ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

HENRY J. DILLON

Interviewers: Alice M. Hoffman
Greg Giebel

Date: January 25, 1974

INTRODUCTION

Henry J. Dillon entered the photoengraving trade in Chicago in 1937 in a non-union trade shop, the Schoenwald-Demers Company. Having been fired by Schoenwald for economic reasons, he received further employment at McGrath, another non-union shop, which opened up for him the opportunity to finish his apprenticeship in color work.

His career was interrupted by his entrance into the Air Froce during the Second World War, not as a pilot but in the operational field of guiding pilots. After the war, he returned to Chicago to complete his apprenticeship. McGrath was now a union shop, and Dillon became active in Local #5 of the International Photoengravers Union.

In the union Dillon, in order to make a name for himself, took on less desirable positions such as that of chapel chairman, delegate to the Chicago Federation of Labor, and delegate to the Union Label and Service Trades Department, and recalls the general state of the labor movement in Chicago at that time and especially the issue over the union label.

In 1952, under the sponsorship of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL), Dillon attended a two-week summer seminar at the famous Wisconsin School for Workers, which provided him with an important foundation for the union work that was to follow. Upon his return from summer school, he was appointed full-time union organizer, a demanding job in Chicago, which had the largest concentration of non-union shops in the country. The president of Local #5, Bill Hall, had had considerable experience in organizing and encouraged Dillon to set his sights on eighteen non-union shops in particular. But in the atmosphere of Taft-Hartley their success was minimal, and Dillon discusses why.

Dillon also talks about the kind of technological changes that were taking place in his industry and what kind of changes were occurring in the employment relationships. He recalls jurisdictional problems that arose with the International Typographical Union. He traces the beginning of merger discussions with the Lithographers to a graphic arts unity meeting that was held in Chicago in 1961 and discusses the conditions that really led to the merger finalization.

Dillon went on to become an international representative for the union and is now serving as vice president of the Graphic Arts International Union.

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DILLON: My name is Henry J. Dillon. I was born on August 18, 1918 in Chicago, Illinois.

HOFFMAN: May I call you Hank?

DILLON: Please.

HOFFMAN: We were talking about the fact that we like to put down some material about your background, how you got into the labor movement and something about what family influences might have contributed to this.

DILLON: Well, I think my entrance into the trade and subsequently into the labor movement was pretty accidental. I graduated from high school in 1936. Economic conditions at that time were not very good, jobs were not easy to obtain, and I was not in a position economically to consider going to college unless I had some kind of work to support that activity. I was willing and looking for any kind of job at all.

I did have several jobs for short periods of time. I entered the trade, the photoengraving trade, in early 1937 simply because it represented a job opportunity. I didn't know anything at all about the graphic arts industry or photoengraving. I didn't know the difference between typesetters, printers or platemakers. It was a job; it was an opportunity. I was impressed with the fact that there was an apprenticeship that indicated that there would be steady regular progress and that at some point in time you would become a journeyman, which seemed to me to be a position of stature and probably would provide some security and things like that, although I didn't understand everything about it. But that sounded pretty good to somebody who was having difficulty finding a job.

That was the beginning. I was offered a job in a photoengraving shop. Photoengraving shops, of course, were virtually all trade shops, a small shop of about fifteen or twenty members.

HOFFMAN: What do you mean by a trade shop?

DILLON: A trade shop is a shop that simply makes plates. It doesn't have any press work; it doesn't do any typesetting or anything of that nature. They simply make the illustrative matter in the plate form. I went to work there in early 1937. It was a non-union shop; I didn't know anything about unions at that time.

HOFFMAN: Now this was Schoenwald-Demers Company?

DILLON: Schoenwald-Demers in Chicago. I don't know if it's important, but I did get the job through a kind of a friend, or a friend-who-knows-a-friend relationship. It wasn't family or relative or anything like that, but somebody led me to the job. I went to work for, I guess it was a 44-hour week, eight hours, five days a week and half a day on Saturday. I think my starting salary was $10.00 a week, and I was an apprentice.

At first they intended, I guess, to make me a finisher, which is one of the branches of the craft; at that time there were about seven or eight branches. However, I was left-handed. The finisher had to use a great many hand tools, and the hand tools were generally shaped so that a right-handed could use them effectively; but a left-hander would have to reshape all the tools. Number one, of course, I didn't have the experience to do that so the finally put me on the proof press. I still did a little finishing from what I had learned, but I was not destined to become a journeyman finisher.

HOFFMAN: What does a finisher do?

DILLON: A finisher simply corrects defects and blemishes in the plate work, the illustrative material that's transferred to a metal plate. There are, of course, frequently defects and breaks and scars that need to be corrected and improved so that it will print without showing. That's the operation just before the proof press. When the finisher had finished his work, generally the plate is ready to go to the proof press. So I simply moved on to the proof press where being left-handed was no particular disadvantage.

GEIBEL: Were there differences in status between. . . you mentioned seven or eight different branches of the craft where some people were involved in a particular operation. . . were there pay differentials or just status differentials in terms of worker perception?

DILLON: Yes, there were. Both, I would say, in status and it was reflected economically in their compensation. Most of the branches were at the same level. We did have what was generally considered a uniform rate throughout the plant, even though it was non-union. But nevertheless certain branches were recognized and did receive more

money, which I believe is true in the case of both union and non-union shops.

One of the real distinctions was whether or not the men were capable of working on color work, plate material that was to be used in color. In most of the small trade shops at that time, the color wasn't nearly as extensive as it has become, of course. But whatever color there was, those people who were skilled in color were generally recognized with higher rates of pay. This would be the cameraman, photographer, stripping, if it involved color work, and the color etchers, who did the etching on the metal plate, and color proofers. I was not, of course, involved in that sort of thing at that early stage.

HOFFMAN: Who was the consumer of this? Was it newspapers?

DILLON: Well, in those days the trade shops did service newspapers to a great extent, [but] not directly. They serviced the advertiser who was going to put his work in the newspaper. He would get his work out of the trade shop. Through the years that has changed considerably. Newspapers produce most of that work themselves, if not all of it. But in those days, yes, a great deal of it went into newspapers. It supported a great many plants, particularly the small, what was known as the "Black & White" plants, plants that didn't do any color work at all. Of course, the national magazines was the real profitable portion of the business. All magazines--well, not all magazines--but virtually the magazine industry was supplies by the letterpress photoengraving. Of course, since then offset has become the dominant printing process.

HOFFMAN: This, of course, explains in part why Chicago was such a strong center, because of the fact that so many magazines were published in Chicago.

DILLON: Yes. I can't say more than that, it's an educated guess, because I really wasn't paying that much attention to the industry in those days, but obviously Chicago was a very large printing center. If we're going to measure printing center size by the number of people employed at the trade, in graphic arts, there is no question that Chicago was at least second behind New York. Those two were the dominant ones in those terms. They had such huge printing plants as Donnelly, which still exists, of course. I think that was the representative type of structure you had in the industry in the Chicago area. There was no question it was a major printing center.

HOFFMAN: Well, I notice that you didn't stay at Schoenwald very long, that you moved over to Thomas McGrath and Associates. What caused you to make that move?

DILLON: It was a small plant throughout the history of the industry, as nearly as I can tell, before my time and during my time. It's always been a fragmented industry with many small trade shops. A fifteen to twenty-man plant wasn't necessarily small in those days, but it was small enough so that it was the fictim of any fluctuation in the economic conditions that might occur. The plant was purchased by another engraving plant, Potman Engraving, I believe, was the name of it, and two plants were merged together and reorganized. In the reorganization, there simply wasn't room for all of the people, and I was politely discharged.

HOFFMAN: Last hired, first fired!

DILLON: With good will, but nevertheless.

GIEBEL: Was this during your apprenticeship?

DILLON: Yes. I'd only been there about two years as I recall. I think it was in the second half of my second year of apprenticeship, which, of course, had a good deal to do with it. The open shops, non-union shops, are supposedly famous for their desire to have apprentices and less expensive help; nevertheless they had some respect for journeymen and craftsmanship. When you reorganize a plant because of economic reasons, I guess you do look for your best people to stay on.

HOFFMAN: At this time was the employer a former worker at the craft himself? That is, was it an owner-operator type of shop?

DILLON: Mr. Demers, one of the owners, certainly came up through the craft. He had been a craftsman and worked at the trade I don't know how many years. I'm not sure about Mr. Schoenwald. I don't recall whether he was associated with the craft. There was never any indication. Mr. Demers would occasionally come into the plant to do some work, and he was a competent craftsman. Mr. Schoenwald had a couple of sons who were working in the shop, but the owner himself, Mr. Schoenwald, I'm not at all sure that he had any background in the trade, other than administrative.

HOFFMAN: Well, then, how did you get the job at McGrath?

DILLON: Fortunately, while I wasn't too well acquainted around the industry, having been in it only a little more than a year, a year-and-a-half, many of the people I worked with had friends in other shops and knew something about other shops. I was, I think, very fortunate that, as soon as it was learned that I was going to be let go, one of the people that I worked with indicated to me that he knew

of a possible job at McGrath. Of course, I went over there, and they did employ me. I wasn't unemployed very long, perhaps a week or so. So I picked up my apprenticeship at McGrath.

Well, McGrath was a somewhat different operation. Number one, they were much more deeply involved in color work at that time. They were a pretty reputable firm, well-established, and they did a great deal of color work for some of the major magazines and seemed to be a step up as far as I was concerned. They made the apprenticeship a good deal more formal; there were documents involved and an apprenticeship contract that had to be signed to guarantee the progression and so forth and so on, which I did not have at Schoenwald-Demers. Now, it all seemed to be progress as far as I was concerned.

GIEBEL: Can you elaborate on that a bit, the contrast between the two shops--the contract that you signed, the difference in work, and why you felt that it was a step up?

DILLON: Well, again, first of all, although I didn't realize it at that moment so much, looking back it seems to me there was no question I now had a better opportunity to be a competent journeyman, including an opportunity to do color work, which was, I think, the objective and the ultimate desire and aspiration of anybody who got in the trade and intended to stay there at least. That was certainly the number one. It was a much larger plant and had the kind of craftsmen involved in color that would be impressive to me. Of course, the formality of signing a paper, which was no real guarantee, I suppose, but indicated that the employer intended to allow me to stay there and finish my apprenticeship and recognized my achievement as I went along, with raises and so forth and so on. It just gave you a feeling that there was a little more security and opportunity there. Having just gone through the business of being discharged, it all seemed pretty fascinating.

GIEBEL: How did this kind of idea of someone singing the paper come about? Did people work together with the employer? Had workers worked together, or was this just an idea that the employer had, or was this a common practice in Chicago in those days, this kind of paper agreement with the employee?

DILLON: I don't really know, but I think it's a fair guess that it had become a reasonably common practice in the remaining non-union shops. McGrath, of course, was another non-union shop; I should mention that. I think it became a common practice with them. It was a kind of counteraction to contracts that the union was signing in their shops. My best recollection is that as a contract it wasn't nearly as formal or explicit in terms of conditions or employment

as contracts that we're familiar with. But it did spell out to some extent the kind of conditions. It would name the vacation rights, if any (there weren't any at that particular time), but holidays--there were some holidays--and, as I say, the progression rate in terms of time, and wage increases. More than anything else, I guess, I'd have to describe it as a list of shop rules. It gave you some idea of what was expected of you and what they would accept and what they wouldn't accept in terms of workmanship. I don't recall that it contained any particularly restrictive language. It wasn't what was known as the "yellow dog" contract or anything like that. It was just an agreement that they would employ you under these conditions and these kinds of increases.

GIEBEL: What was your awareness of the union in those days? You worked in two different shops, non-union shops. What was your awareness of the union shop? I mean, were you at all aware of the advantages that union shops had or were there no particular advantages?

DILLON: Yes. I had become aware of the existence of a union covering the kind of people that I was working with. I got a job, oh, I'd say within a year after I became an apprentice at Schoenwald-Demers. I can't really recollect the precise time; it might have been at the time that I was let go from Schoenwald-Demers, at the reorganization or it might have been a little bit before that. But there were union members in that shop, secret, you know, it was not well publicized. But I have to think that it was probably at the time that I was released.

Again, some of the people down there who were friendly suggested that I go and talk to the people in the union, which I did. Of course, the union was perhaps 50 percent organized in the city of Chicago. They had some good leadership at the union level, but their condition warranted what they did, although I didn't understand it at the time. Their position was, as it is still today, I think, in many areas, that they'd be happy to have me work with them and help me organize the shop, but it was not their policy simply to accept people as members, especially unemployed people. They felt that it was my responsibility to find a job in a shop and then contact them and do what I could to help them organize. Well, that didn't make any sense to me at that time. I learned that that was not a bad policy later on. But at the time it made no sense at all.

So I guess the subsequent step then was simply to go to McGrath's and accept that job, which I did. I never had anyone make an approach to me from the union while I was in the shop. No one ever came and talked to me about the union or suggested that we might work together or anything like that, other than the initial contact that I made. That was all I ever heard. Now, I'm not sure it wasn't going on, but no one came to me.

HOFFMAN: In other words, what you're saying is that at that time vigorous organization wasn't really characteristic of the Chicago Local. Because you had been there and presumably they might have followed up on that contact.

DILLON: Yes. I never really thought about that. But it does seem to me they would have done that because certainly that is the kind of thing we did later when I was involved in their organizing. I think they had some organizing program going on; I guess you couldn't call it vigorous. At least nothing that I was witness to ever indicated that it was much of a vigorous program.

GIEBEL: You mentioned that other people working in the shop at the time when you left your first company and moved to McGrath, that other people knew other photoengravers in the city. How did they know other photoengravers? From past work experience, or was there some vehicle through which they socialized together, or what?

DILLON: I think it was a combination of those two things. Certainly some of those people had worked at several plants in the city of Chicago, although it was a relatively young group of people; there weren't any really older men in that plant as I can recall. There may have been one or two, but out of the fifteen or twenty men, most of them were reasonably young folks. But nevertheless they'd had experience working around different plants. Virtually every journeyman had worked in three or four or five plants in his career.

There was also an organization and I can't recall the name of it. I think it was something like what is called the Craftsman Club these days. It may have been the Craftsman Club; I'm not sure. But there were organizations that some of these people belonged to and attended regular meetings perhaps once a month or so and did get to meet other people from other plants. I think even in those days--and again, I didn't participate in any of this as a first-year apprentice--but I think even in those days the suppliers, for example, would have gatherings of one kind of another, seminars perhaps, and the people would get to meet other people in the industry.

HOFFMAN: Okay. Well, I see that your career in the graphic arts was interrupted by your entrance into the Air Force. And, by the way, I don't know if this is a completely erroneous impression on my part, but I have this feeling--maybe it's because we did this interview yesterday with Roy Turner--but there seems to be an awful lot more people from the printing trades who ended up in the Air Force than might be expected. I'm not sure whether that's true or not.

DILLON: I don't know. It may be. I wasn't involved in this, but I know an awful lot of people in the industry today were. It may be. The Air Force had a great interest in map-making and topography and so forth, and an awful lot of people simply took their trade into the service and worked at it. I didn't, but I've been surprised at how many there were.

HOFFMAN: Did you select the Air Corps? That is, you volunteered when it looked like you were going to get drafted?

DILLON: No. No. They had to drag me all the way! It seems to be--but again my recollection is not clear on this --but it seems to me they did offer me some choice, and I think the choice was based on how I would do with their test, the EGT or whatever it was. You could express a choice, as I recall, and if the test justified it, well, then they would give it consideration. I think I did make a choice to that extent.

HOFFMAN: Yes, I think that's right, because I recall that my husband did the same thing. He flunked out of the Air Force because he was color blind. He would obviously also have flunked out of the printing trades. (laughter)

DILLON: I guess when color took over, he would have found it difficult! Although I've seen many an account executive up there who I thought must be color blind.

HOFFMAN: It's very important that they should be able to distinguish between red and black. What was your experience, briefly, in the service? Where did you go?

DILLON: I spend, I guess, almost the first two years in the Eighth Air Force, principally in Newfoundland, with occasional short assignments to the British Isles. Then I applied for OCS [Officer Candidate School]. After I got out of OCS, they sent me down to the South Pacific, and I spent the last two years in the South Pacific. I was with the Fifth Air Force there. I got there just as the mobilization, or the tide, was switching to where we were on the offensive, and I was along with it pretty well all the way.

HOFFMAN: What was your job? You were a captain, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you were a pilot, does it?

DILLON: No. I was not a pilot. I don't know whether I should be happy about this or not, but I've forgotten a good many of the terminology involved. I started out as what they called an 'intercept officer'--I guided

pilots with radar scopes and that type of thing. It was known as A-3, same thing as G-3 in the Army, but A-3 in the Air Force. I was in weather for awhile--not as a weatherman, but just as an assistant, that type of thing--and field intelligence, again not G-2, but field intelligence, as it related to the kind of work we were doing, which was, as I say, guiding pilots. That is, we worked out their assignments, the targets and things like that, and had something to do with evaluating the information that was brought back and that type of thing. Operational is the best word to describe it--operational in terms of missions flown by aircraft, whatever they were--bombers, fighters, the whole bit, but principally fighters, fighter protection for bombers.

HOFFMAN: When you moved over to the war in the Pacific, where were you stationed?

DILLON: Well, that's what I meant before when I said I went with them all the way. I came to New Guinea; and as the drive started up the islands toward Japan, I went with it. Every place it went, I moved. I don't think I was in any place more than four or five months, and then we'd be on our way.

HOFFMAN: Finally ending up in Japan?

DILLON: I recall it was an island-hopping job. As we'd take an island, we'd move up with it and set up our operational headquarters. I wound up in the Ryuku Islands, which was the last stop before Japan, and then, of course, it ended.

HOFFMAN: Were you then assigned to Japan before you came home?

DILLON: No. I had had sufficient overseas service so that once the war ended and they set up the program of returnees, I was pretty high on the list. So I never did get to Japan.

HOFFMAN: Incidentally, were you married before the war? Or during, or after?

DILLON: I got married after the war. I came back, and I had had a couple of years of college and a lot of night school. I was still oriented toward education. I had always felt very badly that I simply couldn't go to college on a normal basis, all day long like other people. And, of course, with the G.I. Bill of Rights, I thought, "Well, okay, this is my chance; this is fine." So I came back with every intention of just leaping right into college and going on with it as much as I could.

I came back to Chicago; that's where all my life experience had been and my work experience. My family had moved to Cincinnati, Ohio a year before the war and I stayed in Chicago. So I did come back to Chicago which seemed more like home to me than Cincinnati, Ohio, and there was a job opportunity . . . I had gone to Northwestern and I thought I'd like to go back there. The very first thing that happened, I went up to Northwestern and along with making inquiries about going to school, I also went to their job placement bureau. I wasn't really anxious to get back to the trade. I was not a mechanic; I never felt I was very good with my hands. I was much better with my mouth. (laughter) And my head. After having had a couple of years of intelligence work and all that, the trade didn't seem too attractive to me. I really wasn't going to go back there. So I went to the school to find out what the situation would be as far as enrolling and also job-placement opportunities. I met my wife at the job placement bureau.

HOFFMAN: (laughing) First crack out of the box!!

DILLON: We were married in six months. Then we began to have the interests that a married couple have--home, furniture, and you might say, very quickly, children. Suddenly the job got more important than school; that was all there was to it. I really wasn't able to satisfy anybody who had jobs available that I was the kind of person they were looking for. Maybe I was looking for the kind of job I shouldn't have been looking for.

HOFFMAN: What kind of a job were you looking for?

DILLON: Well, I wanted to get a job in some kind of administrative job--sales, that type of thing. White-collar work; let's put it that way. I felt I did have some qualifications, cut educational demands were pretty high then. So was competition, I guess. I didn't really have much going for me.

GIEBEL: Even with all the military experience though, as an officer, that didn't compute into job opportunities?

DILLON: No.

GIEBEL: You could go back to the job you had previously, but not . . . ?

DILLON: Well, there were some opportunities that I simply didn't accept. I can't say there was no chance at all, but they weren't as impressive in terms of reward. There were a lot of promises, and they may well have been sincere promises and they may well have turned out. I'd left the trade to go into the service and I was making $40 a week.

I was overseas virtually the whole four years, and I really wasn't paying much attention to the economy or anything like that. When I came back and found out that they were making $75 a week, I was impressed! I was really flabbergasted! So I knew I had that waiting for me. As a matter of fact, I was stalling the employer. I think you had to return in ninety days or something and he could take you or he didn't have to. So I was kind of stalling him, but I knew I had a $75-a-week job waiting for me and it was really pretty impressive. None of the jobs that were offered to me would immediately promise anything like that, so I took the safe way and went back to the job.

Now, at that time I had completed five years of my apprenticeship, so I had to go back as an apprentice. In the meantime, the shop had been organized, during the war. It was now a union shop. They needed people badly, of course, and it was no problem getting back.

So I went back to work for McGrath and got acquainted with the union and found out that they would expect me to serve my last year of apprenticeship. They wouldn't give me any credit for my. . . . I finished my apprenticeship at McGrath. I suppose I worked there for another year or two. In those days, it was general throughout the industry, the need for men and so forth, that people were going out and negotiating better premiums and changing jobs constantly in order to get more money. The $75 was very great for about six months until I began to find out what everyone else was doing, especially after I finished my apprenticeship.

So I did begin to look around for other jobs. I had interviews with several employers, and I did manage to persuade the employer to give me some increases over the premium. When I had gone to work for McGrath before the war, I was put on the midnight shift. When I came back they no longer had the third shift and they put me on the second shift. There was a pretty decent premium paid for the second shift. Subsequently, as part of this business of getting more money, they put me on the first shift, but paid me as they were paying for the second shift. Those sorts of things were going on to keep people happy. I don't recall exactly how long I worked for them, but I came back in 1946 and I think I went to Collins-Miller & Hutchings in about 1950 or '51. So I worked for them a couple more years.

HOFFMAN: Now at this period of time you did begin to be active in Local 5 of the IPEU? [International Photoengravers Union].

DILLON: Yes. At McGrath's, as soon as I finished my apprenticeship, I began to develop the kind of relationship with the people that would convince them to support me to be chapel chairman. By this time, of course, I

made up my mind that this was going to be my job. I wasn't looking for another industry. I might be looking for another job in this industry, but I was going to stay with the trade.

HOFFMAN: What caused you to make up your mind to that?

DILLON: Number one, I had been given the opportunity to get into color. It wasn't easy to get into color in those days. It was a kind of small group, and you either did black and white work, or you did color work; you seldom did both. And it wasn't easy to get into color. It paid more, and was more interesting, of course, more craftsmanship involved; but at McGrath's, because of certain events, I had an opportunity to get into color. I was very pleased with that and was satisfied that the kind of income I was making and the future was fairly promising. Things were going along pretty well. We were getting involved, as I say, with home and family and one thing and another, and I was just not the kind of person to want to take chances and jump around. I wanted to be certain that I could handle what was going to come next month and be ready for it.

So at that point in time I tried to be what I thought was objective and honest with myself that this was not the kind of work I'm going to be happy with, but I happened to be doing a pretty good job apparently; at least the employer must think so. I'm competent; I'm able to handle it; it's not driving me up a wall. It's not what I hoped for, but. . . . So, I decided, yes, this would probably be my life work. So that's what happened.

Having made that decision, I intended to be active in the union. I tried to play some kind of an influential role if not a leadership role. I don't know how other people do these things, but I had no idea in the world of becoming a union officer. I just wanted to be a little more active in the organization that had so much to do with what was important to me. Obviously the union made decisions that I thought were erroneous, did things at the bargaining table that I thought were wrong. About the only way I could protect myself was to try to change those things.

HOFFMAN: So you were a young Turk?

DILLON: I think so, yes, I think so.

HOFFMAN: Well, I think there are sort of two ways of getting actively involved as a young person in the union. Either you are selected by someone older as being promising and sort of nurtured along, taken under his wing, and pushed. Or, two, you're a young Turk. I think those are the two major ways in which a person kind of gets involved at the level that you came in, namely, elected shop chairman and that kind of thing.

DILLON: Yes. Well, I don't disagree with that. But first, the initial activity was pretty much on my own initiative. But eventually the success--I'll call it success--the success in terms of moving from working in the shop as a craftsman into the union as a full-time officer, certainly that can be easily identified as a time when somebody picked me out and offered me an opportunity that happened.

HOFFMAN: So, in other words, you're saying it was not either-or; it was kind of a combination of both.

DILLON: Well, yes. I think that I established my own record to bring myself to attention, but I didn't get into the real opportunity unless somebody gave me the chance to. Again, you know, I was still very education-minded. I believed that you should always expose yourself to every opportunity to find out everything about everything, and I was willing to take jobs, so I became chapel chairman. All right, fine.

We were active in the Chicago area in terms of the AFL-CIO, Chicago AFL-CIO, and other organizations, and those were jobs that the knowing people, people who wanted positions and recognition of some kind, wouldn't take. They were jobs that didn't really have that kind of recognition. They required some contribution and sacrifice, and the people who had been around a while really weren't willing to take them, the people who were really able and competent to take them. I recall we were entitled to three delegates to the CFL, and we never could get people to accept the job; or if they took the jobs or were elected, they didn't go. Well, I brought a whole new ball game into that. I went, and I gave reports. We were particularly bad in terms of the Union Label and Service Trades in Chicago. We always had delegates elected, but they didn't go. Well, I went to everything.

HOFFMAN: Now was that a committee of the central body, or was that something separate? The Union Label?

DILLON: The Union Label and Service Trades is a department of the AFL-CIO, and they have their local affiliates just like the Chicago Federation of Labor is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO. They have a counterpart in the Union Label and Service Trades.

HOFFMAN: Right. The reason I asked that is that where I'm familiar with that, in Philadelphia, the Union Label and Service Department is a committee of the Philadelphia Central Labor Council. But a little bit in the way you're describing this, it sounds as if it's two different things, that there was an organ in Chicago of the Union Label Department of the national AFL and that you were active in that and that you were also active in the Chicago Central Labor body.

DILLON: That's really the way I recollect it. Obviously, there were people on both.

HOFFMAN: Right.

DILLON: And in our organization, when you were elected to the CFL, you were automatically also responsible for participating in the other. But I think the two organizations were much more separated than the way you're describing it. I may be wrong about that, but I just never had the impression that they were that close.

HOFFMAN: You're undoubtedly right. I think that what it represents is a difference in organizational structure between Chicago then and Philadelphia now.

GIEBEL: Okay. So in this situation now you're coming into contact not only with people in your International, or the local in this case in Chicago, but you're now coming into contact with other people in administrative positions with other locals. Can you talk about the general state of the industry--other union members in the shop you were working at, other local representatives, and your general impression of other internationals at that time in Chicago.

DILLON: I'm not sure I can be very helpful in that respect, because I wasn't really meeting top-level people, even full-time people. I was meeting people in other unions who were about in the same position I was. Maybe they were rising, or some of them were more advanced than I was, but they were not full-time officials. They were simply serving on these delegations and committees in the same sense that I was. We seemed to have a lot in common. We were workers. We were working in our crafts, in our shops, whatever it may be. So I can't say that I have any real recollection that's related to their organizations, to them personally. It was more of a personal relationship than anything else.

One of my big disappointments with the labor movement then--oh, it's changed some--but it all seemed to be rhetoric and futility. I had that feeling quite early in the game. It wasn't anyone's fault. They were never in a position to do more than say the right thing, the thing that should be said, that people wanted to hear. But even then I recognized that a lot of it was just that--rhetoric--and nobody was going to do much about changing the things that we talked about.

HOFFMAN: In other words, what you're talking about is the weakness of the central body construction in which, for example, when you get to the national convention of the AFL-CIO, the president of the state federation is called a "one-oner" because he doesn't really represent very much.

DILLON: I would like to make the distinction between the CFL, which was a very strong, active, powerful body, force, in Chicago--very narrow in its intentions--I'm really talking more about the Union Label and Service Trades Department, because in the CFL I was really a lost nonentity, at least in the period we're talking about. Later on, when I began to go to the CFL as an officer, that was a little different. But I'm still thinking of that period of time when I was simply a delegate, my first year or two. In CFL I got to know a few people, but it was so big, and there were full-time officers and important people, you know.

HOFFMAN: Who were these important people?

DILLON: Well, of course, Bill Lee was the president of CFL then, as he is now, but there were people from the Service Trades--McFadden or Fadden?--well, anyway he was a well-known, long-time leader of the Building and Service Trades in the Chicago area and involved with the AFL-CIO. We'd all recognize his name if I could just. . . McFettrich. McFettrich.

HOFFMAN: Oh, yes.

DILLON: That was it. A man who always turned me off, I might say.

HOFFMAN: Why?

DILLON: Well, of course, in the CFL, I think I attended that for three or four years. It was an autocratic organization, and that certainly wasn't my style. Above all, I had the feeling with the Photoengravers Union that it was a fairly open society. This wasn't true in every local, I suppose, and it wasn't always true in Chicago, but when I came in, for example, I hit that floor at every opportunity, although I congratulate myself to this day that I picked issues that were worth talking about. I didn't kill myself with everything. In any case, there I was, just out of my apprenticeship, and I could go to that floor and people would extend the courtesy of listening to me. Well, that wasn't true with the CFL. If you weren't somebody. . . . All of these people were like that in my opinion--Bill Lee, McFettrich, the whole bunch. Unless you were getting up there to commend them for something, to support something that they're after, why you really had a problem.

HOFFMAN: What about relationships with the CIO in Chicago at this time? With the Amalgamated Meatcutters, the Steelworkers, and so forth? Was it live and let live or was there considerable acrimony?

DILLON: I don't really know what the state of the relations was in respect to the more important and powerful unions. We had a friendly relationship with the Lithographers; I don't know how far back that goes. We didn't go out of our way to associate with each other, but the relationship was always friendly. Everybody, all the officers seemed to know the other officers. They didn't have any real reason to get together for lunch or anything like that, but they knew each other. I suppose they'd run into each other at some labor organization situations. But as far as the CIO, at least in the days I'm talking about, which would be the late 1940s now, I don't know of any relationship. I can't recall any incidents that I can remember where the CIO was discussed until they actually got down to talking about merger, which, of course, came about some time later. No, I can't recall anything that we ever talked about or did with the CIO. It may have been going on, but I wasn't aware of it.

HOFFMAN: Well, now, in your activity on the Chicago Union Label and Service Trades, that was an obvious place for a person in the printing industry to find himself because, of course, that's been the big struggle over the label. What was your role? In serving in that particular spot, were you trying to effect some particular purpose? Was there any challenge or contest about the Photoengraver's label from other jurisdictional attacks?

DILLON: Well, there was, but we didn't attempt to resolve any of those problems at that level because we had an Allied Printing Trades Council in Chicago. These organizations were in constant disagreement over things like that, but we would try to resolve those problems there. The Union Label and Service Trades Department in Chicago was a very weak situation in those days. I don't know how much it's changed. Participation was minimal; perhaps eight or ten people would come to meetings when there should have been fifty or sixty. I do think the printing trades, the graphic arts trades, were always more conscious of label than almost all other unions, and that generally we would have two or three of the printing trades participating, some of them with two or three delegates. In that sense we were kind of cementing relationship with our own trade. We had pretty friendly groups up there.

But the Union Label and Service Trades Department attempted to do, at the Chicago level, the same thing that the International does. That is, simply develop literature and activities that would promote the label. But they were not very good at it because there simply was not enough drive in the situation.

HOFFMAN: Well, I notice here from your resume, Hank, that you attended the famous School for Workers. I wonder if you could say, number one, a little bit about the circumstances that led you to attend it--that is, how

you got selected and so on--and two, I'm very much interested in doing a kind of sub-history of workers education in itself, so I would be very much interested in the impact of the experience upon you and the kind of educational experience it was.

DILLON: Well, it was a direct outgrowth, of course, of my participation in the CFL. My recollection is that an announcement was made in one of the meetings that the school was available. If anyone wanted to apply for it, they could fill out forms and so on. Well, I had no hesitation at all! I didn't even consider it in terms of my own organization. It was simply that the CFL was sponsoring it. So I made application, and as I recall, I made it through the CFL.

GIEBEL: An application to the school or an application to the CFL to be chosen as a member to go to the school?

DILLON: Well, the application form, I don't recall, but I think the sponsor, or the authoritive body was the CFL. They were saying, "Right, this is an acceptable application and you ought to let him in." I didn't find out until a little while later that my organization had been doing the same thing. I simply never knew about it. I did go to the organization and tell them what I was up to.

HOFFMAN: Now, was this summer school?

DILLON: Yes. It was one of those two-week seminars. That wasn't quite the way it happened. [Apparently referring back to the preceding paragraph.] I don't guess I ever did tell my organization I was going. I simply went ahead with the CFL and applied and they agreed, so I was able to go. This must have been in 1952, and we had had quite a bit of internal political fighting in the Chicago local in the years 1948 through 1951, which had culminated in the defeat of a very popular president in 1951 by Bill Hall. I say popular in that he first of all inherited the position from a very popular president, Larry Gruber, who was president when I became involved with the organization.

Louis Miller, who had been very active in the union became president when Larry Gruber left and was president for perhaps two or three years, perhaps longer. I'm not sure of those dates. But his last couple of years--we had annual elections--but in the last couple of years there was a real political battle going, which I wasn't paying much attention to, between Louis Miller and Bill Hall. I think Miller beat him once or twice, and then finally Bill Hall beat Miller. But that was in the fall of 1951. I had been active in terms of chapel chairman and delegate to these various organizations during that period of time, but I was not in the inner circles of the local by any stretch of the imagination.

GIEBEL: What did an outsider see to be the issues between Hall and Miller?

DILLON: Basically that Miller was not doing a straight-forward job in terms of representing the members in his relationship with the employers. I would say that was it. They brought in a lot of other things, of course.

HOFFMAN: You mean Bill Hall was charging Miller with what we would call "sweetheart" contracts?

DILLON: Yes. Permissiveness in terms of the contract enforcement and things like that. I tell you that in terms of the fact that I was not close to the situation; I wasn't paying much attention to it and it's really a surmise on my part. But I think that was largely what was going on.

GIEBEL: So you weren't forced into either a pro-Miller or pro-Hall position?

DILLON: Not at that time, but later. (laughter) No, not at that time. They were content and I was content to attend my monthly meeting of these organizations and have an opportunity to make my reports to the members and things like that.

HOFFMAN: Well, now, to get back to the School for Workers, if we can. Did you just go once or did you go over a series of summers?

DILLON: No, I only went once. I got into this because I wanted to lead up to how I got to the school and one of the results of it. So that was the fall of 1951; I'm active in these organizations through 1951 and 1952, and it's in 1952 when I get ready to go to this school. I think it was in July, sometime during the summer. About a month before I was going to the school, I was approached by Larry Gruber, who was, I might say, at this point Bill Hall's campaign manager in all this political in-play. I didn't know Bill Hall from Adam. He [Gruber] offered me the job of full-time representative with the Chicago local, representing Bill Hall. They wanted me to go on on the first of August and I said, "No." I wouldn't go because I was determined to go to school. But I guess that impressed them, and they found out I'd done this all on my own, you know, wasn't looking for any help, that I was determined to go to this School for Workers, and I didn't have to do that, you know. I guess they were impressed so they accepted that and said, "All right," that I could make it later in the year. So it had that kind of influence.

HOFFMAN: There are unions where they might have been impressed but not necessarily positively! (laughter)

DILLON: Perhaps. I suppose it could have gone the other way. If they felt that I was building myself up to be some kind of competitor, they might not have liked it. But they had decided already they were going to put me on fulltime, so it was a plus.

HOFFMAN: What did you study at Wisconsin?

DILLON: Well, I'm afraid I can't really recollect all that. But it was the normal type of thing, you know--bargaining techniques, parliamentary procedure, pretty basic, simple type of thing; but it was interesting and exciting for me. I can't recall that they had the kind of complex approach to the things that they seem to have these days or at least that we have had when we've had our schools up there, you know, the human relationship and a little psychology. I suppose there was some economics and things like that, but it was very basic as I recall. But I was very impressed and thought it was wonderful, and I do recall they asked you to write a report, a summary of your impressions and experiences afterwards; and I wrote a thesis! I was impressed. I think perhaps it was a really great thing for me, because it provided a foundation for the work I was moving into that just worked out beautifully.

HOFFMAN: In what way? In the sense of the people that you met or in the sense of the exhilaration of the experience? It sounds as if you really didn't learn too much, but that it was the contact and the atmosphere and perhaps the character of some of the teachers that was the most important thing.

DILLON: Well, it wasn't the people. Not that there was anything wrong with the people. They were all strangers. There was no group involvement here in terms of my interest. There wasn't anybody from the printing trade or anything like that. But I guess that was the first time that I really understood that there was some kind of important relationship between the various things that people do in a union if they want to be some kind of a leader. Here I am scheduled to become an organizer. Well, I didn't know anything about organizing, really. But I think I did learn at that time the great relationship between negotiations, administration of an organization--there was union administration, that type of thing--grievance and arbitration procedures which was totally really unknown to us. Our organization, particularly in Chicago, I don't think had a grievance arbitration for twenty years. We used the terms and we had contracts, but we simply never had the procedures; we never really had the cases. And I understood the relationship

between it, and perhaps one thing that they further filled out for me, an understanding of how collective activity could be a really useful force and could be used to accomplish a lot of good. I'm not sure I understood that until . . . .

HOFFMAN: So if I could summarize, Hank, what you're saying is that it was kind of your first solid understanding of the labor movement as a movement.

DILLON: Right. Labor history, here I am struggling, labor history was the thing that got to me best. I never realized that there was labor history. You know, in two weeks they don't do a thorough job; they do the best they can. But they brought enough of it to me for me to know that history. . . boy, I loved that anyway. So I went out on my own a lot on that. But labor history and the other combination of things really, this was a place where you could do something useful and enjoy it. As I say, at that point, I'm taking a craftsman job. I don't think I really like it. Now we're talking about something I really like.

END OF TAPE, SIDE ONE

HOFFMAN: There were two advantages then to the experience. One was that you had the sense of the labor movement, and the second one is that you went home with all sorts of ideas about what you should be doing with respect to grievance procedures, the relationship between organization and negotiations, and so forth.

DILLON: Well, with all kinds of ideas about what somebody should be doing. I wasn't sure I was going to be in a position to be doing anything at that time. Yes, there was effective work to be done.

HOFFMAN: All right. So, upon your return from this summer school experience, you were appointed as what we would call a "staff rep." I don't know what you called it in the Photoengravers.

DILLON: Well, they called it an organizer. I guess I was the one to change that. I didn't really like the sound of that, especially, I suppose, because we did have some history of pretty bad people as organizers. I just felt that it would give the job a little more image if it was called a representative. But it was that kind of work. At that time my total job was supposed to be organizing. Chicago--and we're now talking about the early 1950s--Chicago was still considered the center of the unorganized industry, largely, of course, because of the presence of Donnelly [Printing plant].

There were many big unorganized operations around the country, but I guess it was true that Chicago had the largest concentration of non-union shops in the country. Either that or Chicago was a little more forthright and honest in admitting what existed. We often felt that other locals were less than honest about what the situation was. In any case, we were willing to face up to the fact that there was a large organizing job to do. We had had for some years--and I think perhaps the only local in the country, although I don't know for sure--but we had had an assessment situation on our members to support an organizing program for some years, because we spent thousands and thousands of dollars through the years on organizing.

HOFFMAN: Local 5, you mean?

DILLON: Right.

HOFFMAN: Well, I guess there are two things to be said about organizing, or at least two. One is that there is a certain kind of labor leader who gives lip service to organizing, but doesn't really want to pursue it with any great degree of vigor because new members coming in might not necessarily be his supporters, so he'd rather be the sure president of a small organization than the uncertain president of a large organization.

Then, of course, the other attitude is "organize the unorganized," which is kind of a philosophical attitude that you take whatever risks there might be in organizing the unorganized because you believe in the concept and you believe in the movement. Now, did you have in Chicago a kind of residual hard-core of the first kind of leadership that was giving lip service to the organization, or were there other factors that were preventing them from organizing?

DILLON: Well, I have to go back a little bit. My understanding--while I never worked with the man, I got to know him pretty well after a while--Larry Gruber was an extremely effective leader as far as I'm concerned, based on experience after the fact--I didn't work with him while he was on the job--but I have the impression he was an extremely effective leader. A great deal of organizing was done, really, during the war. I don't suppose the organization nor its leaders are entitled to all that credit for that. The fact was that employers were attempting to run their operations without sufficient manpower; and if the union could be helpful, they were willing to go down that road.

My understanding is that something like twenty or twenty-two shops were organized during that period of time. I'm not sure, but I think that Lou Miller was interested in organizing, really wanted to organize the town. They had an active organizing program; it wasn't quite as effective. After those twenty-two

shops were organized, we did have the hard-core non-union plants left. There's no question about that. They were the difficult ones. But I think they were trying to organize. They had local staff and they had international people assigned on a full-time basis. So they were trying to organize, but they were not too successful. They also had some incompetent people on the staff, nice people, but incompetent, people who really weren't working very hard at the job.

HOFFMAN: So it was just kind of slough.

DILLON: Right. When Bill Hall came in, there was, of course, only two full-time officers plus the full-time representative. Bill Hall was in his first year as president. The secretary had been on for many, many years. He was simply a secretary; he wasn't an asset nor a defect of the situation. He did his job, and that was it. Then there was myself, brand new, without any experience.

Bill Hall had had considerable experience in organizing. He came into the union through an organizational effort; he had been very active himself in the field. He wanted organizing. They knew that the man they had in there as organizer was a close personal friend of everybody's--Bill's, mine, and all--but he really was no longer in a position to do any effective organizing. I came in as his replacement; it was as simple as that. So Bill Hall certainly intended to organize; there was no question about that. He had the support of the organization in terms of the leadership and members, in terms of the fact that they were perfectly willing to pay for the organizing effort. We never got much help out of members, but I don't know if that was our fault or theirs. I never tried really. Maybe they did in the past. We didn't have any organizing committee or anything like that. It was the officers and the representatives who were responsible for it. So that's about where we were. They wanted organizing, and we were working hard at it.

When I came in, there was nothing, nothing to work with. They had won an election at the Northwestern Photoengraving plant which was one of our most bitter anti-union employers and shops. They had won an election there perhaps a year or two before, and they were in bargaining with that plant. Other than that, <u>there was nothing</u>! If there were any files of contracts, it was all kept in somebody's head. There was no sound record structure to begin with, which, in a way, didn't bother me, because, while I was very friendly with the man that I took over from and he stayed on the job for about a month while I was getting familiar with it,--again, maybe a hasty judgement--but I thought immediately, "Whatever he's been doing, I'm going to do it differently." It was as blunt as that. He had nothing for me to work with. A few dog-eared files with some letters in it that had no relation to anything anymore and things like that.

We were pretty sure that we were talking interms of several hundred non-union people. I think we listed about eighteen

shops that were worthwhile organizing. There were even more, but eighteen that were worth our efforts. So there was a job to do there. But that was all right. As I say, my interest ran down the line of keeping meticulous records and files, statistics and things like that. I welcomed the challenge. It was going to be my own material that I'd be working with. So that's the way it started.

And I stayed on that job for about four-and-a-half years. We won a couple of elections but never had success in terms of organizing a plant and fetting it to a final contract. It never happened in those four-and-a-half years. The only thing I can say is when I left there, they had records. They had the name of every guy in the city of Chicago. We finally wound up with between five hundred and six hundred names in the files, and I believe that five hundred of them had been contacted at least once. To that extent we were organizing and working at it, spending the hours at it and so forth.

HOFFMAN: Why do you think you weren't successful?

DILLON: Well, this was in the first days of Taft-Hartley for one thing. I'm not blaming the law for it, but the passage of the law developed so much publicity on unions and things like that, that I feel it really had a very adverse affect on us. And while I'm satisfied with the kind of record we put together, it did take time to do all that, too. So that I think the fruits of that kind of basic work were probably still ahead of us in any case, just in terms of time.

We had a bad philosophy in organizing, I'd say that. I don't know if I created it or just went on with what I inherited. But we believed that organizing could only be done on a very secret basis, approaching individuals at their homes, quietly, secretly. Well, when you're dealing with 500 individuals, that's a difficult problem. As contrasted to today where we say, "Look, we're going to have group meetings." If people are too afraid to come to group meetings, well, then we don't have much to work with. But that's what we were doing in those days. We had to go out and contact everybody on an individual basis. In non-union shops more so than union shops, there was rotating shifts, so you had the problems of getting to people and things like that. I think it was very bad strategy, but that's the strategy they felt should be used.

HOFFMAN: Would it be fair to say, too, to a certain extent, that those employers who were relatively easy to organize were organized during the war, during this big upsurge, so that what you were left with in the period from 1952 to 1956 was kind of a hard-core opposition?

DILLON: I did say that before, and it was absolutely true--these were the real die-hards! These were people who were willing to expend any effort and a great deal of money to fight it off.

GIEBEL: What was the nature of the resistance and how could they fight it off? You had been making contacts secretly with individuals within their hops; what did the employer do in response to that?

DILLON: Well, of course, it was difficult to organize Donnelly's simply because their working conditions and wages and that were at least comparable--at least comparable. They received regular increases, usually generated by the union's new contracts, of course, but nevertheless they got them. Now, they were a group of people who went through a selective process to get their jobs so that they were at a little bit, I think, higher level of intelligence than others. They had more confidence in their position, their job. They understood what their job was going to be, what their future was going to be. And they didn't have the concerns.

The other plants, the resistance could best be identified by the fact that these people would develop a small core of people. Oh, it might be twelve people out of seventy or eighty, who received very special attention and consideration. And around this core there would be forty or fifty apprentices. Well, the employer didn't care what you did as far as organizing. The only people you could really organize were the apprentices. You never could get to this core of people. So that's how he succeeded in keeping us away. Oh, you'd win elections, but you never could do anything with it. You couldn't strike them or anything like that because he knew perfectly well he had enough competent people to operate and the only thing we were doing was relieving him of apprentices who'd reached the fourth or fifth year and he'd like to start over again with one-year apprentices anyway. So that was pretty basically their strategy.

One of the most important plants was the Superior Engraving Company, a very large plant, did excellent work. Well, they had been union. They had had a battle with the union and came out successfully. Well, that sort of thing takes years and years to get beyond.

GIEBEL: But you were able to win some elections?

DILLON: Yes. Right. But all we could do was hope we could work out a settlement at the bargaining table because there was no such thing as striking those people at that time.

HOFFMAN: There was a strike subsequently with Donnelly, wasn't there? Is my memory correct on that?

DILLON: Oh, that was before this. The Allied Printing Trades mounted an organizing campaign there in the 1940s before the war; before my time. I think it was in the 1940s. It might have been during the war; I don't know. And it was a pretty big strike. It should have been effective, but it wasn't. But I wasn't involved in that. We had several elections, lost some of them, won a couple. But, as I say, I wasn't around when the contract was signed at any of those places. At Northwestern, we won elections, I suppose five times in twenty years. We'd go through the motions; and in a period of time they would decertify us successfully and we'd have to start all over again. I often said we have more alumni from Northwestern in Chicago Local 5 than any shop in the city.

HOFFMAN: Before we get into your moving on to the International scene I will want to do some more homework from the convention proceedings, but I wonder if now might not be a good place to put in a chapter on a sort of free-wheeling discussion of the changes, technological changes, changes in employment situation in Chicago on the one hand--that is one series of pages. Another series of pages on the whole concept of merger itself. What kind of technological changes were taking place and what kind of changes in the employment relationship? That is, for example, was there a growth in multi-shop operations in Chicago, that is where you had offset and photoengraving and printing going on under one roof?

DILLON: No, I don't think so. Not during that period. Keeping in mind that most of our shops were trade shops and only supplied plates, didn't do any press work at all, they were letterpress shops and letterpress plates. A good many of those shops began to make offset negatives --never made offset plates, but they made offset negatives--and they began to use some of the offset techniques in terms of camera and stripping work and things like that, but they were simply servicing the growing offset business. It was just a kind of added activity they were engaged in. They weren't thinking of themselves as being suppliers to the offset industry. In fact, their negatives, which was all they made, would then have to go some place where prints would be made. I guess that in those days many of the offset printers had platemaking departments; they wouldn't have the preapratory department before the plate. But to that extent they began to move into the offset field. But certainly there was no trend; there may have been a shop or two that I don't know about, who began to really set up what you might call an offset department. But I'm not aware that that was going on at all.

As far as technological changes were concerned, I would say that there were improvements being made in the industry, I think, largely confined to the camera department and the stripping department in terms of materials and things like that. I

guess it probably was about this time that new plates were being developed as well, or the use of magnesium plates was being extended. Powderless etching was on the horizon; it was not really established yet, but it was something that was very, very good. It was obviously going to be an integral part of the industry; and when it came, it came with a bang! Within a couple of years it was the way to do things. But at that time it was pretty much on the horizon.

There wasn't much technological change in any of the branches except, I think, in camera and stripping. Etching didn't change much, finishing, and proofing. Oh, there were improved presses coming into the field. But up until that time only the bigger companies apparently were willing to invest in the new kind of presses that would run what they called wet proofing, run them so quickly so that one color would be imposed on another color while it was still wet. Before that we had to deal with dry proofing, which was not, of course, like a press, so there were problems. But that's really, I think, about the only technological changes that were developing, and I wasn't familiar with the gallery, the photography, and the stripping. I was really pretty much of an outsider looking in, and maybe there was even more going on that I didn't know about. I was not technologicall-minded or anything like that.

GIEBEL: In general, during this period, before you went to the war and after you came back, up through the beginning of the 1950s, the changes that were taking place within the industry as far as technology was concerned did not really erode the craftsmanship that an individual worker was responsible for?

DILLON: No. No. Now, I'm talking about letterpress. At this point I don't know what's going on in offset at all. There may have been great changes there, but I don't know. In letterpress shops, no, there was no significant change at all.

GIEBEL: As far as the photoengraving end of the trade--that's the letterpress shop that you're talking about there --basically you did not see any erosion of their craft during this period?

DILLON: Not at all, not at all. And that goes for the employment bit if you want a quick comment on that. The industry in terms of its manpower was constantly growing at a very steady and, well, I wouldn't say rapid pace, but a steady pace at least up until 1957. I think that's the point in time when it began to turn down, as far as we were concerned, in terms of manpower. So all through that period of the late 1940s and as I went into the local on a full-time basis and was attempting to organize, the same type of thing was happening in the non-union shops. They were all growing, union and non-union.

HOFFMAN: One question occurs to me about the kinds of jurisdictional disputes and so forth that were going on in Chicago. Were the Pressmen putting any kind of pressure on photoengravers with respect to your involvement in preparation of offset plates? Did they see that as a place where they ought to move in terms of the mounting competition they were getting from lithography?

DILLON: No, not that I can recall. As I said, number one, we weren't making the plates. I can't recall a single shop that actually made plates. As far as negatives were concerned, well, I don't know whether the Pressmen were satisfied, but as long as they could make the plates at that point I think they were satisfied. No, we didn't have any problems with the Pressmen in that respect in those days.

The first important, serious jurisdictional problem that I can recall--and there may have been others before I was active enough to be a participant--was, of course, when the phototypesetter equipment began to come into the field. I was very much involved with the local by that time. I should say that, while I spent two and a half years holding a job called representative, which was supposed to be totally organizing, I had also become vice-president, by election, and Bill Hall and I had developed a very close relationship. The secretary that we had inherited, so to speak, had died and a new man had come in who was very close to us. So the three officers were extremely close and friendly and worked well together. I don't think I neglected the organizing, but Bill Hall used me more and more as an administrative assistant kind of job, and I did get involved in everything the local got involved in after the first year or so.

HOFFMAN: Including negotiations?

DILLON: Right, right. So I was, by the time this jurisdictional problem came up--and it was the first one that had any importance as far as I was concerned--I was deeply enough involved with the local that I was right with it all the way.

HOFFMAN: Now, what did you learn out of this jurisdictional conflict? Were the seeds of some kind of thoughts about merger planted there?

DILLON: Well, no, because that was strictly a battle with the ITU [International Typographers Union], and my feeling is that there has never been any serious consideration of merging with the ITU, either as photoengravers or since merging with other organizations. But just speaking about it in terms of the Photoengravers Union as a separate entity, we never had any thought of merging with the ITU. So that jurisdictional problem certainly didn't lead us in that direction at all. It merely reinforced the kind of distant relationship that we had with them. Then, you know, you're dealing with people at a local level, and we were fairly friendly with them at the local level. We could both sit there and cuss their International, and

it would be all right!! But at the international level it was something else again.

GIEBEL: This is the ITU International? They could cuss the Photoengravers International along with you?

DILLON: They didn't fight with us at the local level. They simply said, "We can't do anything about it because the international says it's got to be this way." We didn't become enemies at the local level because of it.

HOFFMAN: Everybody tells the same story about ITU. It doesn't matter whether you're talking to somebody from Toronto or somebody from Atlanta. You know, there is this current running thread, "Locally, we didn't have any trouble, but. . . " Now, certainly an international has a certain kind of character, but nevertheless it is also true that ITU was a real source of friction for everybody. And I wonder what causes this. Is it Berry and the atmosphere which he created, passed on to his successors?

DILLON: Well, Berry was with the Pressmen.

HOFFMAN: Excuse me, that's right. I'm off-base on that, but I'm just wondering what is the cause of this, where everyone is saying the same thing, that it seems to be this atmosphere coming down from the international of restrictive, kind of narrow craft thinking.

DILLON: Well, Alice, I guess they really believe in what they have said so many times through the years. It is true that they agreed to allow the crafts to separate from the ITU; they were all one organization at one time. They agreed to allow them to separate. I suspect--and I have no way of knowing--but I suspect that when those agreements were reached, they had some assurances that they would still be "father" and that the organizations would crowd around and look up to them and really not go out on their own. That's just a suspicion.

But in any case, through the years every once in a while they'll come down--the record's around; I must have it someplace--with statements at conventions or other places, public statements that it's still their belief that they really are the organization and all jurisdictions rightfully belong to them and they are just being patient until these other organizations understand they can't get along by themselves and they'll come home to "mother." Well, I think that has irritated the organizations through the years. Now, I don't know if they really believe that. I can't say that they have done a whole lot about trying to bring it about, but they say it every once in a while, and it's pretty annoying.

I've had some participation in the Allied Printing Trades Council in Chicago, and I've also acted on the Board of Governors at the international level; they run things according to their lights whether we agree with them or not. They control the label, for example, more so than any other organization. And frequently we make it know, not only us, but other organizations, that we would like them to do what the majority thinks should be done. Maybe they will and sometimes they won't. The instances when they don't . . . we're never going to quite get along with these people. So that's some of it, I think.

But we never thought about merging with the ITU certainly as Photoengravers. The jurisdictional dispute was very clear, as far as we were concerned, and we would fight them on the basis of the issue. We did, and we never got to first base with them. But that was our feeling about them.

GIEBEL: What was the nature of their strength? They simply had enormous power within the places where they were organized?

DILLON: This dispute, of course, was centered in the newspapers and they invariably had 200 people where we had ten. You know, that kind of ratio almost all over. Newspaper management was not about to take any sides. They did take sides, but they were not about to be influenced by anything but the fact that those 200 people were there. They were difficult people to get along with anyway, and we weren't! (chuckle)

GIEBEL: The people who began to work with the camera in the newspaper, would htey have been paid the same rates they they would have been paid if they were members of the Photoengravers? Was there a differential involved that made the newspapers willing to cooperate with the ITU or was it just simply a question of the ITU's power?

DILLON: It was simply a question of power. Now, when I said photo-typesetting equipment, you know, it was a camera mechanism; but it wasn't the kind of camera we work with. I don't want to confuse you on that. It was a keyboard operation which was very comparable, of course, to the linotypes and other machines that they were using. There was merit in their position to that extent. They keyboard operation triggered a photo mechanism. But as far as wages were concerned, our best understanding was that they didn't get any more money for oeprating that; the difference between wages, between the two crafts was not great. It may have been five, seven, maybe even ten dollars occasionally, but really not great.

So it wasn't an economic consideration on the part of the employer. It was simply the fact that, number one, I must say that the ITU was on that situation quicker than we were.

Obviously as this thing was developed ITU was much more sensitive to it than we were, so they were prepared. They made it clear where they stood and what kind of problems the employers would have, so the employers simply went with the easiest way.

HOFFMAN: Who did you begin to think about merging with? That is, in Chicago, in this little group, Bill Hall and yourself and the secretary-treasurer?

DILLON: Well, I suppose that our records will show that we talked about mergers and better relations with the other crafts for many years; all of us did. I don't know if we really talked about merger. We certainly talked about better relationships. There's no question about that. Merger, I can't recall that there was every any discussion about merging with any of the other crafts until the merger with the Lithographers got into the picture. Now that happened, I would think, about 1955 . . . 1954. Golly, I suppose I should know that a little better. But keep in mind . . . no, it must have been later than that. I was on the international level at that time, but I was a representative and the officers didn't keep the representatives that well informed. The time I was in Chicago there was never any discussion about merger really, none that I can recall, with anybody. We did have a good relationship with the Lithographers, but not better and maybe not as good as with some of the other unions.

Merger began some time in the late 1950s as a result of an agreement among all the trades to get together and talk about some problems--the graphic arts unions. And this included the Newspaper Guild, as I recall, and the Lithographers, even though they were not part of the Allied Printing Trades Council and even though the Lithographers were not affiliated with the AFL-CIO. For some reason they all got together and had a meeting. Nothing came of that meeting in terms of . . . .

HOFFMAN: Was this the graphic arts unity meeting? In the Amalgamated newspaper, there was a meeting held in 1961 and it was described as, quote, "the graphic arts unity meeting."

DILLON: I believe it was. Anyway, whatever their purpose--I don't even know why they met--it never went any place, just like none of those meetings ever went any place. But out of that there was an exchange between the representatives of the Lithographers and the representatives of the Photoengravers that led to the beginning of merger discussions and eventual merger.

HOFFMAN: There's one question I wanted to ask you about merger. Whenever I think of the Photoengravers, I, as a historian, certainly think in terms of Matt Woll as being the most famous president that you had, who by

reason of his personality and character had a much stronger imprint on the AFL, certainly, than the numbers of the Photoengravers would have led you to guess that he might have. Because of that [he] must have put a very strong kind of AFL stamp on the international. Or, at least I'm guessing that perhaps he did.

DILLON: I think he did, yes.

HOFFMAN: There must have been at the international level a kind of strong AFL identification.

DILLON: Oh, very much so, very much so.

HOFFMAN: Was this a problem for some of you younger people coming out of Chicago, in terms of thinking about merger with Lithographers, who, after all, had at one time at least been a CIO union?

DILLON: I certainly wouldn't want to speak for anyone else on that. Again, I'm giving you an impression; it may not have been true, but when I became active in the union, kind of on a full-time basis and when I went into the international, I was a young man, comparatively. When I look at our organization, I was probably one of the youngest people who ever reached that level. Since then there's been many more. So my impressions really have to be my own impressions. I can't speak for any group of people. There were active people in the local; there were active people in the international, people who had progressive ideas, innovative thinking. But they weren't a group in terms of age. They just happened to be that kind of people.

So in answer to your question, it didn't pose a problem to me because one of the very first things that was said was that there's every reason to believe that if we work out this merger that we will be able to . . . the Lithographers were saying that they were willing to come back into the AFL and that they didn't feel there would be any obstruction to that. So, you know, it wasn't really a problem. Older members of the organization raised that question very quickly, just as you suspect, because of the AFL orientation. But the younger people just accepted the assurance that that was not going to be a problem. I suspect--I can't be sure--but I suspect that our international officers had consultations with the AFL people and were assured that if everybody was really honest and willing, there'd be no problem. So there was not problem. The die-hards, anti-merger obstructionists continued to use the argument through the years, but it was just one of the crutches.

HOFFMAN: Did [George] Meany play any kind of role in merger?

DILLON: No. No, I think he was kept aware of the activity, but aside from attending the first big dinner we had the day we merged in September of 1964, he didn't participate in any way, to the best of my knowledge.

GIEBEL: What factors did then contribute, outside factors? If it wasn't Meany, was it simply that the two organizations saw the eventual necessity of merger, or what were the conditions, in your mind, that really led to the merger finalization?

DILLON: Again, I'm from the Photoengravers' side, so I only remember history in terms of my relationship with that organization. But I'm inclined to think that President [Kenneth] Brown is probably entitled to the greatest credit for really making merger thinkable in terms of some effective follow-through. To what extent I'm not sure because I didn't know the man in those days. But I do think that the Photoengraving element was probably more susceptible to the idea than any other organization because, as I say, our shops were beginning to do some offset work, not in terms of changing their production system--they were still letterpress people--but nevertheless they were finding that offset work could be done in their shops and obviously were not unaware of the fact that offset was really rapidly growing and becoming the chief competitor of letterpress and competition was getting very, very stiff. I suppose there was some indication that our employers wanted to get into offset. Those employers who did begin to move into offset, of course, had to deal with the Lithographers Union if they wanted to deal with a union that could supply them with all the people they needed. If they were only going to make negatives, our own members could do that; Photoengravers could do that.

So I just feel that the force, and it was a kind of passive force, was simply that there was no reason to object to merger and there were some reasons why it might be a good idea. I think the initiative came from the Lithographers, but the response was really there waiting; and it was a very good response.

HOFFMAN: What was your relationship with Walter Risdon and Ed Nygaard?

DILLON: Not good! (laughter) I don't know, do you mean a personal relationship?

HOFFMAN: Well, no. I mean in terms of Chicago and in terms of the fact that they were the original people who met with the Lithographers, I believe. Right?

DILLON: Yessss. I didn't recall that Walter was, but I know Ed Nygaard was. My first word of a possible merger came when Ed Nygaard made what I thought at the time was a somewhat casual remark. I don't even know how

I happened to be there, but the Photoengravers Council was meeting in St. Louis. I guess Nygaard might have been a vice president by then, I'm not sure. He was a representative, then a vice president. I'm not sure whether he was a vice president at that moment. And I happened to be there for some reason, as a representative, and he made what I considered a somewhat casual remark that he'd met with [Leon] Wickersham, and I think he mentioned Donahue. I don't know if Don was there. He [Nygaard] indicated that they were talking about merger and seemed to be serious about it. I guess he was kind of trying to test reaction.

HOFFMAN: What was the reaction?

DILLON: The reaction was good in terms of the officers who would be most important in such an action. For myself, I might say, I had the most enthusiastic reaction. More so than anybody else there. I remember very well what I said and I've thought about it many times. I said, "Well, what are we waiting for?" I think there was that kind of enthusiasm among the other officers, although they didn't express it as . . . .

HOFFMAN: Why did you feel that way?

DILLON: Well, as I say, I had some acquaintance with the officers of the Chicago Lithographers local. I didn't know Lithographers anywhere else, but I had some acquaintance with them. I didn't have any details to go on, but I just had a feeling that they were a pretty progressive organization. They seemed to be sharp and relatively young people, really interested in what they were doing, and had activity going on. You know, they had their own building by that time and it gave you a feeling that they were going places and doing things.

HOFFMAN: They had the school at Chicago at that time, did they not?

DILLON: Right. I didn't know too much about those things, but I knew they were there. Frankly, by this time, and now we're talking about the 1960s, I guess, I'd had two or three years at the international level in the Midwest area as international representative, bargaining, grievances, and so forth, and I was much more familiar with the problems that were involved. We had begun to see a decline in our membership, in employment, and things like that. It was very clear to me that offset was not only a great competitive factor, but I guess I was beginning to think in terms that it was going to be the dominant printing process. I don't think I was prepared to admit that too soon, but by that time it was going to be pretty important.

HOFFMAN: Well, that's what I was really going to ask you. Did you see yourself in Chicago in a kind of restricted job market as far as letterpress was concerned, but that things were opening up in offset?

DILLON: Yes, but not so much. By this time I'm not in Chicago anymore; I was out in the field. But I'm still a member of Chicago. I know everybody very well; I know something about their situation. But they were just respresentative of what was going on all over.

HOFFMAN: So you would agree with that statement then?

DILLON: Oh, yes. Yes, yes. Competition. If you can't beat them, join them, that type of thing, you know. But it wasn't simply a feeling of trying to survive. I just felt there were some great advantages here. It never occurred to me that we might not survive if we didn't merge, nothing like that. But it seemed to be an opportunity to do many things. All of this was strengthened as we went along.

I guess I need to give you a little bit of the immediate history of that time so you understand what I'm saying. I went with the international in 1957. These discussions began, I guess, around the late 1950s or early 1960s, I don't know exactly. I was a representative and we only knew what they told us. However, Bill Hall was on the council by that time and Bill Hall and I continued our very close relationship. So I was somewhat informed, and Bill would frequently ask my views on things. I was a little informed.

Then our New York president retired and Ed Nygaard became president of the New York Local. I think he probably was a member of the Council at the time these discussions took place. He was very close to Bill Connell, who was still president, and Walter Risdon. In 1963 the merger had gone pretty well down the road by that time. Ed Nygaard died and I was appointed to fill his job until the next election, when I was elected. So I became really involved with merger at that point in time. Of course, a great deal of the work had been done beforehand. Nor did I ever become a part of the real sub-committee that was doing the work. That sub-committee had already been established and certainly they weren't taking somebody off and putting me on at that point. But I really began to know more about merger. Now, that's all by way of saying that from that point on, being closer to it and spending more time with the Lithographers and learning more about their organization, everything I learned reinforced what I had felt were the propsects from the very first. I began to understand things like their research department, you know. During the years I was with the international that's the sort of thing I was trying to do all by myself because we didn't have any such thing and I believed in it. I didn't see how I could represent an area of some forty locals and thirty jurisdictional cities without having the kind of information they had all the time. So I was pretty impressed.

GIEBEL: Well, how can you explain the differences? Here you had been in business almost the same period of time; you're comparable in terms of size although they seem to have a potential to grow further than you did. Now how come their organization seemed to be so equipped and vital and yours seemed to be at least more of a problem?

DILLON: Well, despite the fact that it's a very old craft--lithography--I think it really didn't come of age until after the war. My understanding is that during the war they developed techniques because of the pressure and the emergency situation of the war. They developed things that, when they were translated into the commercial industry, it just went wild. With the result that the whole organization was loaded with young people. Talking about their relative ages, which has come through constantly through the years, our problems with our pension and retirement funds as Photoengravers was because we're so old. Well, they didn't have that. They had young people, who, I think, were inclined to support those kinds of aggressive programs. We believed in them, but we really weren't that big, you know. I think our high level membership was about 18,000 of which probably two or three thousand were retied.

HOFFMAN: That's what I was going to ask you. Were you really comparable in size?

DILLON: No!

HOFFMAN: At this point you weren't?

DILLON: No. They had about 40,000 members before their New York Local seceded. In terms of preparatory workers, we were about the same. But then they had all their trust people on top of that.

So we believed in those things. And again, Bill Hall, moving into the international presidency, represented a new and forceful approach to everything, although I wouldn't say that he understood everything he wanted to do. He certainly was prepared to do anything that was new and innovative and exciting and helpful. He did the best he could to persuade members to support those things financially. But, after all, it was going to take a long time. Everything that the Lithographers had in one way or another established, I suppose, in a period of ten or fifteen years, were things that we were well aware of. We were well aware of the need of it and things we wanted to do. But we simply had not build a structure that could support that.

END OF INTERVIEW

HENRY J. DILLON

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