: No. Actually it's probably the last five years, because of course, nobody ever said boo when we were growing and hiring and increasing. It all hit the fan with the major layoffs. So with the decrease, in Detroit, in Cleveland, in all of the places, we're seeing significant decline, and you impose the normal rules of layoff, they don't like that. I continually try to explain that when we've had layoffs of 500, layoffs of 300, and when you have the layoffs of that many people, you have to have a decision maker or decision point, that is as infallible as you can get. You cannot have decisions made about who's going to end up on the street without employment, without a paycheck, and without probably much hope of getting

employment at that level, by whim or personality or one person's biases or one person's observations. It just isn't good enough, and that's not acceptable to them. And it's just not here. It's a big deal everywhere it's happening, as to whether teachers are going to be governed by the rules of layoff that are embedded in law, or whether the principal single handedly is going to have the say as to who they get to keep and who they get to jettison.

Q: Right.

A: I think that we probably, in this thick contract, the Sears catalog. No, now we have to say JC Penney catalog. The Sears catalog is gone. We do have lots of different rewards for national board certification. We also have, I think what's maybe unique, is that we have several different kinds of sabbatical leaves, probably five different kinds of sabbatical leaves, and so we've been leaders in sabbatical leaves. I think that the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers has an image and has respect in the teachers' union movement, because we have put the pieces of the professional puzzle together and because we have it in the contract. I think that that is all so it's observable and it's replicable.

One thing I noticed when I became president, is that on the old salary schedule, there were several hundred

teachers that were, on the old schedule, stuck at a BA plus 60 credits, bachelors plus 60 credits. And the next lane on the salary schedule would be a masters degree plus 15 I think. So I started asking around, to find out why teachers, so many of them were stuck there. There was like 600 of them I think, that were stuck there. It turned out that there were two categories of teachers that were stuck there. One was elementary teachers, who didn't feel that a masters degree was going to actually help them in their classroom. The other were secondary teachers and/or elementary teachers, who didn't have the sort of personal self-confidence to do the next degree.

Q: Interesting.

A: Yeah, I thought it was too. What I did was I invented our own masters degree program. Our masters degree program was a collaborative program, with the University of St. Thomas, which is a private university, but it was known for its entrepreneurial activity and openness to do off campus programs. They gave us a fifty percent price break on per credit, and so we started the first cohort. We taught our teachers, our teachers taught, I think it was five or six of the classes, the required classes. We used the AFT-ER&D for a couple. For instance, I taught organizational change, one of my business agents at the time taught

introduction to reform, and Lynn Nordgren taught professional development and so on. The university taught half of the courses and we taught half of the courses. We would also celebrate the fact that when they got their masters. The teachers went through it as a cohort of Minneapolis teachers; K-12, but they had a common reference, a common frame, to have the discussions. When they went through the whole thing as a cohort together, of people, at our office, in our office, they got to know each other well, they supported each other. So the lack of self-confidence was overcome because they helped each other. So we had over 500 teachers then, get their masters degree through our collaborative program. They were very popular.

That's a program that I'm really proud of, because we designed it and delivered it. It filled a need. We tailored the program so that it was tailored to the needs of Minneapolis teachers. It was tailored to the experience of Minneapolis teachers, to the strategies that Minneapolis used. So it was useful to them, and it also gave them some understanding and some skills to become the teacher leaders at their site. In the very first cohort, there were five teachers from Patrick Henry High School, who decided to do

it together. Those were the five teachers that went back to Patrick Henry, and we started the professional practice school. So it not only helped all these teachers, over 500 teachers get their masters degree and move on the salary schedule, but it also spawned a lot of creativity and empowered teachers and some of those cohorts to really be creative when they went back to their buildings. That was, as Martha would say, "It was a good thing."

We, in our local, I think have over the years, not necessarily over the last few years but over the years that we have been the bargaining agent, I think we probably have had more successes in the court system for teachers, than any other local in the state. We brought more legal actions than probably the rest of the state combined, and won hundreds of thousands of dollars in settlements for teachers. Then we decided that that was no way to run a railroad basically.

Q: It gets expensive.

A: Well, and it also maintains the adversarial relationship. It embeds the adversarial relationship, and that's why we tried to go to the training, to get the training on how to mediate. So we added mediation as a step, and how to try to get to some principled resolution of issues. We established a labor management committee with the human

resources and labor relations department, and it's called contract administration. Contract administration meets generally, every other week, or sometimes monthly, depending upon how hot the season is.

And so the president and the staff people of the union, and the human resources folks and labor relations director, meet and try to iron out, bring issues to the table, bring problems to the table, bring things that are going on, and try to iron them out before they ever reach the grievance. So we have cut the number of grievances through that process, way down, to where we just, we believe that there wasn't anything we couldn't solve if we all just put our minds to it. So we knew then, that if it became a grievance or if it went to court, it was really something that was a sticking point.

Q: Right.

A: We did take Superintendent Jennings to court, because he was going to try to freeze our salaries one fall. We kept telling him that you can't do that, we're on a continuing contract in this state, and you can't do that because we're on a continuing contract according to the language in our contract. But oh no, he wouldn't pay attention.

One of the other things I'm really proud of, is the success of the three class size referendums that we passed in this town. Starting in '89 I believe, we decided that class size was something that people could get their arms around, and that would be willing to support. We put a levy referenda on the ballot, and we said that with that levy referenda, we would significantly lower class size and we would re-train teachers to teach differently in the smaller class size. That was the first one. So there was money in there for additional teachers, additional space for re-training teachers. We won that one, in spite of the fact that in this town, there's only about now, probably 13 to 15 percent of the households have kids in the schools. It's down to probably 13 percent now. The gentrification of this city over recent years, has just happened like crazy. I think the first referenda, it was 17 percent. Second referenda, then we renewed it, and I think it was down to about 15 percent then, and then the third time we renewed it was for eight years, and that I think probably was the 13 percent figure of families. So what we knew and played out, and was reinforced by the vote, is that it wasn't just the parents that could grasp the issue of class size, everybody can grasp the issue of class size. The

parents know instinctively that if there are fewer kids in the room, their kid is going to get more attention from the teacher. What the teachers know is that fewer kids in the room, the broader the range of student needs they can reach and take care of in the classroom. The larger the class, the narrower range of needs the teacher has time to deal with. So all those are things that people get in their gut, they understand them. The third time, we passed it by 72 percent, phenomenal.

Q: So how did you convince those who aren't parents, who aren't teachers? How did they grasp it?

A: Well, it's a quality of life for them, and they know that if the schools, the only shot at safety and at keeping their home values up and keeping their neighborhoods, is to have the kids be successful.

Q: Did you educate them on that or they just figured it out?

A: Both. Plus we had the support of everybody who was anybody in town, plus we had very little opposition, amazingly little opposition. The Republican party in this town meets in the back room of a restaurant over here, all six of them. But the first time around the chamber made noises and opposed it, but the third time around now -- and we played a huge role, the union played a huge role in getting that passed. Our theme was, "Vote yes for kids", and with

a check mark. We purchased, I think it was 100,000 giant yellow leaf bags in the fall of course, with the "Vote yes for kids" on it, in black, and everywhere in town, people were raking their leaves, in late October, and they'd fill these leaf bags with leaves and then they'd let them sit in their yard.

Q: Cool.

A: So it was way cool. It was incredible advertising. Some people lined them all up along their fence, and some people hung them over their fence and used them as a sign. When we were standing on bridges over the freeway, the day of the vote, people were wearing them, you know stuck their feet and arms through them. They were the best idea anybody's ever had, and people have tried to replicate it since then, but you have to do it on a grand scale, because they don't make 5,000 of them. We still have some of those bags, and then we did the usual lawn signs and the flyers, and we did education about class size, the research on class size. We had flyers on that, we had the full color, fancy postcards all that typical stuff. But the thing that really was the standout were the garbage bags or the leaf bags. The great tragedy of all of that -- oh, and the union put in tremendous amounts of money and staff time.

We funded that big time. I don't think anybody will ever know how much we actually put in, because I never told anybody. AFT sent us a staff person for the last one, and so it was a big deal. The great tragedy is that once Governor Pawlenty got to be Governor and the Republicans took over the legislature, they cut funding for the schools so significantly, and the Minneapolis student population dropped so significantly after 9-11, when the immigrants weren't coming any more, that finally about three or four years ago, the school board finally had cut everything else, and they just had to go back on the class size promise. Of course now, the money is still coming in, until fall of 2008, because we timed it specifically to be the presidential election year.

Q: Sounds good.

A: That's when the most voters come out, and you've got a better shot at it. Now everybody is saying well, why should we support that again, they went back on it. I don't know, it's going to be a really hard sell this time. The class sizes were brought down to 19 to 1 for K 1-2, 24 to 1 for 3-5, or was it 3-8? 3-8 I think. And then 26 to 1 at the high school.

Q: Wow.

A: It was really good. That kind of reminds me of a couple other things we did. Probably late 80s, maybe early 90s, we started a school that started with the cooperation of General Mills Foundation, the Wheaties people. It was a school that they wanted to pattern after the best of the private schools, and so it was called the Public School Academy, because it was kind of named and patterned after the St. Paul Academy and Summit School, which is a very posh private school in St. Paul. It was going to have an absolute class size of 14 to 1, absolutely not one more. The parents were going to agree to be there and be involved, and the teachers then, if they were going to have 14 kids in a classroom, they were going to agree to do all of the extras in the classroom. So they were going to agree to do music, art, special ed, all of the multiple needs, they were going to take care of in their classroom because they only had 14 kids. It worked beautifully for a number of years. It finally went under -- well, it just got absorbed because of lousy leadership. The foundation really didn't want to get its hands dirty and get involved in the leadership question, which I thought was really odd, and I know the foundation people really well. I'd beg them to get involved but they wouldn't touch that part of it. So it died because of lousy leadership.

We did another school called Chiron School of the Future, which was supposed to be sort of -- C-H-I-R-O-N, which I named actually, which was a school that was a school in the community, and it was in three different locations. So it was middle grades, a middle school, and one location was at the basilica building, one was in a downtown office building, and one was over on the St. Paul farm campus, for the science location. The kids would you know, circulate between those locations. Therefore they had experiences in the real world. Oh, we put a lot of elbow grease and a lot of work in getting that school up and running. There again, it was supposed to be kind of a model for an in-district charter. People chose to be there, it was experiential. The kids made presentations of their learnings at the end of the trimester or the semester. They'd have these parents would come in and professors, and everybody else would come in and the kids would present their learning, so it was authentic assessment. It was great. There again, (A) it got absorbed, and (B) the leadership really went downhill.

Q: What do you mean by absorbed?

A: Well the district just kept whittling away at its special dispensations, so that instead of having for instance, city-wide bus service, they would cut them back so they

could only gather from part of the city, and in order to have buses during the day, to get the kids from the downtown site to the St. Paul site, you needed buses during the middle of the day, and they cut back and wouldn't fund that. You know, it's just -- it often happens that way with really great experimental sites. They work for a while and then, it's really hard to sustain them.

Q: One, because the leadership, I imagine.

A: Yeah.

Q: Two, I could see that just the funding. You have to keep cutting back.

A: A big bureaucracy always sort of works to bring things to the sort of common look.

Q: Centralized and standardized.

A: Centralized and standardized. And the oddballs are always easy to pick off. The same thing happened with our year-round school. We had a school of extended learning, and we negotiated different contracts for those teachers and the teachers did staggered days, so they could do 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. or whatever it was, year round, extended school. It was so good that of course, the district did away with the extended bus service and with the extended janitorial service and all the rest of the stuff and there again, it got absorbed. It's too bad that sort of the normal

activity of the bureaucracy doesn't tolerate the really good outliers, and it's very difficult to have other schools learn from them. Other schools really would rather not learn from them, because somebody is always saying that you know, the outliers are better than they are, and it's hard for them to learn.

This is out of place here, but in negotiations, after we had the training and we did principle bargaining, getting to yes, we divided the issues up into subcommittees and we had a lot of teachers involved in subcommittees, and then the subcommittees would bring the information back to the negotiations table. So we opened up negotiations.

I haven't mentioned the radio show yet. In 2005, I began doing an hour long radio show every Saturday, on Air America Minnesota, which is obviously the local Air America affiliate. It's called, Education Matters: Your Children, Our Future. It's a program in which I do both program interviews and information about education issues and labor issues. So it's partly funded by the Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council. So that's been a way to get information to the public about what we do, in depth, about issues that we think they ought to be knowledgeable of and issues that maybe they can help with, because once in a

while we ask them to call the legislature or call their Congress person.

Q: Any memorable shows?

A: Well I think one good show was a show on Higher Ed. We had the AFT human rights, or I guess it was called a super conference. When was it? A couple of years ago, three years. It was co-sponsored by the Higher Ed division and human civil rights and community relations, and women's rights. I don't remember, ER&D might have been here too. Anyway, since Higher Ed was here, I interviewed Bill Scheuerman, and that was a good interview. But I think the most memorable ones were the ones that I did right after Katrina, and I interviewed the women leaders of those unions down there, and I caught them -- well, I had a little help with numbers, but I got them by cell phone and they really were amazed that I tracked them down. I interviewed them within a week after and I did about, it was either three or four shows on Katrina, at various times. I interviewed one young woman who came up here a teacher, a New Orleans teacher who came up here, because I think she had family up here. I interviewed her, but the rest of the time I interviewed like Mary Ann Grashik (sp?) and Brenda, a lot of the folks down there. I think those were probably some of the most powerful ones. There was a

really good show on North High School, because we have a city council member who represents North Minneapolis, who is Jamaican. For people who don't understand Jamaicans, they're rather outspoken and rather energetic about being outspoken, and to them it's just discussion, but it sounds like attack. Anyway, he made the ill thought out statement that North High School ought to be burned down, because it was not doing the job. Well of course the community took offense, the students took offense, everybody just had a fit. His wife, the council member's wife is a big charter school proponent, so there was political, you know behind the scenes going on there. I went over to North High School and I interviewed kids, and it was really good, because the kids over at -- North High School is heavily kids of color, heavily African American, and these kids were so articulate, and articulate in saying what North High School meant to them. Some of them were getting their education at the Sumatech, a math, science, technology magnet there, and what they were going to do with their lives and where they were going to go to college, and the fact that they had come to Sumatech as a personal challenge to themselves, to keep interested and to keep learning, because they knew that the pressure would be on in Sumatech, to learn, and if they went someplace else they'd

probably slack off and not learn as much and not challenge themselves. It really was a good show, and I've given out several copies of it on cds, so that people could listen to it. Somebody said they were going to give it to the council member. I don't know if he's ever listened to it or not.

Q: I was about to ask, what does he think of it.

A: Right. Let's see. I've done some remotes. I'm going to do a remote the Saturday after next, when the letter carriers do their food drive. I do a remote from the State Fair. We always have the studio out at the State Fair, right between the sheep barn and the horse barn.

Q: I bet that smells lovely.

A: Well actually, luckily right behind us, there's a Cinnabon, so the smell of cinnamon overpowers all the rest, and right by the Hippodrome, of course, where all of the shows are.

Q: So you address local labor issues, or do you also do the national?

A: Both. I've done one on the big issue of the day in the Congress, the --

Q: Employer Rights Acts?

A: Yeah. That's not it. Isn't that awful. Well, we'll come up with it eventually. Because I can interview by phone of

course, I can do national interviews, but it's always more fun to have people in the studio, so that you can interact.

This goes way back to our benefits discussion, so it probably should be inserted back with that benefits discussion, where I got that legislation passed for the match. There's one other benefits issue. We were very early, like a decade ago, we put language in our contract for domestic partner benefits. And ever since then we've been kind of quiet about it, because the city workers had domestic partner benefits in their contract and it got to be a big political issue in the city and it got removed. Now it's a big issue in the state legislature right now. So we've always just -- I've always been very quiet about it and kept it way under the radar, hoping nobody sort of knows its there. And the other thing that's happening in the legislature, I just heard this morning on our way in, is that as a part of one of the health bills that the legislature, they're putting in a provision that domestic partners can visit ill people in the emergency room and in the urgent care, and I'm still not picking up the right word, for when you're in -- intensive care, and make decisions, life and death decisions.

Q: That's a big issue as well right now.

A: So it's a big deal, so we're trying to continue to... I've felt good by the fact that it's there and that it hasn't been attacked yet.

We do quite a bit of sending teachers around the country, talking about a lot of the stuff in our contract and talking about a lot of our programs. Oh, I know what I was going to say. When I became president -- no, I'll start out before I became president. In the early 80s, the then president of the Federation, wanted to buy a piece of land in South Minneapolis -- I think it was on 35th and Chicago -- and build a four story union office. At that time of course, we had a lot of people in the union and could have afforded it. The credit union was going to be there and the upper level was going to be a social area. He got a little expensive, shall we say, about his description of what the fourth floor was going to be like, and the teachers, I don't know whether they got nervous or didn't like it or whatever, but when the vote came as to whether it was going to happen or not, the yeses were a majority but a bare majority. It was like maybe 51 percent. So they decided not to build it, and so that meant we were still wherever we were, we were renting. Now we rented in the labor temple for years, until of course

the labor temple was torn down. Then we went to a little one story building out on 22nd and Nicolette, and then when that round of 18 schools were closed by Richard Green, we rented a school and held out meetings in the lunchroom. It worked out well, until they opened the school again, and then we had to go someplace else. Then I talked Dr. Green into selling me a building that the district owned, which was formerly a funeral home, on Plymouth Avenue. In Minneapolis, on Plymouth Avenue, Plymouth Avenue is kind of historic in that it's the avenue that burned down in the riots in the late 60s, early 70s. The whole avenue burned. It's considered in the middle of what we laughingly call our ghetto in Minneapolis that isn't really. So he sold it to me for a song. The school district had bought it to run Talking Typewriters, during the 70s. Talking Typewriters was a federal program for kids that didn't know how to read, and it was kind of an early version of computer based learning. So it was pretty interesting, but then of course the federal money dried up. They didn't need the building any more. They rented it to a daycare that put absolutely outrageous carpeting on the floor, because you know, the little puzzles and the little numbers and everything, oh, and then outrageous things on the walls. Then it had been vacant for about three years, and after it had been vacant

for about three years, it had been vandalized. A car had actually gone through one of the walls, and so it was in pretty tough shape. But when I went inside, I could see --

[END OF FILE 6]

A: -- that it had great bones. It had great real wood paneling. The room where they used to lay out the bodies you know, and had people come, was a perfect room for membership meetings and stewards meetings. So we bought it and had it rehabbed, and it worked really well for a number of years, and then we finally outgrew it, because we were doing so much professional development and so many masters degree cohorts and so many professional paid classes and so on, we kind of outgrew it, and we either had to put a second story on it or find someplace else. I decided that we'd look elsewhere, and we bought a building from an old retired Swede and his wife, who wanted to retire and go to Florida and jettison their interests, realty interests anyway. So we bought the building that we're in now, and we totally rehabbed. It was just an empty warehouse, there wasn't anything in it; no walls, nothing. And so I designed it the way I wanted it and had good help from one of my staff guys. The two of us basically oversaw the building of what now is a really good professional campus,

and the union campus is where we deliver all the professional development. We have membership meetings, stewards meetings, retiree meetings. Community people use it and it's really, really been very, very serviceable. So that's another thing I'm proud of, is getting that building and designing it so that it works as well as it does. There's about ten meeting rooms. Also, in the back, left part of it as a warehouse, so that we had a place to put stuff for what we call the school store. The school district used to go around and collect things from businesses, to give to teachers, that teachers could come and take, to use in their classrooms, to use with kids, to use for projects, furniture for their classrooms, whatever. The school district wanted to get out of that business, because they wanted the warehouse space and they didn't want to pay the person to do it any more as one of their budget cutting. So I said well, we'll do it. So we do take care now, have a school store where businesses will call and say come and get these strips of leather from Wilson leather, and the teachers can use it then for lanyards or for the kids, or they can weave it or make bracelets out of it or you know, put beads on it, whatever. Then, some banks will change their address or something, and then they send us the envelopes and paper and stuff.

Art stores send used poster board and people, when their garage sale is done, bring things that didn't sell. People bring us magazine collections from years and years of magazines. Anyway, it's been a help for teachers in that you know, they're always scrounging for stuff, and that place is full of stuff.

Q: (laughs) Do you want to take a break a bit?

A: Sure.

[BREAK IN AUDIO]

Q: OK. Why don't we start talking about --

A: Well before you do that. I'm sorry to interrupt, but I forgot that I did a recent trip to Sweden. I had always been bugging them to send me to Sweden, because of course I've got relatives in Sweden. So I went to the Swedish convention of Swedish teachers, maybe three, four years ago, and wrote a big report on it that I think is maybe still on the website, on the international affairs. But I was totally fascinated by the fact that the Swedish Teachers Union has taken professional pay one step further, and they've gone to free market.

Q: Free market?

A: It's long and involved, so I'll just shorten it to about one sentence or two. They negotiated a country-wide

contract, which they do, and they put in there, a minimum but no maximum, for teachers salaries. Their assumption was that teachers would individually negotiate with their own principals and obviously, the sky isn't the limit because principals have to stay within budget, but they also thought that would do several things. Over five years, they assumed and were pretty much told by the other side, by the government, that they could expect a 20 percent increase in salaries over five years. And they looked back five years later and that was true, it went up 20 percent. But the second thing they wanted to happen is that they wanted what we call preschool teachers' salaries to be raised, which they were, because of the floor. The third thing they wanted to happen was that the hard to fill positions, like the math and the science positions, would be able to negotiate higher salaries; the shortage areas, and they did. I think that's one thing we want to continue to keep an eye on, and that convention in Sweden was really kind of an interesting eye opener as to where we can maybe at least theoretically think about the future.

Q: Finn and all them would love free market pay.

A: Yeah, which is what causes you to stop and pause and ponder and say, ooh well maybe not. (laughter)

Q: Maybe if we were a little more socialist we could pull it off.

A: Yeah.

Q: Why don't we get into more of what AFT has been in your life for the past 25, 30 years. Let's just start at the beginning. Why don't you just describe your first couple of conventions of AFT.

A: I was an AFT vice president for 25 years I think. Let's see, when was Reagan elected?

Q: '80.

A: And then reelected?

Q: '84.

A: '84. So it must have been the '84 convention. Well, it was somewhere right around in those early 80s there.

Q: When Reagan was invited?

A: Reagan was invited.

Q: That was like '81 or '82, in Los Angeles.

A: Was it? Yeah, OK. Well that was a rather interesting convention for me personally because of course, Al had tried to convince the vice presidents that we should be polite, and that we should be civil, and that we should do whatever we could do to keep our delegations from doing anything bad. So I'm obviously a rookie vice president, so I think well, this is going to be interesting. I was one,

of I think only a few vice presidents that refused to have my picture taken with Reagan. I think there were a lot of vice presidents that did have their picture taken with Reagan. It came time for Reagan to speak, and I was standing on a chair in the back, with some folks, and what do I see, but I see my entire delegation walking out of the hall, with TV cameras on them. (laughter) National TV cameras, and a couple of my delegates; the treasurer, who had been around for a lot of years, Gail Peterson, and others, were interviewed by the national press. After that demonstration, which of course went everywhere in the national press, I thought well, that was a nice career in the AFT but I'm doomed. (laughter) Al's going to surely wipe me out after that. But I wasn't. I lived to survive another day, but it was one of those things where I just wanted so badly to walk out with them.

Q: But you just couldn't.

A: But I just thought, I'd better not. Then, I think various AFT conventions are always sort of connected with cities. One disappointment is that we haven't had a convention in Minneapolis for about 40 years.

Q: Forty?

A: Yeah.

Q: They used to be here all the time.

A: Well they used to be here a lot in the early days, but then there were certain folks in the travel department that only wanted to take conventions to cities, where you could be in one hotel, one gigantic hotel, and they wanted the convention to be in the hotel, in a huge ballroom. And so those of us that didn't have that kind got put way down the list, in spite of the fact that we have an absolutely beautiful convention center here, and we have every other gigantic convention in the western world comes here, because people love coming here, particularly in the summer. We've had conventions where -- well some of the largest conventions in the country have been here, and they've traveled far and wide to find rooms. But you know, the AFT convention isn't that big. It's only 3,000 people. Then they did a couple conventions in a row, they did surveys of the convention goers. Well then of course, we weren't exactly at the top of that list either.

Q: I think that was when we went to Vegas, right?

A: Yeah. And you know, people always want to go to San Francisco and they want to go here and they want to go there. So it was a great disappointment to me that in my 25 years, they never, ever came here for a convention. The most they ever came here for was that human rights conference, and it was mostly because I was a women's

rights chair. People loved it here and everybody kept saying well gee, we should come here for a convention. I always say well, tell the travel department. There were some sort of historic conventions here too. One of the really early conventions in St. Paul, and a lot of the AFT history archives.

Q: Yeah, that's my fault. It is, I found that picture and I pushed it. It was a really great, nice picture of I think 30 delegates, in December, up here for a convention.

A: Well, and I think there was -- I remember sort of a panoramic picture of an early AFT convention in, I suppose it was in a hotel ballroom, in either Minneapolis or St. Paul. It was really quite formal and quite interesting. I think my very first AFT convention was the Hawaii convention.

Q: That's a nice way to be introduced.

A: Right, that's what I thought. That was before I was involved at all, and so that was when Flora Rogge was president of the state MFT, and I asked her if I could go, and for some reason or other she let me go. That was sort of my introduction. This is a totally irrelevant story, other than the fact that it was the convention that had the absolute worst local hosted social that we have ever had at any convention before or since. They put us on buses and

took us out to a park, and we sat at picnic tables. Then they brought one of those little cardboard, rectangular container plate, kind of with the folded up edges, and in it were some blue chips and some gray poi, and maybe a little mound of sort of like coleslaw, and that was it. So we thought well, this is just a taste. This is poi and everybody wanted us to know what poi tasted like. Some people tasted it, some didn't and put it aside, but we found out later that that was it. (laughs) So that was a huge disappointment. Anyway, it's the only place I'd ever been thrown out of a restaurant too, because I didn't speak the language. We went to a Japanese restaurant that was touted in the travel books as being so incredibly authentic, but we finally had to leave because the gentleman behind the counter making the sushi didn't want to have anything to do with people who didn't know how to speak Japanese.

Q: Oh, OK. Very authentic then.

A: Mm hmm.

Q: So you've seen the evolution of AFT conventions though, the start of Shanker, and the movement from bread and butter AFT conventions, fighting for everything, to professionalism.

A: To issues oriented conventions, in which we developed very long, very detailed, very extensively articulated professional issues, and actually discussed them in a convention setting. That continues pretty well today as a tradition. They're of course, are discussed first now, in the divisional meetings, but then they're discussed all over again once they hit the floor. His leadership in bringing those difficult issues to the convention and then having really wonderful arguments about them. I learned a lot about microphone control and floor leaders. You know, you sit back and look at who is selected to be a spokesperson for a particular issue. I learned also of course, about the big issue on secret ballot, which was in its early days, a really big issue. Its kind of waned now mostly.

Q: That was mostly the conversation in the 70s, yeah, the secret ballot issue.

A: Of course Al insisted that you don't come as a delegate to the AFT at convention as an individual. You're beholden not just to your own conscience and your own belief systems, but you're representing literally hundreds of members back home, as a delegate representing your local and your local members, and when you vote for the 200 members back home, they deserve the ability to be able to

see how you voted for them. So it was pretty logical to me and it was pretty easy for us too, in our local, because after the tumult of the 70s, we pretty much followed the party line after I got to be an AFT vice president. So when those votes would be printed, they'd be pretty consistent. We did have a guy from Minnesota who ran for AFT vice president back in the 70s, so our local wasn't always in the Shanker camp or what turned out to be the Shanker camp eventually. Those were kind of interesting days. Some of the guys who went before me told stories about the New Orleans convention, where they had a hurricane and they couldn't ever get there.

Q: Hurricane, fire, flood, yeah.

A: And the one in Chicago with the Fewkes tower, somebody stole a Fewkes tower. I don't know, there's all kinds of great stories. The fun part or at least it used to be the fun part of unionism, is always the getting together in the back room after the meetings and telling the stories and hearing the stories from those who have been leaders before you, and that's where you hone your understanding of life and philosophy and unions. That's where I learned it too, in the back room, from great leaders. I think the conventions have gone through various iterations to try to involve more people, so that more delegates feel that

they're a part of the convention. I don't think it's made it yet. The committee structure has changed and then it's changed again. The committee structure though, in the early days, people were always really paranoid about what would come up at committees and how it was handled and who was going to chair the committees and what their political stripes and leanings were, and whether they could handle a really contentious discussion.

Q: What were your first assignments on committees?

A: Well, I pretty much always ended up either in ed issues. For a while, I chaired one of the ed issues committees, and then after I became women's rights chair, then of course I ended up in the women's rights committee and chairing it for a while because they trusted that I would be able to handle some of those difficult issues that comes to women's rights committees. And so I think those attempts to broaden out the number of people that are involved in committees has only been partially helpful. I think with the newer, younger members, I've tried to convince people that they have to be even more open than they have been now, because there's still a lot of control of microphones and a lot of control of discussion, and the younger people just plain don't like it. We've kidded all the way through this, about the Gen-Xers and the Millennials, but they just

don't like that form of control, and when they see it happening and they know it's happening, they can feel it's happening, because they see the same people at the microphones all the time. They just feel that that's not right and that it ought to be more open than that. But the structure just somehow can't trust the delegates without strong guidance. So I don't know where that's going to go.

Q: Either they have to learn how to rip the tape off the floor and grab that mike.

A: Right, which they may.

Q: That's a Tom Hobart story. He actually stole a microphone.

A: Really?

Q: He had to leave. NYSUT just came in to AFT and they had a plane to catch, to get back to New York for something, and of course you know how the microphones work back then, and Selden was running it. He lost control of conventions the last couple of years that he was doing it. So he was sitting down. He noticed the microphone was a little too far, and he noticed this guy from Colorado was going to jump up first and talk about the mergers and all that stuff and be against it. And everybody was saying, you'll never make it, you'll never make it. If you have to wait, we're going to miss the plane. So he actually ripped the duct tape from the wire, up, when Senden was trying to get

control again, and as soon as he said microphone, he yanked the microphone away from this guy and the guy said hold it, hold it, hold it, I had the microphone first. And Hobart says, "I don't know what he's talking about, I have the microphone right here."

A: (laughs)

Q: So these younger kids have to learn how to...

A: Well, maybe that will do it. I think they're capable of it.

Q: They are. They have the energy now.

A: Right, they have the energy. I just don't think they have the -- they somehow don't have the will to challenge authority enough. I mean the boomers were, that's who we were. Heck, if it's authority, you just automatically challenge it. It doesn't make any difference who it is. If it's authority, you either protest it, shove it out of the way or you take it over, one of the three, but these kids aren't like that, which is one reason why we're worried that they're way too willing to follow principles and give deference to principles. Anyway, I digress. So, AFT.

Q: What did you see happen with ed issues? I mean it started to come into itself in the 80s, and then *A Nation at Risk*

hit. Was that kind of the catapult for ed issues committee?

A: Oh, absolutely. And of course, one of the huge mileposts was Al's press club speech in 1985, in which he laid out all of the components of a professional model and how we ought to respond, and respond by saying well, there's a lot of truth in that report. There's a lot we have to examine in public education. We aren't perfect. We aren't producing the kinds of graduates with the kinds of skills they need to be internationally competitive and maintain the kind of living that we want to maintain in this country, and that we have to examine ourselves, and we ought to be the ones to do the examining. That was a pretty radical response, because the rest of the education cartel, including the NEA and school boards and everybody else, said oh, things aren't that bad, we're OK. I'm OK, you're OK. And so Al's voice had a very different tone to it, and that's one of the many reasons why he was as respected as he was. He was so respected worldwide as a thinker, and he was a part of every think tank, I think, on education in the entire world, and it's always because he did not just follow the traditional response or the expected response. He'd tend to take a different view and view that was thought through. That isn't to say that the

Executive Council always appreciated his pronouncements. I think I already mentioned that it really angered some people that Al was sort of this freelancer, leader out there making pronouncements and making speeches and making policy all by himself, and the Executive Council was sort of an afterthought. But Al was confident enough in his own skills and in the soundness of his positions and arguments, that I think he thought we could be had, and we always were. He would often take the discussion in the Executive Council meetings, you know one step further, and bring in a speaker or a researcher that either nobody had ever heard of, or somebody who had written a book that he was really interested in. Usually it was ahead of its time.

Q: Like he would bring in Hirsch and Ravitch, and then they would push their stuff in the *American Educator*.

A: Right.

Q: So you have the full front.

A: Right. And so his ideas were really accepted I think, education wide, to a very unusual degree. I don't think there has been very many leaders in any kind of industry or profession or business that have had that sort of singular influence, and probably won't again, in education. I remember one time, that he brought in a Canadian who wrote a book about labor law. This was probably 15 years ago.

He was talking about what's happening to labor unions in this country right now, and how terrible it is and was that the unions in the United States of America have absolutely no protection any more, that they're going down because they don't have the kinds of protections that they do in other industrialized countries, and that we really, as unions, ought to pay some attention to it. Well at that time of course, we didn't have much influence in Congress or in the White House, and it just kept spiraling downhill until now we're barely picking ourselves up off the floor. There was always a question about how people got appointed in the AFT, and hired into what position, and the suspicion it was often their politics that got them there.

Q: The Social-Democrat?

A: Yeah. And for a DFL'r from the prairie, I never understood it frankly. I never sort of -- you know, when I got there, I had no clue who Social-Democrats were, what they believed. I didn't grasp that all of these people had this affiliation, and what it meant for our international relations and the international department, what it meant for IFFTU, the International Federation of Free Teachers Unions, what it meant for the difference between IFFTU and WCOTOP. All of that stuff, I didn't get any of that. I still don't get much of it (laughter) frankly, except you

know, what other people would point out. Well you know, that person got that job because they're an old Social-Democrat or that person... But the one that absolutely cracked me up. We were in Tennessee. I think it was the meeting where we went to the Saturn plant. So we must have been in Nashville. I was in a bar, a cowboy bar I think, and David Gray was sitting next to me, from Oklahoma; African American from Oklahoma, well originally from Detroit. Somehow, in the conversation, he said that he was a Social-Democrat and I said, "No wonder!" I couldn't ever put several things together. And then the second question was, "You?" I mean, an African American from Oklahoma? Explain to me how that happens. I don't get that. So usually I was a little more circumspect in my responses than that, but with David it was all right.

Q: With David it would be fun to say.

A: "You?"

Q: I mean there was even a council meeting where someone got so irate, they asked who -- because there was an article in *Newsweek* or *Time*, one of the New Republic claiming that the AFL-CIO was in bed with Reagan, with the Social-Democrat stuff. Someone stood up at a council meeting and was like, Who here is a member? I want to see you and kind of try to expose everybody.

A: I don't remember that but it could have happened. I mean, usually where you'd figure it out is again, in the bar afterwards, and you sort of asked people that you trusted to kind of fill you in on who it was. But there were sort of family ties often. There were plenty others, and there were also lots of incestuous relationships with AFL-CIO and lobbyists and all those kinds of things. So for those folks who lived sort of close to the action, they sort of had a better shot, or who were on the Executive Committee or who were involved on a more regular basis. I'm sure it was easier for them to figure out, but for those of us who live far away and live in flyover land and only showed up for Executive Council meetings, it was really hard to figure out.

Q: So you stuck with the education issues. And women's issues later.

A: Exactly. And you know, as I got some confidence in being called on, because you could always kind of tell where you were placed in Al's esteem, as to where you were on the list to be called on. So I sort of moved up in being called on, earlier and earlier. He told a couple people who were friends of mine that he respected my intelligence and appreciate my sense of humor and my contributions. He'd never say that of course, so it was reassuring to hear

that. Where was I going with that? Oh, the other thing about Al is that I found it absolutely impossible to small talk with him.

Q: You can't, it's impossible.

A: And I just kept thinking, it's got to be me. There's got to be something I can talk to this man about in a buffet line, you know?

So finally whatever I'd say would end up sounding stupid to me, and then he'd have some rather sharp retort. Then I'd think oh my goodness, I blew that. But I found out later that there were other people that had as difficult a time. But then he had close friends that seemed to be able to talk about -- well part of the reason is, I couldn't talk about any of the things that he was interested in. I couldn't talk about the technology stuff he liked to buy all the time, all the components of the stereo systems at that time and all that stuff. I couldn't talk about baking because I didn't do that, and I sure as heck couldn't talk about wine, because I'm a Luddite as far as wine tastes are concerned, and I certainly wasn't a collector. So there wasn't anything that I could relate to or could talk to. We invited him out here to speak several times, for several various occasions. I invited him out one time to see the Public School Academy and Chiron, and

that was one of the times when he made this pronouncement to me that class size didn't make any different. That kind of made me mad because I thought…it does too! He was being cryptic, but of course it doesn't make any difference if that's all you do is lower class size.

Q: Al also, is just a man who loves to debate.

A: Yeah, and that was good. I loved to too. You had to have something that you felt would really advance the conversation and really contribute to the debate; otherwise, you ought to keep your mouth shut because he didn't have much tolerance for people who didn't really contribute to the debate. So for that reason, those were really rich discussions. For those of us who listened well -- not everybody is a good listener either, but for those of us who listened well, and I'm a verbal learner, so I learn from listening to things, we learned a lot from Al. He also of course, was a voracious reader. Everywhere he went, he mostly packed books. He didn't pack much other than books, so he'd always be reading wherever he went. There were always lots of rumors of course, about Al's personal life, and those were always kind of interesting to listen to.

Q: Just to listen to.

A: Yeah. I didn't know enough to contribute to the discussion, so I always just listened. But it was one of those lessons in life that probably reinforced the saying that power is an aphrodisiac. When I got confident, and I think confident enough in myself, then I sort of started advancing the women's issues. It was a time when it was -- there was a time when women's issues kind of waned, and then it started sort back up again. So I was considered one of the leaders of the modern women's rights committee, because there had been an older women's rights committee; not older women but a women's rights committee in the past, and then it had kind of waned and kind of I don't know, gone out of style or something. Then they sort of heard where I was going with a lot of those issues, and I'd always kind of call them on where are the women appointees to that advisory committee and things like that.

They sort of start figuring it out, right? So then I was asked to be chair of the women's rights committee, so I reenergized that committee and gave women again, a place and an opportunity to talk about issues important to women. We re-upped the women's rights conferences and started to have women's conferences. We started every year and then every other year, and now it's combined with all the budget cuts, everything gets cut.

Q: How did you reenergize? Was it the timing, at the moment women's issues were coming to the forefront, so you're lucky there, or did you have to find something to really get membership around?

A: I think it was focusing and funneling the issues that were bubbling at the time. The AFT has a very broad range of members and beliefs, who hold a very broad range of ideas, and so there are women there that are on the whole spectrum of issues and belief systems. So there were lots of women who had interest, there were lots of women who were angry because the issues had been neglected for so long. There were lots of women who were angry because of some of the positions that the male leaders has taken, angry because the good positions that the AFT had taken weren't emphasized, and still aren't by the way, and really felt that they were being ignored; that the women were being ignored and their issues were being ignored.

Q: So it was a timing thing, they're ready.

A: Yeah. Plus you know, starting in the late 70s, early 80s, there were lots of boomer women coming into power everywhere, in every organization. It was just sort of our time and we'd come up through the protests and the activities and we were kind of tired of seeing the guys with the bullhorn out in front. We had been through the

women's rights marches and we'd been through the bra burning and all the rest of that, and so we were ready to take legitimate leadership roles. So across the country, there were lots of locals that were starting to be led by women, that had been previously led by men leaders. And there were still lots of women's issues that were not resolved and of course still aren't resolved, and there were true believers that just felt that an organization of educators and workers ought to be paying more attention to those issues. So we, as I said, tried to focus them. Plus, women's health issues were getting to be a big deal and continue to be a big deal now. Now, the interest is in what are these young women going to do as their rights are systematically taken away from them, and they believe they won't ever be taken away from them. Now you look at the latest Supreme Court ruling and you say well, it starts.

Q: It's starting to pick away. It kind of reminds me of what everybody always says about even new members in unions as a whole. Well of course we're going to have health benefits, well of course we're going to have these days off and this amount of sick leave and this kind of career ladder, because it's always been there.

A: Right.

Q: A union is just my travel agent, to get to Disney World, and they're being taken away.

A: And the Gen-Xers are not joiners. Because they think they can do it all by themselves. Since they raised themselves as latchkey kids, they think, I can get myself into or out of anything I want to, you know anything that happens to me. And so they don't get collective action, they don't get collective energy, collective anything. When something happens to them for instance, at a school site, and they have to go into a disciplinary meeting, the union rep is there, the union attorney is there, the Gen-Xer is there, and the Gen-Xer's attorney that the Gen-Xer is paying for, because the Gen-Xer does not believe that the union attorney is working for them.

Q: Because they're working for the union.

A: Right.

Q: Which they don't understand.

A: Right.

Q: I can't afford that. How can you afford that?

A: Well, they can't afford it but they do it anyway. So it's examples like that of how --

Q: Trust that we can do it ourselves?

A: Yeah. We'll see what happens when and if more of these things just go away.

Q: What's interesting is I just heard that the Girl Scouts are still growing, even though you have a generation of non-joiners previously to them. Even immediate to them, is still the Millennials don't join at all as well. But I just heard that they are still growing very fast and very strong worldwide. I wonder if it has to do with women binding, women built power base, women's health issues. Who knows?

A: Well I think parents also want to keep girls active and involved and sort of empowered as young women, and being on the soccer team and being on the rugby team or whatever, that they're on now, and being involved in history. They want to keep those young women involved so that they don't get sort of led astray.

Q: But will they continue on, who knows?

A: It would be good. I mean, some people are hoping that the Millennials are going to save us. They do seem to have more of a worldwide environmental concern but we'll see.

Q: Right. So back to AFT. They built up the women's committee but AFT came up to -- looked at itself with Futures, the Futures committees. What did you see come out of that redevelopment, reorganizing of AFT?

A: Or what didn't I see.

Q: Exactly.

A: Well, Futures I, it had some good philosophical statements in it that I used fairly frequently, one of the three main tenets of Futures I was we have to be as concerned about the success of the enterprise as we are as our own success, because otherwise, our members aren't going to have any place to work. So we do have to pay attention to public education and the Minneapolis Public Schools, and make sure that the Minneapolis Public Schools continues to exist, or our folks are going to be on the street. It reminds me of the story, there is a meat cutters local in this town, who worked for a chain of grocery stores called Country Club. They had a large grievance with the Country Club markets about wages and working conditions. The meat cutters were so angry at County Club, that they knew that if they went on strike, Country Club Foods would go out of business, and they did it anyway. And so they went on strike and Country Club Foods went out of business. So I did think it was important to emphasize that we're concerned about teachers, teachers as professionals, but we're also concerned about the entities for which we work. Having said that, the preamble, or those opening statements, as good as they were, the rest of the document was basically a political document on organization structure of the AFT, and how to give voice to the various divisions within the AFT. So the

five divisions then, became divisions, and the PPCs were invented and the program policy council meetings were invented. The council meetings were supposed to then be having the PPCs bring their issues to the council, to broaden out the activities and the membership and the empowerment of all the various divisions. So that was about it. There really, in my mind, really was not a view of the future of the labor movement, the future of public education, or the future of public education unions.

Q: It was more just a restructure to give a voice.

A: Right.

Q: Within a union that was shifting.

A: It was shifting because of course, grow or die, and broaden your base. Because there had been a no raid agreement with the NEA, there wasn't much place to go to grow or die, there wasn't much place to organize. So they had to broaden. Futures II, I still don't believe was any better. What the organization itself, and I spoke about this until I was blue in the face, both at the council meetings and privately with leaders, that until the organization took a real serious, honest -- or had the ability and the openness to take a real honest look at what the organization ought to look like in the future, to empower not just the teachers in the classroom but the locals, since the AFT is

made up of good, strong, powerful locals, and until it looked at itself and was able to examine whether it ought to be the top down, hierarchical, bureaucratic structure that it is now, or whether it could indeed think about, examine other restructuring in the private sector, to become a point of sales delivery organization. I kept saying all the time that the place where the teachers meet and involve and touch and feel and articulate and get involved with the union, is at the local level, period. It's also at the grocery store shelf level, where they interact with Wheaties. It's not at the CEO level, it's not at the distribution warehouse, it's not at a board level, it's not at the officers' level, it's not at the state level. It's at the local union, and the local unions, as with Saturn, as with other wholesale restructuring of how we think about quality management, means that you think first about how the members, the ones who are paying enormous amounts of money to the organization, can get what it needs. And the first line it gets is from the local union. Now instead, the opposite is happening to the local unions. The local unions are being starved out, because more money and more effort and more power is going to the state unions, and the national union is holding on for dear life to its power and old

hierarchical structure with its employee contracts that give everybody a title and everybody's on a hierarchy. And we model nothing. As an organization, we don't model a flattened structure, we don't model teaming, we don't model the expectations that we have of schools and school districts. We're really good at telling a school district how it ought to organize itself so that it can push the decision making, push the budgeting out to the local schools, where the teachers and the kids are, and the administrators. But do we do that? Absolutely not. We do the opposite. All the money goes upstairs and a little bit trickles back down. The excuse for bulking up the state organizations is that the state legislature is where all of the decisions are being made. Well, adding a few lobbyists to a lean state organization would be enough to take care of that, but oh no. The state organizations are being bulked up, so they do all the professional development, they do all of the organizing through there. They do everything that the local unions used to do, are now the money and the effort and the personnel are going to the state, the bulked up state organizations. When I think about the lessons of the Saturn plant -- I've been to the Saturn plant three times. We've won two Saturn awards, our local -- and the time we were there with the Executive

Council, with Al. The lessons of Saturn, the lessons of -- we have the Carlson School of Management over here has a juran chair. All the reading I've ever done on, and thinking and looking at how the private sector is reorganizing itself so that the just in time delivery and the -- well, it's also what Tony Alvarado did in District 2; cut down the district office and get that support and that money out in the organizational structure would be the local unions. I argued, for the last probably six years, to reinstitute the local presidents' conference. I can't even get the local presidents conference back on the agenda, but the state fed presidents conference is every year, in a nice place, and the state fed presidents are able to get together and talk and share and work together. So I've just been terribly frustrated that the lack of attention to local unions, the restructuring of the organization from what made it strong --

[END OF FILE 7]

A: -- which is strong local unions, identified with an image, with a number, with a name, with good local leaders, is being squeezed and starved and neglected and in favor of maintaining strong centralized control in Washington and in the state capitols. I think that for a while, it seemed to

be an effort to make us look like the NEA, so that if we merged, we'd have comparable structures. But now that merger seems to be on the backburner. I just think that it's so much a maintenance of status quo, in the light of the fact that the local unions are hurting, they're dealing with issues that the national doesn't have a clue how to help them with, such as the layoffs. They're having to cut budgets because they're losing so many members. It took them forever to figure out that we ought to pay some attention to charter schools and that they aren't good, they're killing us. Would they listen to the fact that they're killing us? Absolutely not. Somebody had the idea that Al loved charter schools and therefore we ought to be in favor of charter schools. Well excuse me, it's killing us, and it's now being demonstrated in city after city after city, it is killing us. The same with NCLB. Absolute refusal to accept the fact that NCLB is killing us and is purposefully undermining and doing in public education, particularly in the urbans. That was its purpose and that's what's happening to us. And instead, we were told, in an Executive Council meeting, when we said the NCLB is killing urban education and we have the evidence to show it, we were told by the president at that time, that we shouldn't listen to our superintendents,

which absolutely blew me away. It's just been this total lack of having the legislative department and the lobbyists challenge the Congress on any of this. So instead, because Ted Kennedy was in favor of NCLB, everything was fine. Well, it wasn't. There was hardly anybody in that AFT office who was willing to speak up, and the people that did aren't there any more, and the people that did knew what they were talking about but nobody would listen to them. So we kept saying, meeting after meeting after meeting, NCLB is killing us and the charter schools are killing us and as an organization, what are we going to do about this? Nothing. I mean it was just --

Q: Is it too little too late now?

A: Yeah, I'm afraid so, and I'm generally pretty much of an optimist. But in this town, I don't know how we're going to recover. I just don't know.

Q: And now I see a Spelling's Report on the higher ed side. She came out with a report and everybody's calling it the NCLB for higher ed. It could be the killing of public universities. **START AT 4:25 MZ10**

A: Oh absolutely, and where it started was with ENCATE. I'm the AFT rep on the ENCATE board, and they are trying to do away with ENCATE so that the higher ed wouldn't have to have standards and wouldn't have to be accredited, and

that's why they started TEAK, the competition for ENCATE. Very clearly, they're going after higher ed now. I mean it's that old saying about first they came for whoever, but it wasn't me. So it's very clear and we still, organizationally put our head in the sand, and then what happens? Now there's that coalition of everybody in the education cartel, everybody and their half sister is going after the well, this is the way NCLB ought to change, these are the five principles and we ought to oppose it. So who's the last one on, and it looks like an afterthought? So now the AFT joins that coalition, after all this yammering about how oh, we were on the inside and it would have been worse if we hadn't have been on the inside, and well there's really good stuff in there and we can't throw away the good stuff with the rest, and it just needs to be tweaked a little, and if it was just a little tweaking here fine. But you know, the folks from the Hill, who are in that legislative department, aren't listening to the folks who are living it.

Q: Is it because they've never lived it?

A: Well, I think it's because they had their legislative agenda before they came in. I rant and rave about it, but I just think that Futures I was unusual in the labor movement. Nobody else was sort of examining itself like

that and you know, having Ray and some of the other folks help with Futures I was a really big deal and it was a good lesson for other unions to pay some attention to the future. But after Futures I, obviously there's been a lot of other unions that have sort of leapfrogged over in thinking about how to totally restructure themselves. And some of them are the Change to Win folk, although they seem to be having trouble now, getting along with each other. (laughs)

Q: We kind of saw that coming.

A: Yeah, right.

Q: But the steelworkers, who are still with the AFL-CIO, have reinvented themselves into an amazing organizing union. They can organize a plant in (snaps fingers) a second, with their fast organizing plans.

A: And their education, they have a great education role. Yeah, they do a lot of -- obviously, they've spread out into any worker that walks. And we're still kind of stuck. I just think it's sort of philosophically or theoretically, I don't know which, not credible to consistently be really good at telling other people how to organize themselves and how to live their professional lives and how to do things, and then not model one iota of it. I just think that's not credible.

Q: And you think part of the future is because of the merger? Do you want to get into the merger now? Your blood is boiling already so...

A: Yeah, I guess I've gotten myself worked up into it.

Q: I mean part of Futures probably is to align themselves more with NEA.

A: Right.

Q: To make a possible merger work.

A: Which again, I don't know whether it was Al sort of didn't articulate it deeply enough or broadly enough, or what his vision was, enough for people to really sort of understand where he thought he was going with it.

Q: Well as we were talking about yesterday, there has been two, three theories of what the merger meant.

A: Right. I don't know either, but I think it's whatever that theory was that he was operating on in his own mind has passed us by. The NEA is going to affiliate with and is affiliated with the labor movement, either state by state or local by local; the state of Washington or Seattle just did.

What I didn't -- well let me back up a little bit in the history about the Minnesota merger. While we were still in the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, I was a Minnesota Federation of Teachers vice president forever.

It was a nimble organization, it was a focused organization, it was lean, had the most respected lobbyists at the state. Because we were affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, we had enormous credibility and respect, and when we went to the legislature people would listen. The legislators liked the AFT, liked Al, and therefore, we generally had a leg up, in spite of the fact that we were a half or a third of the size of the other organization. There was an opening for somebody to run for president of the MFT. I can't exactly remember what year that was, but it must have been early 80s. Some of us who were leaders in the MFT, maybe about a half dozen of us, got in a room and we sort of asked ourselves out loud, who was going to run for the next president of the MFT. Was it going to be me or was it going to be Sandy Peterson? So we decided in that meeting, that I wanted to stay local president. I like being local president, because that's where a lot more action is, and that it was Sandy's turn and Sandy ought to be president of the MFT. So long story short, she became president of the state MFT and she was a good president of the state MFT. That, for about 12 years, we had, as officers of the MFT, we had on again, off again, cool, warm, whatever, discussions with the Minnesota Education Association about the issue of merger. It waxed

and waned. You know, it was energetic sometimes, with some presidents, and not with others. So we kind of got used to being in these merger talks that usually didn't go anywhere. However, Sandy was really kind of sold on the issue and really bought the, sort of again, the philosophical point that comes with -- that she felt would come with it, which would be a future oriented, whole new look at the organization, at the organizational structure, at the potential outcomes, the potential results, if we were one. I sort of bought that, because I always liked thinking about the future. When I was in the classroom I taught futures. I was enamored of that possibility also. Eventually, she and the then, I don't know maybe two or three presidents of the MEA, finally, they got pretty serious about it and there was a team of the officers of the MFT, some of the officers of the MEA, and I was there as an AFT vice president, and the NEA vice presidents, and there was a staff person from the AFT and a local staff person who was an NEA person; worked for a long time, I don't know, maybe three years or so. Now, I will be the first to admit that I got tired of those meetings and eventually quit going. That was one of my mistakes. One of my other mistakes was that I trusted the people who were there in the room, to have the best interests of everybody

at heart, and they didn't. To some extent, the overriding goal of the AFT was just to get the merger, period. They were being so pressured to get this merger.

Q: So it didn't matter if they wanted to follow a model? Whatever model was out there they wanted. They didn't care if the large --

A: There wasn't a model out there.

Q: So they didn't follow an NYSUT model or?

A: No. So what happened is, it started from whole cloth, and to some extent, we couldn't foresee how it was going to work out, but people had this good faith belief system that good intentioned people could make it work out. What we didn't find out until it was too late, is that the context, the unwritten, oh what do you call it? The behaviors and the belief systems and the structural stuff, are so ingrained, that the larger organization just basically became the way the organization behaved. I mean, as much as people tried to not have that happened, it just became an MEA, a larger MEA. And it became that because they'd bring in pollsters from the NEA, who were NEA pollsters, they'd bring in facilitators who were NEA facilitators, they'd bring in PR people who were NEA people.

Q: Where were the AFT people?

A: Well in the first place, nobody called them and asked them for stuff like that, but in the second place, the AFT couldn't compete financially and so as a result, those of us who were strong AFT locals and who were big in the old state organization, suddenly were little fish in a bid pond with no power. I kept saying to the AFT, that the AFT is disappearing in this state. It is disappearing before our very eyes, and don't you care? But they really didn't because they were so enamored of this state merger. So I think that when they did the Florida -- well, the Montana merger was next, and that was easier because the teachers aren't a very big part of the Montana Federation; they're mostly public employees. Then they got to Florida, and they've had a lot of the same kind of struggles in Florida, big time. But to this day, nobody really cares in the AFT. I have had endless, endless meetings with AFT folks rather high up, who have been sent out to try to fix or try to mediate or try to develop a memorandum of agreement or try to do something about our problems out here. Substantially, nothing happens. A lot of words, a lot of time, a lot of --

Q: A lot of promises.

A: A lot of promises. Nothing happens and structurally, it is never going to happen for us now. We operate our local

union on 29 centers on a dollar and you know, the teachers are angry about that because of their over $700, only 29 percent of that is kept here, to run this local office and to purchase local staff and to provide the services that they need. They need the services in their school building. They need people to mediate adult conflicts in school buildings. They need staff people to go out and work with them when they've been kicked by a student. And they need people who are on committees to pay attention to what the math adoption is going to be, pay attention to the design of the parent report card. It takes bodies and it takes money, and it takes money to keep the building open, to staff it, to do all that kind of stuff, and we're supposed to do that all on 29 cents on the dollar, and it isn't possible, and it's just, "Oh well?" So I'm very jaded and discouraged because of that. As I said at the beginning, in retrospect, I should have opposed it. I think had we organized a little bit, we could have opposed it, and we would have been better off.

Q: Did you take any of the locals to the merge conventions to raise this up, raise these issues, or would it have been a folly, I mean too little, too late?

A: Oh, to AFT?

Q: Not AFT, MFT

A: Yeah, it was too little, too late. I don't think they learned enough from it, other than we certainly don't hear anything about national merger any more. So I don't know whether that was a part of the learning or not, but it's unfortunately too late for us unless we break away and start a new union, or go with Change to Win.

Q: (laughs) That would make some headlines again.

A: Yeah, right.

Q: Is the same thing happening in New Mexico?

A: I don't know. I've got to talk to Ellen more about that, but I don't know. Size does make a difference, and when you're absorbed, it's very difficult. The other part that hasn't worked, is that one of the big arguments was well, think of it, if we're all together over at the legislature and we're the biggest and most powerful lobby. Well guess what that -- the headlines always say the same thing; the big labor teachers union is the one that now contributes more by a lot, than any other organization in the state of Minnesota, over a million bucks every time. So what have we gotten for that? Absolutely zero, absolutely zero. It's amazing how little we've gotten. The only thing that we got was our Minneapolis pension was saved. It didn't cost anything. It's a big disappointment, a big boo-boo, big disappointment.

Q: At least in New York they can say they've gotten things.

A: Well, and they basically are the organization. You know, NYSUT always was, because they had the numbers in New York City and elsewhere, they always were the dominant organization. So they never can figure out why it doesn't work when you're not the dominant organization. All they have to do is ask Buffalo, but they choose not to ask Buffalo anything.

Q: No, they don't. Buffalo decided to answer last too anyway. Speaking of -- you know, you'd like to talk about futures. Why don't we do kind of a wrap up thing. Usually my wrap up is the future. What do you see the future for three things; MFT, AFT, and the labor movement as a whole?

A: Well the future for MFT Local 59 of course, is inextricably tied to the future of the Minneapolis Public Schools, and right now that's very shaky. Minneapolis Public Schools is continuing to lose students. Originally, the demographers said that Minneapolis schools would bottom out in 2008/2009, and start turning around again. Now they're saying it's 2010/2011, and maybe it will turn around. So, I think the Minneapolis Public Schools may end up being kind of a boutique school district that's really educating part of the city very well, and educating hardly anybody in the other part of the city. If we hopefully continue to

educate at least part of the city very well, so that we can continue to hold on to that market share. I think it will be very difficult for the union to adjust to the demands of the consumer parents, as they're exhibiting themselves now, and the issues now. It's going to be very difficult because, at least the current leaders don't have the kind of confidence of membership or community that would require a really dramatic change in how teachers are transferred, assigned, laid off, rehired. Those are issues that require some finesse, some intelligence, some cleverness, in trying to figure out how to deal with those issues. I think what should have happened a long time ago, which the legislature never did and it's too late now, I think, is to go to a countywide school system. Had we gone to a countywide school system, so we had a larger area in which to desegregate. The three school districts in the country, the only three that have successfully desegregated, are Louisville, Charlotte, Mecklenburg, and I've kind of forgotten the other two, but it's because they have this huge area in which they can move people around. We don't. We're landlocked in this 25 miles. But if we're going to, I hope statewide, we could become a countywide school system, because I don't think it's sustainable to continue to have 350 school districts in this small state, with as

few kids as there are in these little school districts. Plus then, you have principals in every school building, you have a superintendent sitting usually in the one school in the district or the two schools in the district. The superintendent is in the office right next to the principal, which is ridiculous. You can't find good superintendents any more. So we really need in this state, to go to a countywide school system. I don't know if the legislature is ever going to have the guts to do that.

As far as the contract, I hope that there comes a day when the relationships and the quality of the school district leaders and the quality of the school site leaders, mean that they actually implement what's in the contract and actually do implement it all. I hope that the state is able to sustain the funding for the professional pay plan, and that it becomes so embedded that it sustains itself and will be continued. I hope that we get to the point eventually, where we can count on education leaders to be skilled leaders of professional human beings and therefore, I think in order to do that, we need to padlock schools of educational administration and have administrators go to the school of business and to local academies. I think that in order to continue to attract the best and the brightest, we really have to change what

happens with teachers in schools, so that they are respected by these skilled leaders, because right now they aren't and they feel it, and people are leaving the profession in droves, and young people are not coming in. Males and persons of color are not coming in because of the salaries and the working conditions, working conditions more so than salaries. So as much as people complain about the fact that we don't have enough persons of color in the classroom, it's a national problem. Males aren't coming in either.

So the future then, needs to be sort of, maybe we could go back to the new three Rs, that the AFT brought out a few years ago and I think I'm the only one that's still using; respect, responsibility and results. That all relies on building relationships. Teachers and education is going to have to gain some modicum of respect by politicians, by parents, by community people, or it's going to disappear. The responsibility. Teachers are already taking extraordinary responsibility for student results. They're getting paid partially on student results. They're showing dramatic increase in students results but they can't do it alone. The families, the parenting and the communities have to take responsibility for some of the children and some of their outrageous behaviors. They just

have to, and it's impossible to talk about. You get killed if you try to talk about it but somehow, there has to be a turnaround in parents and families and community have to take responsibility for the children. You know, if Bill Cosby can't talk about it, white educators can't talk about it and it just, it has to be. That's one reason why I have some faith in Barack Obama. He at least can talk about it, and talks about it in a very sophisticated way, which is probably why he doesn't get put down for it.

And then results, we're showing good results, but we have to show better results, as everybody says, in order to stay competitive worldwide, and to help produce graduates that are creative and intelligent and educated enough so that they can work on a team and they can know where to go to get information and be creative. Now, by the same token, the labor movement -- was there one in between there?

Q: You can do AFT if you want.

A: Oh, the AFT.

Q: You already kind of talked about AFT.

A: With the AFT, I just am so convinced that it has to tip itself on its head and flip itself around, upside down, or it's going to become irrelevant also. I finally convinced Sandy Feldman to have a local leaders taskforce, that I

thought was going to be able to get to some of those issues of local unions, at least that's what she said it was going to be about. It never was, never could embrace that discussion, and I brought it up at every meeting, as you can imagine. So that was a big disappointment. So I think the AFT is in danger if it continues to be the organization it is, top down. And then the labor movement is scary business, it absolutely frightens me to death, because what I can't quite figure out is how it gets recreated once it is pretty much down to nothing. When it was created in the first place and the labor laws were created in the 30s, with all the active organizing. We talked about the 100,000 people being on the streets, marching on the streets of Minneapolis, and the funeral of the truckers who were murdered by the guards. That kind of energy and that kind of organizing and that kind of recreation of workers' rights, I can't see the road to that recreation right now. The only thing that seems to bring anybody out are the folks that are marching today, who are illegal immigrant workers, who are part of the problem. And they're part of the problem in that we continue to bring people here who are willing to work for nothing, and that continues to bring down the -- we continue to pull everybody down to the lowest common denominator. We continue to have the good

jobs going elsewhere. We continue to have employers who only answer to stockholders, who only think that the massive restructuring means cutting thousands of jobs. I don't think a country can survive on service work, and it can't survive without workers who are getting good pay and benefits, who make up the middle class. So without the middle class, without the labor movement, to create the middle class. There's a little book that was written and printed by a guy who lives around here, it's called, *Middle Class, Union Made*, and that connection of the middle class, union made is absolutely critical, and without the unions and without the middle class, we are a third world country. And how we pull ourselves out of being a third world country, I think is very questionable.

The issue of course, is how the citizenry understands what's happening to us. I worry also because since 1980, the citizenry has been hammered that government is no good, government services are inept, taxes are bad, all private sector is good, and all of the adults now, in the decision making and in the voting booth now, have been raised on those mantras, and they don't know to think any other way. The other thing is, the countries from whom the immigrants are coming now, are countries that are not strong countries, that aren't strong democracies, do not have a

strong infrastructure, don't have the kind of good government services that we once had immigrants come from. So therefore, they sort of don't have that same understanding of what government ought to do for folks. If the labor movement created public education and public education and the labor movement are done in, the same question; who's going to create public education and why? It doesn't have the constituency it once had. When my German and Swedish grandparents came here, they came from countries, particularly Sweden, where they paid high taxes, they expected good services, they funded education through college, they funded health services completely, they funded services in nursing homes for old people. They had those expectations, and those are the expectations they brought here. Except for us few old Scandinavians hanging around here, there aren't a lot of other folks that have that kind of experience and come from that kind of belief system. Even now, the legislature is trying to raise taxes by adding a fourth tier, by restoring the level of taxation for the highest wage earners in this state, just restoring. Pawlenty cut them and now it's just restoring it. Oh my gosh, everybody out of the woodwork. No taxes, no taxes. Taxes are bad, can't have taxes. Taxes takes all my money. Aren't taxes awful?

Q: What money are they talking about? They have no money.

A: Exactly, but that isn't what comes out. What comes out is, shouldn't be raising taxes. Even though their property tax is going to go down, it's going to fix their problem, which has been pile everything on the property tax because you know, the governor wouldn't let any other tax or fee be increased. It's going to fix that for them, but oh my God, somebody's going to have to pay more taxes, even if it's somebody earning more than $400,000 a year, are the only ones that it's going to touch. And it's not on the first $400,000, it's on the dollars after $400,000. So those are the folks they're worried about.

So I'm not very optimistic at this point. I pray that maybe somebody -- and part of the reason I've been really interested in Barack Obama, is he seems to be the only candidate so far, that can kind of inspire people and really elevate their thought processes, and paint a picture of a different kind of country. I don't think any of the rest of them can.

Q: The only one close, the only one who is talking about class issues is Edwards.

A: That's true, but then he gets hung with the $400 haircut and the birds' eye view of his mansion. And then you think oh yeah, right.

Q: It completely takes away the whole image. Barack continues the message. You look at where he came from and where he is today.

A: Yeah. So I know Edwards absolutely says the right stuff but I don't know...

Q: So does Kucinich but you know.

A: Yeah right. He's like the little Portuguese guy. (laughter) You know, the senior citizens still vote at a greater rate than anybody else, and I just hope there's enough memory left there, that we can help turn it around. But there is so much to turn around. There are so few CEOs that have the right philosophy, that there is something innately good and ethical about treating workers well and providing good salary and benefits and working conditions for workers. There's hardly anybody. Who is it? The Costco CEO.

Q: I was about to mention him.

A: He's terrific. He takes a small salary, puts it all into the organization. He's being really successful but you know the *Wall Street Journal* makes fun of him.

Q: And his best friend is the owner of Starbucks; only does it to a point. He doesn't respect the workers but he'll give them just enough to keep them semi happy making coffee. He'll give you a little bit of the stock options, we'll

give you a little health care, but once you go over 40 hours a week you know, I doubt it.

A: Yeah, so instead we've got the guys in charge of Circuit City.

Q: Oh yeah, that's the latest.

A: Oh, disaster!

Q: It doesn't surprise me, because we've been seeing it for the past five years, but this is the latest.

A: It's the latest and who do you lay off and say get out of here, we don't need you any more? Your highest salespeople. The people that have gone up your ladder, who have gotten really good at selling your products, and the one who are selling the most, are the ones who are getting laid off, and you're going to go down and get the folks walking in the door and start all over again, and if they want to circle back after a few weeks and try to get their own job back, well fine but no benefits, lower salary. And then we have Wells Fargo. I mean, the very latest one is Wells Fargo, and they're claiming that they have to lay off all these employees because of the owners of the stock, the shareholders, want a bigger return on their investment. And who is the very, one of the big shareholders? A Saudi sheik. So we've got a Saudi sheik who is forcing Wells

Fargo into laying off -- they're the ones maybe, is it 17,000 workers?

Q: I think that's Wells Fargo.

A: Right.

Q: Circuit was more like 400, 500.

A: No, I think it was 3,400.

Q: OK.

A: So anyway, it's thousands of workers. So you do in all these workers because some billion, trillionaire Saudi sheik decides he wants more return on his investment. We're being led through a nose ring by the stock market, and how many people are in the stock market? Forty percent of the citizenry. Most of us, through our pension or our 401(k)s, and there's absolutely nobody taking or rarely taking an ethical stand that work, in and of itself, and workers, are important people. It's just mind boggling. It's what I talk about when I go into the pulpit on Labor Day, and talk about the ethics and the value of work. You know, it's the same way -- I think we're at the same point right now, with our society and with the middle class, as we are with the climate.

I mean we have to do something dramatic now, in order to start reversing global warming. You can see it in the state of Minnesota now, very dramatically. Not just our

winters, but the vegetation and everything. We're at the same place as to whether we're going to save the middle class or not, and we don't have an FDR. We don't have somebody that -- we don't even have an Eisenhower for heaven sakes, who said that people who try to do in the middle class are the ones that are going to end this society as we know it, are enemies to our society. We don't have anybody who is willing to take on the new robber barons, nobody. It's just -- well, I've got to quit ranting.

So, I don't have a lot of hope for the labor movement right now, unless we get somebody like --

Q: We'll see what happens after '08.

A: Yeah. I don't know if you listen to Air America or not.

Q: If the wind is right I can pick it up.

A: Well, if you listen to Air America for any length of time, particularly Thom Hartman. Do you get him in the afternoon?

Q: I think he's on in the afternoon.

A: He is so smart. He is so articulate. He has written about ten books, they're all good. You listen to him -- and it's T-H-O-M Hartman -- and you listen to Big Eddie Schultz from Fargo, the only gun toting, meat eating liberal on the prairie, and you hear the depth of corruption in what has

happened to government in this country, the depth of how deep the infiltration of really scurrilous people, bureaucrats, has been in this country. It's deep and pervasive, and it is going to take a long time to excise that infestation of snakes and weasels and lice. They're embedded so deeply, and it isn't going to happen between '08 and '09.

Q: But it could be a start.

A: It could be a start.

Q: But it's going to take a generation.

A: Oh, man. I hope I live to see it but I don't know. Well, and I think the labor leaders need to get a grip. The labor leaders need to first of all, get some young, energetic, forward thinking -- and I don't care about -- I shouldn't say I don't care about loyalty, but keeping the old fart white guys in power just out of loyalty is not smart any more. We have some disastrous examples in our state, and just weak and no concept of anything, and if we don't get some new labor leaders in both the AFL-CIO and whatever, Change to Win, whatever we're not going to be able to help ourselves. Because they aren't there. I had one other rant.

Q: OK.

A: You know, every four years or so or seven years or whenever it is, when the labor industry show comes to town, I always do a booth. I told the director of communications at the AFL-CIO, who is a friend of mine I said, "Now you watch. First of all, they're going to go to the wrong TV stations and secondly, the guys who are going to be the spokespersons for the labor industry show, in order to attract people to come down and see the new things that are going on in labor and industry, are going to be old, white haired white guys with gold jewelry dripping all over." And sure enough, sure enough, every single one of them white hair, paunch. The only thing they didn't have was the old cigar, but gold chains, gold bracelet, a big gold ring, and standing there talking about the new labor movement. It was appalling and I just, every time I saw it on television that week, it just absolutely drove me nuts. What don't you guys get? (laughter) No women, no people of color, no young people? Oh, Lord. Oh, gee whiz. So I don't know, maybe we're doomed, maybe we're not. I don't know, but everybody always says, biblically and otherwise, the decay happens from the inside out. That's what's happening to us, inside out. Well, there isn't anything that can happen to this country, there isn't any external

enemy that could do to this country what we have done to ourselves.

Q: Right.

A: Nobody. So amen to all that I guess.

[END OF INTERVIEW]