AFL-CIO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

JACK CONWAY

Date: May 23, 1979
Place:
Interviewer: Alice M. Hoffman

AMH: Okay. This is an interview with Jack Conway, May 23, 1979, Meany Center, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Jack, could you just start off by saying something about how you got involved in the labor movement in the first place?

CONWAY: Well, my own involvement started in 1942, February of 1942 when I went to work in a General Motors plant in Melrose Park, Illinois. I got involved in organizing the plant for the UAW. We were successful in organizing the plant, had our NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] vote in early May of 1942 and had a very substantial victory, that quickly was translated into a contract and the inclusion of our local union into the General Motors section of the UAW. I was chairman of the bargaining committee of my local union, which was a big one--16,000 members--until 1945, when the war ended, at which time I returned to the University of Chicago where I had been before that. Walter Reuther had been ~~the president or~~ the vice-president of the union and the director of the General Motors department of the

union and I had very close association with him within the union as a result of that. In 1946, March of 1946, Walter Reuther was elected president of the UAW and he asked me if I would leave the University of Chicago and come to Detroit as his administrative assistant. I did that and worked in that capacity with Walter Reuther for fifteen years. So that my involvement with him spanned that whole period of time in which the CIO went through its leadership change and Walter Reuther was elected president of the CIO, the whole span of the negotiations on labor unity, the actual merger itself, the period of time that followed that. For a brief period--1961-1963--I left the labor movement and went to work for the United States government in the Kennedy administration, so I was physically separated from the UAW at that time. When I returned to the movement . . . .

AMH: You worked in the Department of Labor?

CONWAY: Housing.

AMH: Oh, housing.

CONWAY: I was the Deputy Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Administration. I returned to the labor movement in, I believe, March, 1963 as the Director of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. So I picked up direct involvement in the internal affairs of the labor movement, but from that strategic position. I was the director of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO until May of 1968. I resigned after the UAW had made its decision to separate from the AFL-CIO. I was not prepared to make a choice, so it was easier for me to simply resign and leave the labor movement again, which I did in 1968. I maintained continuous association with people

in the labor movement and have kept abreast as best I could of the developments. For a short time in 1975 and '76 I returned to the labor movement as the Executive Director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which was another exposure to the AFL-CIO family of unions, a fairly intensive exposure. And then I proceeded to leave again to do something else.

So. . . That's the history and my own perspective on the merger and the negotiations that led up to it are, of course, fairly intimately tied up with the UAW and Walter Reuther as an individual and my own participation in it as a staff back-up to discussions. I would say that I probably was privy to most of the thinking and the activities that went on. But from that perspective. And it has to be kept in mind that anything I say that the elephant that I'm looking at may be quite different from the elephant that others are looking at.

AMH: Well, it's a very important perspective, though, and one that we want to be sure and get. Did Walter have any ambivalence about running for president of the CIO?

CONWAY: Well, that was a product of a fairly serious set of discussions. Ambivalence is not the right word--we were very concerned about what was going to happen to the CIO, and it centered around the personality of David McDonald. McDonald was a puffy, egocentric kind of person that people just took for granted as long as he was the secretary-treasurer of the Steelworkers Union, and Phil Murray was alive. But when Phil Murray suffered his first illness, there was something that happened that had a great deal of impact on us, because Phil Murray told us about it personally. He experienced, I believe, a

heart attack. I'm not certain, there could have been something else with it. McDonald, who was the secretary-treasurer and the heir-apparent by virtue of that fact, prepared Phil Murray's obituary and had it printed in the United Steelworkers paper and they held the presses in Indianapolis [Indiana] at the Cornelius Printing Company until Phil Murray died. He didn't die! And the result was that when he recovered he was aware of the fact that McDonald had behaved this way. He went into his own Steelworkers convention shortly after that--Murray--when he recovered and he stripped McDonald of all his power in the Steelworkers Union. He took all the power of that second office and put it in the office of the president, so that he, Phil Murray, had total power in the union. He reported this in fairly extensive detail to Walter Reuther in a meeting that I was at, and why he had done it, and how his whole opinion of McDonald had changed as a consequence of this. The thing that he failed to do, however, was to break the succession--the automatic succession feature, and that still remained in the constitution that should Murray die, or should a vacancy occur, the secretary-treasurer became the president by virtue of a succession clause.

AMH: A number of people have wondered why he failed to do that.

CONWAY: I think it was oversight. I don't think he ever expected to die. You know, these guys. . . if there's anything I've learned from association with labor leaders is that they are incapable of planning for some orderly succession. They cannot conceive of a situation in which they are not the center of the affairs of their

particular organization. We're going through that right now with George Meany. Maybe he's planning something, but I doubt it very much.

So, anyway, that had quite an effect on our own leadership. We had been, of course, the subject of enormous CIO opposition to the UAW. We were strong enough to stand on our own two feet, which we did; we were rarely concerned about anything that could be done to us that would be adverse. Walter Reuther had been elected president by a very narrow margin after Philip Murray came and intervened in opposition by very conspicuously displaying his support for R.J. Thomas, chopped our majority for Walter down almost to the point where we lost it. We elected Walter but lost control of the Executive Board. That's the point at which I went to work for Walter as his administrative assistant.

We spent the next twenty months preparing for our next convention around, because we knew we were slated for extinction unless we could win. We prepared very carefully, and built our strengths across the country. It was a very difficult period for everybody, cause we were on the road constantly. The net effect was, though, that we made the decision to take on our opposition--Thomas [R.J.], Addes [George], and others--across the board in the union, and we succeeded in defeating all the top officers and everything but four of the regional directors. But before we did this we made a trip to Pittsburgh and sat down with Phil Murray and told him what our decision was. He tried to dissuade us from opposing George Addes in particular. He didn't seem to be as concerned about the others, but he was about George Addes, who was the center of our opposition. So, we were not very sympathetic to that. All we wanted to be sure was that Murray maintained his neutrality.

We didn't ask him to do anything on our behalf and he agreed to do that. We extended the invitation to him to come to our convention. He did. And did behave well and we defeated everybody, except these four regional directors, which we took care of at a later time. So we consolidated our position. The effect of this was to bring about an accommodation with Phil Murray in the CIO. He and Walter Reuther developed a fairly close working relationship. When he got sick, I guess it was in 1950, late '50, a year or so before he actually died, we began to be worried about what would happen in the event that he were to die, so we thought a great deal about it. We were all getting ready to go to Los Angeles to the convention of the CIO when we got word that he had died in San Francisco. So we did sit down as a group--half a dozen of us--and talk through all of the ramifications of the CIO, the demise of Murray and what would be done under various circumstances if different courses of action, different alternatives occurred. It was after the assessment of the other possibilities--the possibility of McDonald taking over as both the Steelworkers president and as the CIO president --that we decided we'd have to take the risk and. . . .

AMH: Did you think that Allan Haywood being president was tantamount to McDonald taking over?

CONWAY: Yes, that's right. Haywood would have been a caretaker president and Haywood was a hack, in the best sense of the word, but a hack. There was no substance there--speechmaker, organizer, in the old thirty's [redacted] sense. Not a very skillful man in making a transition into the kinds of problems that we had, he had very little to do with anything other than the organizing activities of the unions that

made up the CIO, the smaller unions.

So, we made the decision. It was a tough battle and we fought hard and won. And McDonald was absolutely a depressed individual. As a matter of fact, he made such a fool of himself because he organized Haywood's campaign and then failed. Mike Quill and Ralph Helstein, both of whom have been heads of surviving left-wing unions in the CIO teamed up in the small unions caucuses, as it was called, with the Steelworkers Union and tried to defeat Reuther and to elect Haywood. At the point that McDonald got up before the CIO convention to cast the vote of the Steelworkers he mis-spoke himself, and cast the vote for Walter Reuther. (laughter) Then had to change his vote and went out in the stairwell, outside the platform at the convention hall there and cried. Sat in the stairway and cried like a baby. It was out of that, of course, that we had to put together a CIO administration. So we did not have a happy family.

AMH: Now Walter had the support of Jake Potofsky?

CONWAY: We had the support of Potofsky, Curran [Joe], Carey [Jim], the key union was the Rubber Workers Union. We took that away from Buckmaster [Leland Stanford], who was its president. We put together the majority, and it was a split vote, right down the middle.

AMH: Do you recall that Potofsky and somebody else went to call on McDonald to ask him to withdraw his support for Haywood so that the CIO could be unanimous?

CONWAY: That was all part of the campaign strategy, that's right. There were various people doing different things, and there were people who supported Reuther, who wanted to make this kind of a unifying

effort. Potofsky was by nature a unifier and . . . .

AMH: Who else would have been there with Potofsky?

CONWAY: I don't recall. It could have been Emil Reive. The New York union group were basically accommodators, in the sense of not wanting to rock the boat, and caught between these two big powerful unions that were slugging it out. So that was the setting out of which this whole thing came. Of course, the CIO operated. . . . had a small staff, didn't have a huge staff. Most of the people were housed in that little building on Jackson Place. The field staff around the country that Allan Haywood directed. . . the significant thing, of course, is that the whole apparatus of the CIO was used in the campaign against Reuther and for Haywood. The single exception was John Brophy, who stood up and cast his vote for Reuther. All the staff had votes because they picked up the charters of the CIO councils around the country. And it became a badge of honor that you voted for Haywood and against Reuther, except John Brophy voted for Reuther against the establishment. So that was the setting out of which we had to try to put back together the CIO.

Probably the next couple of years McDonald sulking, taking the CIO from the name of the Steelworkers Union, behaving in a manner in which he, you know, pumped himself up, his publication The United Steelworkers . . . .

AMH: What do you mean he took the name CIO. . . .?

CONWAY: He took CIO off the Steelworkers, off the letterhead and everything and converted it to the United Steelworkers of America. That was it. And he pushed this and pushed himself, of course, in the

process and tried to make a new set of identifications and his performance was pretty sad, but nevertheless that was it.

Now the other ego in the CIO family was Joe Bierne, who was the president of the Communications Workers Union at the time and had been its only president, had brought it into the CIO on an affiliation, a late union coming into the CIO and so the traditions within that union were largely internal Communication Workers of America traditions and not CIO traditions. So Joe played his independence to the hilt. He also was an Irishman, a good talker, and all of these things--a heavy drinker at that time, and saw, in his particular role the possibility of soloing. He'd been a solo artist before he came to the CIO, so that there's nothing new about that. So very quickly the wooing started and McDonald and Bierne were essentially the targets of the wooing.

AMH: Who was wooing whom?

CONWAY: It's hard to say. They fit nicely into the kind of environment where they were approachable. McDonald, of course, was sulking and eventually made his moves which were largely directed at sending out vibes that the CIO had no future, that it was necessary to open unity talks and all of this sort of stuff. And Bierne, of course, was able to play, as I say, a fairly solo role and was open to all kinds of discussions with people. His principle enemy, though, was the IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers], which was a very serious threat to him and so he was not able to get too far off base. But after the negotiations for unity became serious, Joe made the transition fairly easily and was given the chairmanship

of the Community Services Committee under the new structure, which in a sense, was his special forum. And he was a happy man, let's put it that way. Not a significant guy in the sense of the politics of the merger so much as McDonald was.

AMH: In other words, it was clear that McDonald was going to make some kind of . . . . He was talking to the Miners, he was talking to the Teamsters. . .

CONWAY: Right. Anybody.

AMH: Yes.

CONWAY: And talking to himself, talking to the public, getting his book written about the Man of Steel. You know, all of these kinds of things. So he was. . . . Now that, of course, led to our assessing the CIO from a perspective of the Autoworkers Union and what this would mean down the road. We came to the conclusion--I don't know precisely when--that maybe the unity talks ought to be pursued seriously. I was the person who introduced George Meany and Walter Reuther to each other in the sense that when the arrangements were made to meet in the Statler Hotel shortly after Reuther got elected president--they'd never met before. . . .

AMH: Really?

CONWAY: That's right. So I was at the suite, Meany came and the two of us sat and talked for a half-hour or so before Reuther arrived. I introduced them and they sat down and started talking, essentially through me for a while, and then finally I excused myself and left. They talked only for an hour or so and essentially what transpired--from what Reuther told me--was that George Meany indicated

that he was serious about wanting to bring about a unification of the labor movement and Walter Reuther said, "I think that makes sense. There are differences that have to be reconciled." They were both agreed that it had never been possible as long as Green and Murray were alive, because they had too much of an ego stake in it, and that it was almost incumbent on the two of them--Reuther and Meany--to seriously pursue this. So that from that beginning came, eventually, a merger.

Reuther's concern was expressed in his public speech to his own convention that there had to be, as a minimum, the basic protection of the CIO Industrial Union idea and that there had to be some way of settling the internal disputes between unions--the race question, the equality of membership, and so on--and the corruption question. Meany, of course, had taken steps fairly quickly to get involved in the Operating Engineers and a couple of other, the Waterfront Union, as president of the AFL and he was demonstrating a concern about some of the corruption in the AFL unions, and the CIO had already expelled the five so-called Communist-dominated unions and so that cleaned up their act they felt. So it was just a question of putting it together over time.

The UAW had worked out with the Machinists Union a no-raiding agreement. It was something that Al Hayes and Walter Reuther spent a lot of time on. And in the process of that they developed a fairly good personal relationship. The Autoworker-Machinists relationship was a troublesome one. Not only because of a jurisdictional conflict, but because of, really, a cultural difference. They lived in two different

worlds, the two unions, so that you could sit down and talk and come away thinking that you'd had a meeting of the minds, but in fact you hadn't and it would show up very quickly in performance, individual behavior.

AMH: What was the nature of the two different worlds?

CONWAY: The Autoworker's Union was a strong, centralized union with strong leadership, commitment to a whole set of principles that governed its collective bargaining relationships. It had a larger social philosophy, which prevailed in the general behavior of the union. The Machinists, on the other hand, an intensely decentralized union, made up of many disparate parts, deep-south union, came out of the conditions where, within their own union they reflected the white-black hostilities. Of course, where we came into contact mostly was in the Aerospace industry, on the west-coast in particular. We carried over to the Aerospace the kind of strong, centrally-directed collective bargaining techniques. And the machinists dealt with each plant. So we were just not talking to each other very effectively. We learned to over time. But we did work out a no-raiding agreement.

AMH: Whose initiative was that?

CONWAY: That was the UAW. We had Al Hayes come to our headquarters and meet with our Executive Board and then Walter did the same thing with theirs. And then we started a series of discussion. It took quite a while to hammer that agreement out. And then that became the basis for the CIO internal disputes document, which was a fairly easy thing to work out, because the CIO did not compete against each other. They had a very strong respect for each other's juris-

diction... There were a few occasions when this was not the case. But usually Murray and Reuther could agree and when they agreed that was sixty percent of the CIO agreeing. So the rest of it was just like . . . there was nothing they could do, really.

So the building blocks for the unity were there, with the resolutions of the Communist question, indications ~~of~~ on the corruption issue, the willingness, obviously, of George Meany to meet the civil rights thing. I don't think George ever had any problem with that! So then it was a question. . . . . .

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Begin Tape One, Side 2

CONWAY: . . . . That's right. As I say, everybody making public speeches. McDonald making his, Reuther making his, Meany making his, and so on. Eventually comes the move to meet in Miami and the Unity Committee, and the fact that all these so-called conditions had been stated publicly. Everybody knew what they were. When the committee met they really had very little to talk about. They each laid down their conditions and each agreed with the other that they were reasonable, and they had to hurry quickly to put together a statement that indicated that they had essentially agreed on the unity package. Then from that point on it simply moved.

Now the way the structures were fitted was an interesting settlement.

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AMH: Well, before we get to the structures, could we back up a minute on the no-raiding, because there was some difference of opinion that developed apparently, in that Meany said, "We have a no-raiding agreement. We've signed it and we have it." And Walter wanted to say, "Well, there should be a certain number of AFL signatories before we really make this final."

CONWAY: Yes.

AMH: Some people have said this was a result of a misunderstanding; other people have said that it was an indication that Walter was trying to back away.

CONWAY: No. He was not trying to back away. It was a question of Meany saying over and over again what was true. And that is that the Federation was made up of much more autonomous unions than the CIO. The history was different and the Federation could not in effect sign off for any of the participating unions. This was true in the CIO, too. But the CIO could gather together its Executive Committee, which was made up of the largest unions and they could agree. And when they agreed, in a sense, the presidents of the unions were there and they were agreeing. All of the smaller unions were very dependent on the CIO largesse in order for them to carry out their separate missions, and with one or two exceptions, were not in a position to do much in the way of protesting once the larger unions had agreed to something.

Now in the AFL it was a different deal, especially among the Building Trades Unions, and George Meany kept making this point that the Building Trades Unions had their own ways and their own histories

and that you could not legislate for them. It was largely out of this context, this give-and-take, that I think they went public in order to create some pressure on the individual AFL unions to sign on, to get enough signatures to sign on.

Pete Schoemann turned out to be a fairly supportive, cooperative guy--the Plumbers. Of course, Meany was out of that union. Hutcheson [ ] of the Carpenters, the old man, was rather difficult. Jack Lyons was a cooperative guy, and so on. So what they, in a sense, did, I think, was created a psychology, herd-effect, and got the signers on.

Now in signing them on, there still were differences of interpretation and I think that everybody moved to the merger knowing this, knowing that it was the kind of thing that would have to play out over time and to be corrected, as it was. There were a few crises that came on later on.

The other thing is that Al Hayes had left the AFL because of his disputes with the Building Trades Unions and their refusal to let him and his union in, into the inner circle of the Building Trades, and, in a sense, discriminating against that union. That's one of the reasons they left. So Hayes reinforced Reuther's suspicion of the way the Building Trades Unions played the game. Of course, we knew the Teamsters, we knew [JAMES] Hoffa, and we knew the Central States Teamsters in particular. Hoffa was dead-set against the merger. Hoffa and I debated in Detroit on the question of a merger. He against it and me for it. I'll never forget the final point that he made to the packed house, the biggest auditorium at Wayne State

University at the time, was. . . He said, "Jack, we've always gotten along well together, the UAW and the Teamsters Union. We've never had any disputes that we couldn't resolve once we got our lines of communication worked out. Isn't that right?" And I said, "Yes, that's right, with problems, but nevertheless, we always were able to settle our disputes as between our two unions." He said, "If we merge it's going to spoil all that. We can treat you the way we do because you're not in the AFL. But if you merge we'll have to treat you like we treat every other AFL union." (laughter) And he tried it. As a matter of fact, we had a couple of mean disputes. . . .

AMH: The Brewery Workers.

CONWAY: But they put some pickets around our Packard Plant and they tried to do various things with the Riggers Union and so on. And we had to battle. Once that was over, we didn't have any problems with the Teamsters after that.

AMH: Well, I noticed that in June 1954 when the no-raiding agreement was signed, with the dinner at the Mayflower [Hotel] and so on, that the Steelworkers were not at that point signatories. Is there any significance to that?

CONWAY: McDonald was probably drunk! I don't think there was any significance to it. As I say, it was all part of this extreme emotionalism and egocentric behavior on his part. And he was a very heavy drinker and from that point of view unreliable as far as his personal performance. I've sat next to him in meetings where he was so drunk that he just mumbled through the whole meeting, and was out of it.

That's what eventually led to his being defeated by [I.W.] Abel. But that's a kind of personal tragedy. It did effect all these relationships as a troublesome thing.

AMH: What about Walter's relationship with [David] Dubinsky? Was that a force for merger?

CONWAY: No. Dubinsky always, through the years, talked to Walter, as they would meet. So would Harry Bates, so would [James] Suffridge--Suffridge was the Service Employees Union guy in Chicago--and a few others; they liked Walter as an individual. Most of them feared him; they thought he was a Communist and all this sort of stuff.

But Dubinsky made a special point of keeping their relationship alive and I think Walter considered him a personal friend.

AMH: Okay. Well, you were going to talk about the structures of putting the two organizations together.

CONWAY: Well, let me, before I do that, talk about Arthur Goldberg. Arthur Goldberg had been General Counsel of the CIO and the Steelworkers Union when Phil Murray was president. Arthur Goldberg took Lee Pressman's place after a traumatic split between Murray and Pressman on this whole question of expulsion of the communist-dominated unions and the shift that occurred in the CIO policies at that time, flowing out of the 1948 convention in Portland, Oregon and then the expulsion convention in Cleveland. That was in 1949. Goldberg became General Counsel and served in the same dual capacity. At the point Murray died and McDonald became the Steelworker president, and Reuther became the CIO president, Goldberg continued as the Steel-

worker General Counsel and as the CIO Counsel. This caused, in my judgement, a conflict of interest. It never really played out in a way that there was a. . . but the basic loyalties of Goldberg were to the Steelworkers Union because they paid his salary and he carried water for McDonald through this whole period of time.

AMH: Did he support Reuther in the election, in the Haywood-Reuther election?

CONWAY: I don't recall ever seeing him. So he was scarce. And I think understandably so. I'm not saying that in a sense that he should have stood up and be counted. I mean it's hard for a guy to stand up and be for two people at the same time who are in opposition to each other.

AMH: I was curious because in the book, there was a biography of Walter Reuther. She says, and I was surprised to read there, that Goldberg had supported Reuther. And that struck me as curious for exactly the reason that you. . . .

CONWAY: Yes. Well, if he did I'm unaware of anything he did. Most of the unions that he had anything to do with other than. . . . of course, he represented other unions as well. Oh, I'd have to take that back. He represented the Garment Workers Union and Potofsky and [Frank] Rosenblum were supporters of Reuther. But, as you indicated earlier, they're unity types. So Goldberg could have been associated with their efforts to get it resolved, which would have been a natural role for Arthur. By nature he's a matchmaker.

But here was Goldberg in this rather peculiar role during this period of time, as the attorney for the Steelworkers and as the

attorney for the CIO, and eventually the keeper of all the documents and this sort of stuff. He hastened to write his book right afterwards, which was fine. I think it was a contribution to history, had the documents there at least. And his interpretation of that period, of course it has a lot missing from my perspective. But nevertheless Arthur worked hard in his technical capacity to produce the documents and to make sure that they protected the CIO's interest. I say that meaning it. As the negotiations moved towards the actual merger itself, the facilitating documents, Arthur had a very substantial constructive role in working out. He was able to take our CIO insistence and to go over and meet with Matthew Woll and others and talk it through. So he did a typical match-maker role in there. He loved it. He played back and forth between the two. And at the same time he could be dealing with McDonald. He could be reflecting McDonald's interest and telling McDonald, as I'm sure he did, that this thing was moving towards unity and merger.

The CIO was structured with an Executive Committee and a General Board, an Executive Board on which every union was represented. Of course, the AFL was structured with its Executive Council and nothing else. So that was reconciled fairly easily with the inclusion of these two instruments known as the Executive Committee and a General Board in the AFL-CIO constitution, the Executive Council being essentially the power body between conventions. There was no disagreement on who was to make up the leadership. That was made very clear from the beginning. Reuther said that as far as he was concerned Meany and [William] Schnitzler could be the officers of the merged group and the magic

number of seventeen and ten was arrived at because the Executive Committee of the CIO was a ten-person committee and Meany had some maneuvering inside the AFL to get his seventeen, but it was essentially the size of the AFL Executive Council. They made a few switches as they got close to the wire. So all those mechanics and so on were quite smooth.

Jack Livingston, from the UAW officer team was involved in the Washington Wage Stabilization Board activities and as a consequence of that he was rubbing elbows fairly constantly with his AFL counterpart, loved it, could hardly wait to have the merger take place, and privately negotiated himself favorable consideration for the director of ~~the~~ organization role, which was another thing that we insisted on in the CIO, that there be some commitment to organizing.

AMH: You mean privately negotiated. . . he negotiated with Meany directly or . . . .

CONWAY: I don't know who he negotiated it with, but we knew he was doing it. By this time Joe Bierne and Livingston were drinking buddies, so you got McDonald and Bierne and Livingston. Livingston coming from inside the UAW. Livingston also striking up old acquaintances with R. J. Thomas and the people who had been defeated in the UAW leadership who were on the CIO staff. The thing is everybody we defeated ended up working for the CIO, except George Addes, who left the labor movement at that time. So that always, essentially, the UAW, as it strengthened itself and purged and so on, whatever got purged ended up working for the Federation, the opposition. So there was a whole collection of people who were anti-Reuther, anti-UAW in strange ways.

AMH: When you say the Federation, you mean the CIO Federation.

CONWAY: CIO, that's right. And by this time, of course, they're seeking out counterparts. So putting together the committee structures was also part of this whole thing. There was no COPE committee in the AFL; there was no Community Services Committee; there was a Legislative Committee and there was an Economic Policy Committee. So the way these committees were put together also was part of the politics. Andy Biemiller, for example, was the legislative representative for the AFL and Bob Oliver was the legislative representative for the CIO. They didn't get on. They were on opposite sides too often to get on very well. And when the merger took place, Oliver became the second man in the legislative department and only lasted a short period of time, because of personality. Jack Kroll, on the other hand, came in and becomes the head of the COPE operation, because he had been the head of the PAC operation and he had a. . . .

AMH: Well, he and McDevitt shared it for a while.

CONWAY: They shared it, but McDevitt was just like Oliver. McDevitt couldn't carry Kroll's water. Then, of course, Barkan [Al] became Kroll's successor when Kroll stepped out, and so Barkan made that accommodation. The irony is that Henry Fleisher and Al Zack went into the Public Relations Department. At the point we announced to the CIO staff that the merger was going to take place, that we'd worked out all the details in the unity agreement, Al Zack was hysterical in opposition to the whole thing and I had to come down on him very hard, and ~~as a matter of fact~~ IN EFFECT say, "Look, the realities are we're going to do this and you better accommodate." He did. He accommodated. . . .

AMH: Very well!

CONWAY: Leap-frogged right over Henry Fleisher and accommodated very well. Henry eventually leaves, he can't make the adjustment. Leo Perlis came in, you know, through this committee thing, and he had Joe Bierne as his CIO. . . who was also making these accommodations. So you could just sense this thing taking place as the accommodation was occurring. Within a matter of weeks after the merger it was very clear that George Meany now was going to do exactly what had always been done in the CIO, which is to isolate the UAW. So that the politics of the new federation was just like the politics of the old CIO--stick it to the UAW, so to speak. Isolate the red-head, and so on. So there were all kinds of machinations, some of which had validity, some of which were personality problems and so on, over questions of policy, international affairs, organizing, doing this, doing that. It was an up-and-down kind of thing. Reuther worked at it, I think, as far as his personal relationships with Meany was concerned. They just never clicked. They were very different. That didn't daunt Reuther; he worked at it. But he never mastered the AFL-CIO's politics. He never really mastered the CIO's politics either! Walter was a very strong national union president, was terrible at federation politics, because it took hand-holding and all kinds of things that he just didn't like to do.

AMH: Because the politics of accommodation was difficult for him.

CONWAY: That's right. Well, it wasn't so much the accommodation. Walter always operated off a power base, you know. You advocated,

you debated, you finally had to make a decision. When you made a decision, you voted, and then that was the position. In a Federation, the opposite is the case. You never vote. You work, and you work, and you work, until you get everybody's differences accommodated and you get the lowest common denominator. That's the consensus. It used to be bad in the CIO, but at least you could take a vote, or at least you could get the Executive Committee to say "Yes," and that gave you the consensus at a higher level. But in the AFL the consensus was always at the lower level. And the right to veto, the right to block, the right to exert your own separate, special interest was something that Walter had great difficulty accommodating to. So that during that time, that early period of operating in the AFL, there was a tendency for Walter to stay back in Detroit and come down to Washington with some kind of organized program and to try to sell it, and sometimes think that he did sell it only to find that nobody did anything about it. The implementation also was a big source of problems, because it was not under the control of the. . . . So it was a lot of ups and downs during that whole early period of . . . .

Now the other thing is, and here I think McDonald had a lot to do with this, too. With the formation of the Industrial Union Department two things occurred: one is that it was to be a counterpart to the Building Trades and the Metal Trades and the other departments, but it was to function as a service department and not to be a power base inside the AFL-CIO. McDonald did not want to have the Industrial Union Department become a Reuther power base inside the AFL-CIO. Neither did Potofsky and these guys want to see a situation in which

the CIO was carried inside the new Federation and operated as ~~part of it~~ a power base. So there was an awful lot of early talk about making sure that the CIO didn't have an apparatus all around the country, although it was written in the Constitution that they could have Councils and do this, that and the other thing. They didn't do it. McDonald wanted to solve one of his own problems within the Steelworkers, so he convinced--or somebody convinced--Al Whitehouse that he should give up his directorship role in Cincinnati and move into the IUD to become its director, largely to prevent Reuther from controlling it and also to accommodate a Steelworker internal problem. So the IUD functioned for a couple of years--two or three years--didn't do much. As a matter of fact it was not supposed to do much. Nick Zonarich was moved from his role as an independent organizer in the West into the second spot in the Industrial Union Department.

Then, of course, the other insurance policy was that it had to be open to all unions. So right off the bat the Teamsters wanted to affiliate 400,000 members, and the Carpenters, and the IBEW, and all of this sort of stuff. So they flooded the stage to make sure that this IUD did not become ~~an effective~~ in effect a power base. So that was the situation there. McDonald refused to serve in the IUD because Reuther was its president, so that's how I.W. Abel came in. It was still the same business. It was beneath McDonald to serve in the IUD; he was up on the Executive Council, you know. So that was the situation there.

AMH: What kind of hopes did Walter have for the IUD? What did he expect the IUD to do?

CONWAY: I think he pretty generally agreed with the proposition that it should not be a power base. He put all of his energies into making the AFL-CIO work. That was his principal interest. It was only after experiencing a lot of frustrations that he began to think more and more in terms of the Industrial Union Department having some kind of position of . . . .

AMH: Well, he was concerned about organizing the unorganized.

CONWAY: True.

AMH: He made that the subject of many of his speeches. Originally, presumably, Jack Livingston was going to launch a big organizing campaign.

CONWAY: That's right.

AMH: Which didn't quite get off the ground, somehow.

CONWAY: As soon as Jack Livingston became the director of organization he thought he was the third ranking officer in the AFL-CIO, and he was very quickly disabused of that fact. On the other hand, I mentioned earlier we were aware of the fact that Jack was negotiating this, and we made the decision that as far as we were concerned that was fine. That he was kidding himself, but if he wanted out that was fine for our purposes, too. So we filled in behind him with Leonard Woodcock and Norman Matthews when that switch was made. That gave us a chance to broaden our leadership base in the UAW. Then, of course, what happened is that Livingston very quickly joined the "isolate Reuther, stop the red-head" type, and he became again, kind of the center of the people who had been squeezed out, or beaten, and so on. So guys like Bill Kircher end up working for Livingston,

a whole series of machinations, all of which we were very used to, so we were not at all surprised at any of this stuff. Of course, the fifties were the years of the Eisenhower administration and there were a lot of problems associated with that. We very quickly began to shift into problems of . . . .

[END OF TAPE ONE, side 2]

BEGIN TAPE TWO, side 3:

CONWAY: . . . the corruption problem, of course, was up there for everybody to see and have to deal with. In our particular case we had some rather serious industry problems to deal with, automation, decentralization, two very sharp recessions, a whole series. So we focused more and more on our own problems. I had to spend an awful lot of time with the McClellan Committee because the Autoworkers Union was dragged into it over the Koehler strike and this was a counter-move on Hoffa's part to deflect the attention from the Teamsters by, in a sens getting the Autoworkers involved too. So for a year-and-a-half I spent a lot of time on that.

AMH: And also there was Gosser.

CONWAY: Dick Gosser. That was a side-show! That was a side-show! Yes. Gosser was one of our officers in Toledo; he had been in prison as a kid and he was tied in with Eddie Cheyfitz, who was tied in with Hoffa. It was just a can of worms. So Goldwater and the Republicans, when they ran out of gas as far as the Koehler strike

was concerned with the Autoworkers, ~~why~~ they picked up on the theme of Gosser and corruption. And there was no corruption and they focused on our "Flower ~~(??)~~" Fund, which was our way of financing our own internal political activities and Gosser was cleared, the union was cleared. Gosser eventually went to jail for an absolutely stupid thing that had to do with his own income tax, had nothing to do with the union. But I just cite that, that during these early years of the merger, this was the focus, with Reuther trying to get the AFL-CIO to organize, trying to deal with some of the international affairs problems where there always was a very sharp difference.

AMH: Yes. There was a considerable difference rather early on over the trip to India, right?

CONWAY: All kinds of things. I don't know. I paid not that much attention to these things, because you could almost bet I was in automatic disagreement on foreign policy questions. And there was Victor Reuther and Irving Brown, and then there was Jay Lovestone, who used to be in the Autoworkers Union and, you know, all that stuff. I stayed as far away from that as I could. Then, of course, we did put together some political activities that were significant in electing Jack Kennedy president. Our Union--the Autoworkers--played a very strong role in that. Then I joined. . . .

AMH: I wanted to ask you about the relationship with Johnson.

CONWAY: Lyndon Johnson?

AMH: With Lyndon Johnson.

CONWAY: Oh, well, that's a whole separate story. He was majority leader during that period and was our enemy for all practical purposes. Anything we wanted, he was against us, so we were always having to work hard. So I was always a battering ram, as were others in our relationships with Johnson. But Reuther was always on the high road with Johnson. They had a personal relationship that went way back to Franklin Roosevelt's days.

AMH: Did Bob Oliver play any role in that?

CONWAY: Some, some. Yes. He was a Texan and had a relationship there that was a. . . . that was his reason for being. If it hadn't been for, theoretically, some connection with the Texas powers--[Sam] Rayburn and Johnson--he wouldn't have even been around. So. . . .

I think what I better do is to break. . . . .

[Apparently the tape player is turned off. No indication of how long.]

AMH: When we left off, Jack, you were really starting to talk about Walter's relationship with Jack Kennedy.

CONWAY: Yes. Walter's relationship with Jack Kennedy was very direct, but it was to a large extent through me. Even when I left the UAW and went to work for the Kennedy Administration for the two years that I was there, Walter Reuther would frequently call me up and ask me to do things on his behalf in connection with the president and the administration and so on. So that relationship was ~~never~~ a very easy. . . the access was excellent. With Kennedy's assassination, of

course, the whole thing changed. My relationship to Johnson was nil, negative as a matter of fact and I told Walter that I simply was not an appropriate person to do this. It was much more important for him to deal directly with Lyndon Johnson.

AMH: Now Jack, in this biography that I mentioned of Walter, she makes the point that there was some tension between Meany and Walter that involved you, over your appointment as Undersecretary of Labor.

CONWAY: I wasn't appointed, because of the objection. What happened was that I was the Deputy Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and nobody was consulted on that. Kennedy asked me to do it and I agreed to do it, and then I told Walter. That was my leaving of the UAW. Meany wasn't consulted in any way. Nobody was. It was a personal thing between the President and me. During the course of that time that I was in the administration, what happened, Arthur Goldberg was appointed to the Supreme Court and Willie Wirtz was elevated to Secretary of Labor, and Kennedy wanted to appoint me Undersecretary of Labor. At this point, George Meany threw a fit and objected strenuously, made a special trip to the White House and just blew his stack! I was told this by the President, and he just said that under these circumstances he didn't think he could go forward and I agreed with him. First of all, I had no particular desire to be the Undersecretary of Labor, and secondly, that role is sensitive to the whole of the labor movement. And it is reasonably appropriate for a friendly president to appoint somebody who is not persona non grata, as I obviously was, to Meany. Meany would be the

first one to say that his relationship with me as an individual is friendly, but nobody ever looks at me as an individual. They look at me as representing something--a point of view, a philosophy, a segment of the labor movement that is not ~~theirs~~ theirs.

AMH: Well Meany seems to say that it was a matter of procedure, that if Walter had picked up the phone... this is a quote from Meany, in the book. Not a direct quote that Meany said this to me or anything, but he says, "If Walter had picked up the phone and talked to me for ten minutes we would have been glad to have Jack Conway Undersecretary of Labor.

CONWAY: That could be. I don't doubt that at all, that this was Meany's reaction to the whole thing. It's academic, since Walter didn't call him, since he didn't have to agree, he was free to object.

AMH: No, but I wonder if it really is reflective of the nature of the problem. Because that seems to say that part of the problem was Walter's failure to recognize that Meany was, in fact, president.

CONWAY: I'd say it's this problem that I alluded to earlier of Walter being an excellent president of a national union and a poor Federation politics person, where consultation and consensus and all this sort of stuff is the name of the game. So that Meany, who is a supreme politician in the Federation context has, as his strongest defense, the procedures, the consultation, the lack of it or whatever. So that Meany could be right.

AMH: Yes, right.

CONWAY: Or (she) could have reported what Meany said correctly.

I have absolutely no regrets. As I say, I had no desire to be the Undersecretary of Labor.

AMH: A lousy job! (laughs)

CONWAY: Besides I was getting ready to leave the government anyway. I did, ~~certainly~~ SHORTLY after that, when Reuther asked me if I would leave and take on the directorship of the Industrial Union Department. This follows the Meany thing. So, you know, Walter didn't have to consult Meany on the Executive directorship of the Industrial Union Department. But I'm sure Meany might have had the same reaction. Maybe he should have had the courtesy of being told that this is what was going to happen. I don't know, but anyway, I did go back to the Industrial Union Department, largely because of the very serious deterioration which had taken place.

AMH: Under WHITEHOUSE.

CONWAY: No. Inside the AFL-CIO. Two things had surfaced which were serious problems. One was the Building Trades determination to get a situs picketing bill passed and the Industrial Union Department's dogged opposition to it, which had exacerbated these relationships. The other thing was the flaws in the Internal Disputes machinery began to show up and there were all kinds of conflicts between unions that were not being resolved. Al Hayes and Walter Reuther joined forces at the AFL-CIO convention that preceded my coming back to the Industrial Union Department.

AMH: This is when, now?

CONWAY: This is 1962. They had a helluva battle at the convention in Miami that led to the Article 20 being added to the

Constitution, which set up the arbitration mechanism and the whole thing, which was what Walter had been fighting for back at the point of merger.

AMH: Right, because I recall in 1961 Walter threatened to walk out.

CONWAY: And it was over this issue. So that when I came back to the labor movement in that capacity, as the Director of the Industrial Union Department, I had a bad scene on my hands in more ways than one. There were these problems. What was apparent for the labor movement as a whole was very little progress being made. The unions were not organizing, they were not doing much of anything. And the labor movement was beginning its long slide down. The other thing is that the staff was organizing, both in the AFL ~~and the~~ CIO, and in the Industrial Union Department. I wasn't told this. And when I came into take over the responsibilities of the IUD, the first thing I was confronted with was the staff union situation. So I spent an inordinate amount of time negotiating an agreement which I did without too much trouble, but it took time. Ross Allen, who is here, was one of the negotiating committee ~~team~~ members for the union, the Newspaper Guild. Once we had that behind us we had no problems. I did several things during that period. First of all, I talked to Walter about the situs picketing thing and I convinced him that there was merit on the Building Trades side of this argument and that we ought to accommodate them. I reached out for Neil Haggerty [Cornelius] who was president of the Building Trades Department and started talking with him about how we could put this thing together. And the result

was that over a span of four or five months we got agreement on a bill that we could both support and we diffused that situation. I got to know, in the process of this, Pete Schoemann and ~~[Angelo]~~ Peter Fosco and all these guys, and developed a certain sense of trust and rapport. So we turned that around.

Then I developed the coordinated collective bargaining MECHANISM and research, and a whole set of tools that would pull unions together.

AMH: Now the staff at that time was Nick Zonarich. . . .

CONWAY: Jake Clayman had been brought in. They were both there. Whitehouse left and that created a vacancy. I came in and became the Executive Director; Clayman was essentially the treasurer, back-up person; Zonarich was the Director of Organization for the IUD. Then I built a staff of people who focussed on the collective bargaining mechanism. We developed a computerized research system where we could break contracts apart and compare them and do all this sort of stuff. We perfected the mechanism of pulling unions together around a single industry or a single employer. We did very well with several of them; the copper industry is a good one. We pulled that together and brought about a merger as a result of it of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers with the Steelworkers. That coordinated bargaining continues. We pulled it together with the General Electric and that still persists, and a number of other companies. We were well on the road to a whole series of things. We began to organize a few places. It was tough, but we did. Then I got involved with the Farm Workers Union and worked with Cesar Chavez and brought that whole thing along and helped work out the merger with the AFL-CIO

Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, cleared the scene, the stage and got the union along. I developed some concepts about community unions, community organizing. I worked with OEO whole framework. I took a leave of absence and set up the community action program with OEO and then came back to the IUD. So we had a real head of steam up. We were beginning to make a helluva lot of progress in a lot of areas and we had excellent communication with the AFL-CIO unions and I, in particular, with, you know, across the board, had very good relationships with Andy Biemiller and with Nat Goldfinger and Lane Kirkland and. . . . then, of course, in this context, things worsened and Reuther and Meany fell apart and got into their contest and that led to. . . . .

AMH: Okay, now was this disagreement about what you were doing in the IUD?

CONWAY: No. It had nothing to do with it. It was purely on matters other than that. Then, of course, with the. . . .

AMH: What sort of matters was it?

CONWAY: Well, I think a lot of it turned on the cold war and how to work in the larger setting. The actual. . . .

AMH: The ICFTU and. . . . [INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS]

CONWAY: Yes, that kind of thing. As I indicated before, this had been going on for years and I insulated myself from it. First of all it was a no-win situation in my judgment. So, once the decision was made to withdraw from the AFL-CIO, then I had to make a personal decision, which I did, which was to leave.

AMH: Were you consulted about this decision?

CONWAY: The decision to withdraw? I was there the day it was made. I wouldn't say I was consulted. It was a situation. . . I've described it. It's been reported and a couple of other situations. McDonald was gone, Abel was elected to take his place. Abel came to the UAW and spoke to the UAW convention and there was a whole euphoria. At this point Victor Reuther decides to give Harry Bernstein the inside story on Jay Lovestone and the CIA and a whole bunch of other things. After our UAW convention was over, I picked up the L.A. Times and saw this big story about CIA monies flowing through the AFL-CIO. AFILD, this operation they've got here, and so on. That led to a bitterness. Joe Beirne, head of the AFILD again became a character in this, Paul Hall, George Meany, that whole crowd of international affairs specialists. My own feeling was that it was bad, but that it would go away, like it had in the past. But then it got worse and worse and worse and Tom Bradon wrote an article saying not only was the pot black, so was the kettle, too, and that Reuther had taken CIA money and used it in Italy with the Socialist Unions and Victor Reuther denied it, and, you know, all that sort of stuff. This was getting worse by the day and at a certain point I was called by Cord Meyer, who was the CIA guy that I knew, who was the liaison to the labor movement. He was anxious to talk to me to see if there was some way of resolving this thing, shutting it down, getting it out of the public prints. I met with him and heard him out, and what, in effect, he was saying was "something has to be done to stop this. It's doing a lot of damage." I told him I didn't know what could be done. A day or so after that Hubert Humphrey called Reuther,

called Meany, called others, and Hubert became the person who was supposed to put pressure on everybody to bring it to a halt. Finally it was worked out that Walter Reuther was to come in and sit down with George Meany and talk it through. I was in my office in the Industrial Union Department and Reuther came in and went over with me what he was going to say when he met with Meany. I said, "It sounds all right to me." What he was going to propose was since everybody wanted this whole thing to shut down, go away, that if Meany would assure him that it would not be raised at the Executive Council Meeting, that he, Walter Reuther, would shut it down as far as all his people were concerned. Meany agreed to that and Walter came back and reported this to me. I was apprehensive about Walter operating on this assurance. I asked him if there was anybody there with him. No, it was just the two of them. So I called Lane Kirkland and said, "I want to come and talk to you." And I said, to Walter, "Why don't you stay here and wait till I come back. I'll see if I can verify this." So I went up to Lane's office and I said, "This is what Walter's told me happened in this conversation between Meany and himself. Is this what happened?" Lane said, "Yes, it's an accurate description of what happened, because as soon as Walter left, George Meany called me in and told me what had gone on just as Walter apparently went down and talked to you." So I said, "What I'm going to do is I'm going to confirm Walter's impression of this meeting by, in effect, saying you confirm it, having talked to George." And Lane said, "That's fine." So I went down to Walter and told him that this was the case. So he went to the Executive Council meeting that was

was to be held where this would have come up. It was held in Chicago, at some out-of-the-way hotel on the northside. I forget the hotel; one where the actors go and stay, where the pump room is. I was there and the opening session of the Executive Council was scheduled that day and Walter went to the meeting. I was sitting in this suite of rooms with Irving Bluestone working on some things. Irving had taken my place and was Walter's administrative assistant in Detroit. AT the coffee break, Walter came storming into the room and said, in effect, [that] the whole thing came up at the Executive Council meeting and it was abusive and so on and there was just no way of operating with any sense of trust with Meany and that he simply could not continue.

AMH: The whole thing came up how?

CONWAY: Instead of Joe Bierne raising it, Paul Hall raised it and just took off on one of his raging, cursing performances. Then Bierne said, "Well, I didn't intend to bring this up, but. . . " And everybody else jumped ~~him~~ and everybody was defending George Meany and denying. . . .

AMH: They were attacking Victor for having. . . .

CONWAY: They were attacking Walter, and Victor, yes. So when he left he just said, "That's it!" I don't think he stayed at the meeting. He might have stayed, but I don't recall. It was only one of these one or two day meetings. That's when he made his mind up. Now it didn't happen for another few months, but it was over! And it was over based on the fact that these two men simply could not work together, could not trust each other. What Meany did was simply let

it all happen. Walter considered that a direct breach of understanding.

AMH: Do you think Meany could have prevented Paul Hall?

CONWAY: Sure! Or he could have stopped it. He didn't. So I went to Kirkland afterwards and I said, "What happened?" And he said, "Well, Bierne would have raised it, but he didn't. And nobody can control Paul Hall, and he did. And once it was raised there was no way of stopping it." I said, "Well, that's too bad; it's very serious." So, that was it. I forget when that was, but I think that was in August or something and it wasn't until around January or February the next Executive Council meeting that was over. In the meantime Walter and Irving kept writing these elaborate missiles, you know, which they exchanged. . .

AMH: Zing(??) papers.

CONWAY: Yes, that's right. To build a justification for doing what they did, none of which I had anything to do with. I just cut myself loose from it, mentally and every other way. At the point I knew it was the end of the road and I began the process of figuring out what I wanted to do after that. I left in. . . I guess our Industrial Union Department convention would have been scheduled for October, or some early date. We always met early. And George Meany one day came to my office, the first time in five years, and said, in effect, "Would you postpone your convention. I'm going to be out of the country. Give me the courtesy of being able to be in the country and so on." I said, "Certainly, you're entitled to that." So I worked it out so we postponed the convention so he could be there. I buried the thing as inconspicuously as I could, and got the hell out. And the IUD went dead. Nothing ever did happen after that.

AMH: If I may be permitted to express a personal opinion, it's a real tragedy because a lot of things were happening in the IUD, some very important. . . .

CONWAY: Yes. It was really building a good program, good head of steam, a lot of credibility, and I think could have had substantial impact on the general tone of the labor movement.

AMH: What were your own personal expectations for merger at the time it took place in 1965?

CONWAY: Well, I would say that I had the usual reservations of any CIO person merging with the AFL. But its time had come. I didn't have any reservations about it really, if the terms could be worked out that were acceptable. The other thing is that I was a very strong Autoworker, self-sufficient trade unionist in a self-sufficient union, you know.

[END OF TAPE TWO, side 3]

BEGIN TAPE THREE, side 4:

AMH: (mid-sentence). . . labor movement's problems or anything else.

CONWAY: No, I didn't. As I say we turned inward because we had a lot of problems. We addressed those problems during the late fifties, and, of course, everybody believed that a united labor movement could have a greater political impact if everybody got behind a common effort. And, in a sense, the 1960 election was the product of that. I'm not sure there was a lot more done as a result

of the merger, but the labor unions played a significant role in that. All their differences were hammered out inside. We had a huge problem over the selection of Lyndon Johnson as the vice president. It was so bad that George Meany, who was there--he was not a part of the committee that we had working; that committee was smaller, it was Walter Reuther, me, Joe Keenan, Alex Rose, and Arthur Goldberg. We were the steering committee for the Democratic Convention--but Meany and all the other guys were around, and when the decision was made to appoint Johnson as the vice president, Meany called a meeting of the Executive Council. The damned thing went on for hours and he was going to storm out of the meeting, condemn Kennedy, do all kinds of things. And here again, Walter just played an absolute yoeman role; he just stood like Horatio at the bridge and refused to let them adjourn and stayed with it for three or four hours until he bled all the emotion out of it and got them to agree to go along.

AMH: Now, it's my understanding that Dubinsky was also pressing for Meany to recognize Lyndon Johnson's ADVANTAGE to the ticket.

CONWAY: Dubinsky wasn't there. Dubinsky was back in New York. That was part of the problem. Arthur Goldberg was again shuttling back and forth between other interests. And at the point that our committee was scheduled to meet with Kennedy after he was nominated, Arthur didn't show up, so the four of us had to go over without him. The reason was clear afterwards; he'd been there before us. He and McDonald. So they were already working the Lyndon Johnson track. We had our crisis when the selection actually came. We were, as a

committee, assembled in Walter's room, minus Arthur, when Bob Kennedy and Ken O'Donald came over and gave us the information. I knew we were in trouble already because we'd gone from ten o'clock in the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon without their getting back to us. You don't have that kind of a vacuum that long without something happening that's wrong. Just as Kennedy came in to tell us, of course, we saw it on the air, television. I told Kennedy when he came in, I said, "You better just go in and tell them and get the hell out of here." So he did.

But everybody blew up, except Rose, who turned his hearing-aid off and sat there. Because he'd been talking to Dubinsky and was aware of this. Oh, about fifteen or twenty minutes of histrionics and I remember very vividly when Walter stopped to take a breath, I said to him, "Well, you always said you wanted a president who could make a decision. This one's made his first decision!" (laughter) He stopped, and looked at me, you know, and the anger went out of him and he said, "You're right! Let's cut out ~~indulgence,~~ this self-indulgence, and go to work." So that's what we decided to do. We turned the Michigan delegation around and we worked on a whole series of things and then had this big business with Meany and the Executive Council members who were there that evening. So we had our work cut out for us.

But that was the kind of thing that Reuther did extremely well. He was just a dogged person when it came to hanging in and solving problems.

AMH: Since you knew Walter so well, I wonder if you'd comment.

There's so much in the public press about the difference in style between Meany and Reuther. I mean, for instance, that Reuther was uncomfortable being at the Americana or the Fontainbleu in Miami, that a suite was rented for him; he put Jim Carey in it and somebody came through to see Walter and Jim said, "Well, he's in the linen closet down the hall." That kind of. . . non drinking. . .

CONWAY: All those things are true. Walter didn't drink, couldn't drink. He drank once, one drink to celebrate something and it knocked him for a loop; he couldn't absorb the alcohol. He did drink a little bit of wine, that sort of stuff, but rarely. He was not ostentatious. You know, he grew up out of a German, Social-Democratic workingclass background and he really believed the things that he said about the labor movement should not be meeting in places like the Americana Hotel or in Miami Beach to begin with. ALL THESE THINGS. He believed that. So it's no exaggeration.

Now, then what does he do but turn it into his own little caper with the press and that sort of. . . that's a different thing. Most of these guys didn't have anything to write about anyway. So any differences that you can pick up between two principals and exaggerate and, you know, fills your story out. There was a lot of that.

AMH: No, but Walter really felt that there was something fundamentally wrong with the representatives of the American labor movement being so posh.

CONWAY: That's right. And the first time we met after we merged in Miami, there was a big drive on to organize the Miami Beach

hotel workers and so on, and they put on a helluva rally, and turned out a lot of people. Reuther and Meany spoke. Reuther spoke first and was an eloquent speaker and he had that crowd just. . . . and then Meany came up and gave his speech and said, "Never again." He would never. . . .

AMH: He would never follow Walter again!

CONWAY: Never go on the same platform with him again! Literally. That was a flat ~~gruel~~ rule, and they never shared the platform again on anything. I was there.

Now there's very much difference in style. George Meany couldn't run a national union like Reuther did. It's been raised, and with some validity, whether Reuther could ever run a Federation like Meany did, you see. They're very different things.

AMH: Right. They call for very different leadership styles.

CONWAY: Yes. Different skills.

AMH: Did Walter recognize that at any point?

CONWAY: No. I think that when he thought about it, he thought that he could have done a decent job running the AFL-CIO. He thought he could do anything, any competent person, and he probably could have. He'd have had to accommodate and do a lot of things differently. But, they just were coming from different places.

AMH: What was the effect, do you think, of . . . .Now you've already made it clear that you think that Walter's pulling out of the Federation had a very serious effect on the IUD. . . .

CONWAY: Killed it. It still hasn't recovered. It's just nothing. Hasn't been for. . . you know, it's just laying there.

They've got money. They spend it. They, in effect, do things that the AFL-CIO does but a little bit more. You know, they work in the political action thing, they hold conferences, they. . . they don't really do anything as far as I can see. Certainly not anything that's contrary to what the AFL-CIO would be doing. Not that that's a good thing necessarily to be contrary, but there's no energy.

AMH: No, but there are some people who thought they would be the yeast in the bread.

CONWAY: Yes. That went out.

AMH: Have you been involved at all in any of the discussions about the possibility of the UAW coming back?

CONWAY: Oh, only at the very top level. I've talked to Doug Fraser about it on a number of occasions. I've not talked to Woodcock. I know what his position was. Emil Mazey called me up at one time and asked me a whole series of questions about. . . .

[END OF TAPE THREE, side 4]

BEGIN TAPE THREE, side 5:

CONWAY: (continuing). . . opposition to reaffiliation. Doug pretty much followed along the same course that Leonard had committed, believed it, thought that it was a good thing to put the labor movement back together again, and ran into incredible opposition from inside the union, mostly because the younger people, especially, and the leadership of the local unions just look across town and see all

the AFL-CIO types, especially in the Central Bodies, and wonder "what the hell should we get involved in that for." The argument that they can change it is always advanced and serious questions raised about whether that's possible. Because those ~~that~~ who have been around long enough know that one thing the UAW does is to galvanize everybody else in opposition. They can disagree with each other all over the place, but as soon as the UAW is involved, they all agree, in effect, to isolate the UAW.

AMH: Well, I think one thing they're doing now, at least in the areas where I work, they provide a haven for those people who are interested in coalition politics.

CONWAY: You mean the UAW does?

AMH: Yes.

CONWAY: Because it's set up. . . .

AMH: To provide a place for the neighborhood organizations, the youth group organizations to go.

CONWAY: Yes. And what they did is they took all of the ideas that we were working on in the coalition sense in the IUD and incorporated them in their cap-council structure. They could have done a lot more, but they did at least provide that kind of haven, so I think you're right on that score.

I have no attitude on this one way or the other, as to whether the UAW should come back or stay out. I supported Doug's reasoning, if that's what he thought made sense, for him to spend his energies on during the six years that he was going to be president of the UAW, so be it! He could have taken the opposite point of view and I would have been just as supportive.

AMH: What about the brief merger with the Teamsters?

CONWAY: That was a disaster and it should never have happened. It was a product of frustration. I heard about that after the fact. Reuther called me up and said that he'd bumped into Frank Fitzsimmons in the airport in Detroit and they got to talking and commiserating, and the first thing you know they're putting this together.

AMH: You must have jumped out of your socks!!

CONWAY: Yes. There's an association in a lot of people's minds that I was involved in that, but I was not. I was putting together the Center for Community Change at the time and Walter wanted me to be involved, but I couldn't see it. I agreed to try to come up with some program ideas in the social action area that they could work on, and some of the community union things that I was working on in the Center. I said, "Hell, you can do this kind of thing, happy to work with you." They needed a black director and they couldn't find one, so I talked Wiley Branton into doing it. He enjoyed it for a year, and then said, "Jesus Christ, this is a weird world!" (laughter) So he arranged to get out of that. So that's, you know, it was so . . . It's never happened, and it's a good think it aborted as fast as it did.

AMH: I always ask: What's the question that I should have asked you that I didn't ask you?

CONWAY: I can't think of any.

AMH: Well, I can think of one, and that is, your relationship with Jim Carey. How did that effect the merger?

CONWAY: It didn't. Jimmy Carey was an immature person. He had built a union, lost it, and Phil. . . .

AMH: And a lot of people's respect along with it.

CONWAY: Right. And Phil Murray kept him on, much as he kept Dave McDonald on, in the CIO role, so that you have these two personalities, McDonald in the Steelworkers and Carey in the CIO. Jimmy was a bright, but impetuous and extremely difficult person. When the UE was expelled and Carey was given another shot at building up the IUE, he got a lot of help, a lot of CIO help, and became an anti-communist haven for the electrical industrial workers. He built the union back up but never was able to really exert the kind of leadership that would make the union into the kind of thing it should have been.

AMH: So it was easy for Walter, therefore, to say to Meany, "You and Schnitzler will take the two top spots." He was not pressing for a position for Carey.

CONWAY: No. Quite the opposite.

AMH: Did Carey feel that he. . . .

CONWAY: Walter just took the position with Carey that, "I'm not interested in the top spot and I'm sure you're not either," and Carey said, "That's right." There was no disagreement on that score. Actually at one point, it was clear that the IUE was in trouble and Reuther came up with the proposition that the IUE should merge with the UAW and they should. . . . And Carey just ran away from that so fast. He didn't want to lose his second union. No, he was just like a spoiled kid. He was no trouble to me in the IUD. He was the secretary, the second officer. But he never bothered me.

AMH: He never played any role, particularly.

CONWAY: No.

AMH: Okay. Well, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]