Interview with Mel Galbraith

August 19, 1974

By Greg Geibel

# INTRODUCTION

Born in Nebraska in 1928, Mel Galbraith's introduction to the lithography trade was in the Navy in 1946, working in a print shop aboard an aircraft carrier, and later in 1952 training young people in a sub-tender print shop.

Out of the service Galbraith served as an apprentice on a multilith press in Minneapolis. He joined Local 10 of the Amalgamated Lithographers Association and became shop steward in 1954, from which position he also became involved in the organizing committee of his local and as chairman of the COPE (Committee on Political Education) Committee. He talks about organizing in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area in the fifties and jurisdictional problems with the Printing Pressmen. He also recalls the nature of his responsibilities as a member of the COPE Committee and his own involvement in politics on a state and national level.

In 1960 Galbraith moved to become the full-time president of the ALA local in Des Moines, Iowa, which was under the International Subsidy Program. He describes the International Subsidy Program and tells what effect it has had on the training of leadership within the union. Galbraith's new position brought him in closer contact with the internal politics of his International union.

In 1961 Galbraith was appointed international representative to cover midwestern areas, and he resigned his position as local president. He discusses the role of an international representative, especially in the area of negotiations and also in the field of organizing, using as a case study the difficulties he had in carving out a litho unit in the Lord Baltimore Press plant in Clinton, Iowa. He describes his experiences with conglomerate-type negotiations as the representative assigned in dealing with American Standard Corporation in geographically dispersed areas and with Western Publishing, especially in Racine, Wisconsin, Hannibal, Missouri, and Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1970. He stresses the pro's and con's of this coordinated approach to negotiating contracts and reflects on the changing patterns of negotiations within the printing industry.

Galbraith offers his thoughts on the question of merger, recalling his position in regard to merger with the Photoengravers Union and his experience with Photoengravers as an international representative shortly after merger in 1964. He looks at conditions as they existed in Cincinnati prior to the merger of the Photoengravers and the Lithographers locals and pinpoints the questions that arise when locals talk about merger. He also

discusses the merger with the Bookbinders in 1972, the events preceding it, the issues involved, and his ability to service Bookbinders, and he offers an opinion on merger in the future with other unions.

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GALBRAITH: My name is Melford L. Galbraith. Place of birth, Brocksburg, Nebraska in 1928, February 26.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, Mel, I gather that you were introduced to the trade union movement at an early age; your dad was a unionist.

GALBRAITH: Yes, my father had a union background from his early days of working in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: And who did he work for?

GALBRAITH: Saw mills.

INTERVIEWER: So what union was he involved with then?

GALBRAITH: I imagine the ones that dealt with Ganst-Weyerhauser. I don't specifically recall him ever saying which specific union.

INTERVIEWER: What were your early memories of his experience with work in Weyerhauser and saw mills?

GALBRAITH: Well, I can't specifically remember the instances. I was a little bit young at that time. But that was in the days when they would arrest them and put them in jail, but they couldn't afford to keep them in jail so they'd have to let them out and they'd again go back and clear the saw mills or wherever they were working, of the people, the replacements, the scabs they had hired and get arrested again. In was a continual thing. I recall my father and my uncle talking many times about this.

INTERVIEWER: Was your dad living away from home in those days?

GALBRAITH: Off and on, yes. He'd, at that time, he was living in Rapid City and so was the family.

INTERVIEWER: How many other children in your family?

GALBRAITH: I have three brothers and one sister.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and are you the oldest?

GALBRAITH: Yes, I am.

INTERVIEWER: I guess you first make your acquaintance with the trade in 1946, while in the Navy. Do you want to describe the circumstances surrounding your first introduction into the trade?

GALBRAITH: Yes. I had taken one year of training which was basically letterpress at that time in high school and while aboard the ship they assigned me to the print shop aboard the aircraft carrier and that's what I continued to do during that first term in the service.

INTERVIEWER: What were conditions like on an aircraft carrier, in the printing end?

GALBRAITH: Well, we had regular offset equipment on there, camera and platemaking equipment and one small offset press, a 14 x 20 Webendorfer. You had to do your work predominantly when you were not on rough seas. You could do it on just regular rolling seas because everything was built that way. But basically you were much better off to do any printing when the seas were a little calmer.

INTERVIEWER: Who else was in your unit? Were some of these people members of the union, or were these people all people like yourself, people that they brought in and trained during the war period?

GALBRAITH: When I came there, the point system was catching

up to all the oldtimers and they had transferred off. That's why they were looking for people with any type of experience. I had had no litho experience in school, so for me it was a learn-out-of-the-book thing and trial-and-error method. Later on we did get an experienced man in there, and that helped out quite a bit; but by that time we were being able to do offset printing in some sort of a fashion. Certainly not anywhere near what commercial production was.

INTERVIEWER: So you spent a year on ship?

GALBRAITH: I spent just about two years. It was late '47 when I was discharged.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do following discharge?

GALBRAITH: Following discharge I didn't think that I would care to take that trade up, so I took a job under the G. I. Bill of Rights as a sign-writer. I continued on in that job until I was recalled for the Korean War in 1952, the early part of 1952.

INTERVIEWER: You liked to see your work in bigger print than working on an offset press, huh?

GALBRAITH: Well, I guess I was young and foolish and didn't know what I was doing. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: So 1951 or '52, you were recalled?

GALBRAITH: In '52 I was recalled in the first part of the year and I spent another nineteen months. All this time was spent aboard a sub-tender, in the print shop, which, for the most part I was in charge of the printing aboard that ship.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a one person operation, or did you have somebody else working with you?

GALBRAITH: They had between eighteen and twenty-four people working in the shop.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so it was quite a good-sized shop.

GALBRAITH: It was not that big, but that's the amount of people they had. The young people who went to school either in Memphis or D.C. would come out there for sea training aboard ship, and I guess they just had an abundance of them. The shop really wasn't that big, and one of the first things I did was change it around to a three-shift operation, and it was more feasible with five, or six, or seven people on a shift.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So at this point you were getting people who were trained on land, and this was their first ship experience?

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And you would break them in to operations aboard ship, and then they would get transferred to some other. . . . ?

GALBRAITH: Yes, they would then be transferred to some other fleet area. They would normally stay from twelve to sixteen weeks aboard ship and then be transferred.

INTERVIEWER: Then you served nineteen months in this capacity?

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Discharged again. Now at this point did you decide to stick with the trade?

GALBRAITH: Yes, at this point I decided I would stay with the litho trade. When I got home, I was going to go look for a job; but my father said that was the wrong way to do it, that I should go to the union office. So I went out to the Amalgamated Lithographers Union office and met Mr. Ed. Donahue, and subsequently he got me a job in the trade. I've been with it ever since.

INTERVIEWER: So this is in 1952. . .

GALBRAITH: No, this is. . . .it had to be. . .

INTERVIEWER: 1954.

GALBRAITH: No, it wasn't. I went in in '52 and got out in the latter part of '53. I'm sorry. . .

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so 1953 you go to the union hall and you meet Ed Donahue, and you tell him that you served two different stints in the service working on litho machines, even training people. And what does he say--that he's going to give you a journeyman's card?

GALBRAITH: No. No. The union didn't recognize any service trade, and I wasn't really that concerned. He got me a job operating a multilith press in one of the contract shops in Minneapolis, and it didn't take me very long to find out that I had an awful lot to learn, to do commercial printing.

INTERVIEWER: So you started as an apprentice running a multilith press?

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And how many years do you serve as an apprentice?

GALBRAITH: Four years.

INTERVIEWER: What are your early remembrances of your local in Minneapolis? What number was that?

GALBRAITH: That was Local #10 of the Amalgamated Lithographers. Well, I think, basically, early memories was. . . well, I don't recall too much as far as becoming involved in the first couple of years. Along about 1954, '55, I became interested in the shop steward job because I didn't feel the steward was doing a proper job. I ran for that job and from then on became very active.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so '54 you run for shop steward, and how does one run for shop steward in the ALA [Amalgamated Lithographers of America]? Do you notify. . .

GALBRAITH: Each shop holds its own election in the first part of the year, and those who want to run merely let the rest of the people know they want to run.

INTERVIEWER: You have to go around. . .it isn't a question of going someplace and getting on a ballot; you have to go around and kind of. . .

GALBRAITH: You have to let all the people in your unit know that you're interested in it and will run for it. The people I worked with felt they wanted me to be the shop steward; we had some problems in the shop with label work where the employer had had it done in non-union shops and expected us to do that work. And at that time the law was such that we didn't have to touch that work. Because of this and my activity here, we generated enough votes. . . as a matter of fact, I don't think the other gentleman even ran then. Finally, when it came down to it, they elected me; and I was a shop steward for the rest of the time I was in the plant.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a large plant at the time?

GALBRAITH: No. No, it wasn't. We had about ten or twelve lithographers in the plant in total.

INTERVIEWER: There were other locals present at the plant?

GALBRAITH: Yes, we had the Teamsters Union representing the receiving department, the Bookbinders in the bindery, the Typographical Union and the Printing Pressmen in the letterpress side.

INTERVIEWER: So a full representation of other unions in the printing industry. . .

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was this generally the case with Minnesota?

GALBRAITH: Yes, this was generally the case with all the shops in the Twin Cities.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you shop steward?

GALBRAITH: I left Lund Press. . .

INTERVIEWER: L-U-N-G?

GALBRAITH: L-U-N-D, Lund Press in Minneapolis, in the latter part of 1958 or the first part of 1959.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so four years, and what were your responsibilities as shop steward?

GALBRAITH: Well, your responsibilities were to make sure the contract was kept up, that it was abided by by the members and the company, that there was no erosion of the conditions negotiated and to act as the intermediary between the membership and the local office. With the local we had monthly meetings where all the shop stewards would get together and President Donahue and Vice President [Heber J.] Stephens would go through the contract and explain it. We would also have our say in coming negotiations during those periods of time, what we felt might be needed in the coming negotiations. From that activity you also got involved in other activities of the union. I was on the Organizing Committee in the local and also on the COPE [Committee on Political Education], and was chairman of the COPE Committee.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, maybe you can describe some of your participation on both of those committees. What was organizing like in Minneapolis in those days?

GALBRAITH: I'd say organizing in Minneapolis-St. Paul and in that area was pretty much like it is today--large metropolitan area where a great majority of the lithographers belong to our union. I think we probably had an advantage of where people came to the union to see what they had to do to get organized. My first

experience was working with Stephens, Heber Stephens, who was vice-president of the local at that time. We went through a course on organizing, went to school under Vice-President [Jack] Wallace at that time. Contacts were fairly easy to come by because in a metropolitan area such as that people were seeking out the union.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a traditional printing center located in Minneapolis-St. Paul?

GALBRAITH: Yes. Minneapolis-St. Paul is, I think, the third or fourth largest printing center in the United States. It's right up there; it's one of the real big areas for printing.

INTERVIEWER: So you had a good supply of potential members and a good reputation and it was relatively easy to organize in Minneapolis-St. Paul in those days?

GALBRAITH: Yes. And, you know, at that time the local had two full-time officers and some office girls. Depending upon the rush of negotiations and the press of grievances, it was just about. . .as much as time would allow. . .you certainly could do as much organizing as you wanted.

INTERVIEWER: What was attractive to potential members? Were different things attractive or were the wage rates attractive, or the security or the potential employment elsewhere? What were the kinds of things that members responded to in the late fifties?

GALBRAITH: Through the early fifties and late fifties a tremendous change-over from letterpress to litho-printing created many jobs. It also boomed the Amalgamated Lithographers. We did have good contracts. Our contracts did exceed the other printing industries, first with the thirty-five hour workweek, and the first in many of those areas of reaching agreement with employers on things that other unions did not have. And it became well known, well advertised, and it was just a matter, in the printing industry, with the exception of some shops, who went into offset who already had letterpress contracts--I think about four or five of them in the Twin-Cities--that if there was non-union people,

they looked to the Amalgamated Lithographers. And in those days we did do a lot of advertising also, advertising the Amalgamated Lithographers.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have jurisdictional problems in those days with photoengraving shops moving into the area of lithography preparation?

GALBRAITH: In those days, in the fifties, I don't recall jurisdictional problems with the Photoengravers. The only ones I can recall in my experience would be with the Printing Pressmen's Union.

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk a little bit about those kinds of jurisdictional problems? What were they?

GALBRAITH: Well, the real problem was that the Printing pressmen at first didn't want to have anything to do with litho, and finally they changed their position; and where there was no litho they would write into their contract the jurisdiction of the litho. Unfortunately, when the litho did come into these plants, they put it in at a much lower wage rate and working conditions, which created a problem for employers on the basis of competition. We were able to pretty much over-go this on the basis that, when they did put in litho, they normally transferred letterpressmen to that, rather than train lithographers, so that their production and quality did hurt. It took them a number of years to get up to the standard of the Amalgamated shops.

INTERVIEWER: Let me just try and summarize that. Printing Pressmen had clauses in their contracts that covered the introduction of lithography; and when an employer went to lithography, printing pressmen attempted to man those new presses. While they were able to do that at a lower rate, what suffered was the type of work, the quality of work. . .

GALBRAITH: Quality and production. . .

INTERVIEWER: Quality and production. Was this generally known by employers? Was that a price that some wanted to pay and others decided to ignore the Printing Pressman contract and go to Lithographers?

GALBRAITH: I think if the employer was a non-union employer, although he would rather stay non-union, if he had his choice, he would rather have a contract with the Amalgamated on the basis of being able to get experienced help. If he already had a contract, then he had no place to go. If he had a letterpress contract and then agreed to that litho coverage under the Printing Pressmen, he was pretty well stuck with it. But most employers who were non-union probably would like to stay non-union; but if they had to have a union, they wanted one that could furnish them with experienced help. And that carried over even into the sixties.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned also that you served on the COPE Committee in addition to the Organizing Committee. What was COPE like? I know Ed Donahue is very interested in political concerns now with the International and as a COPE representative. At that level was he active with COPE, locally?

GALBRAITH: Ed was not only active in COPE; he was active in politics on every level, from the Governor on down--senators, Senator [Hubert] Humphrey, [Walter] Mondale, all of them in this sort of politics. As far as the COPE Committee, our responsibility was to raise funds. We did that not only through the national COPE, but we had our own local programs in the Local #10 to raise money. We would hear the candidates at union meetings and then make recommendations to the membership on what we should donate to the local Minnesota candidates. This was in addition to that which we raised for the national COPE.

INTERVIEWER: You had an interesting introduction to politics then working with Donahue. Minnesota is a very interesting state in terms of the labor movement's participation in the Democratic Party. You really come out of a real strong background then.

GALBRAITH: Yes. Right. Yes. Many, many of Humphrey's bean feeds. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Were members receptive or was this something that local leaders attempted to get the ball rolling? Or was this something that you found the rank and file was generally supportive of?

GALBRAITH: In Minnesota, especially St. Paul and Minneapolis, working people are generally politically motivated, I find, from experience in working in other states, much more than in a number of the states that I've worked in.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any easy explanation for this?

GALBRAITH: I would imagine it was history, going back to Floyd Olson, who, in his days, in the thirties, was a Socialist--probably be a conservative Republican in this day and age. (laughter) There also is a great history in Minnesota on the Teamsters' strike of '34, where in 1934 Governor Olson called out the National Guard to protect the pickets from the Minneapolis Police Department. So from some violent problems there and the politics of the DFL, [Democratic Farmer Labor] Socialist Party I guess some people called it, I think it evolved that the working people up there in the early forties were much more liberal than in many other areas. And the Twin-Cities is a strong labor town, both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

INTERVIEWER: So did you attempt to get people in your shop actually involved in campaigns or was it simply enough at that level to get some money contributed to campaign funds and then the candidates would attempt to put together their own organization? Or did you actually try to help form organizations for candidates?

GALBRAITH: Not as far as a single shop; a number of us worked on the COPE Committee; some were very active on the local levels and for candidates. Others of us were more concerned on a larger level, such as the metropolitan area, Minnesota politics and national politics. I, myself, never worked in the precincts or the wards, but many of the COPE members did.

INTERVIEWER: Before we leave the fifties, I want to just ask a question. To what extent were you aware of International internal political questions that were going on during this period with [John] Blackburn and [George] Canary and then finally Ken Brown's presidency? But during this period were you aware of Canary's presidency, and if so, to what degree?

GALBRAITH: Yes. I was aware to the degree that I was informed by my local officers. I was aware a little beyond that because in those days Donahue was a young man who thought a great deal of the attorney, Ben Robinson. Ben Robinson had been in our local for a couple of functions and had spoken, and I was aware of at least his side of the story at that point; in addition to that, you know, we learned stuff from union meetings and some correspondence from the International Union.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You would get the journal or the magazine, and at meetings you would hear people who were International representatives or other officers come into Minneapolis, and you were influenced by President Donahue, who you had a strong relationship with. So you were reasonably well-informed, at this point, I guess, about what was happening on the International level.

GALBRAITH: Yes. Especially in relation to how President Donahue felt.

INTERVIEWER: Was he influential for most of the rank-and-file members at that time? Did they respect his opinions on these questions?

GALBRAITH: Probably more so than any other local that I can think of at the present time. He was very influential with the rank-and-file, well-liked. As in any organization, probably, you've always got that two or three percent, but basically he was well-respected and even by those who disagreed with his judgement; but he was respected by those people.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe a little bit in some detail what a local meeting was like. The ALA is viewed as having had a strong presidency, as contrasted to the Photoengravers' weak presidency, but strong committees. Can you describe a local meeting in those days? What was the presidency like in Minneapolis?

GALBRAITH: Well. . . the presidency, I think. . .

INTERVIEWER: Let me be specific. Was Donahue able to take a

leadership position that would allow him to go out in front of the membership on some questions, areas that he felt he needed to go out in front, and then go back to the membership and help them to see the importance of these decisions. It's rumored, or at least I understand that to be one of the reasons that many members, old ALA members, explained the ability of that organization to function so well in terms of anticipating problems.

GALBRAITH: Well, you just couldn't really just say the membership because on any question that came before the membership, unless it came from the floor, Donahue would meet with his Executive Board and be strong with his Executive Board in leadership and reasoning why; and normally then, when the Executive Board minutes were read, the Executive Board was in tune with his ideas and his thinking, and if they changed it or modified it, at least they came before the membership with a unified position. He was and still is an excellent speaker and was able to get his points across to the membership.

INTERVIEWER: In 1960 you get an opportunity to move from Minneapolis and move to Iowa. Do you want to describe a little bit the background of how that opening occurred and how you became aware of it?

GALBRAITH: That was in late 1959. The International representative for the area was James O'Neill. He was servicing the Moline, Des Moines, Midwest area, and the Des Moines Local membership down there was looking for a new full-time president, which was under the International Subsidy Program. A trip down there and another trip along with President Donahue, the Des Moines Local elected me to become their full-time president effective February 1 of 1960.

INTERVIEWER: Can you, just before we go on further with that, describe a little bit about this International Subsidy Program. What did that entail?

GALBRAITH: At that point in time, small locals, if they would vote to raise their dues, and I think the figure at that point was $2 per member toward paying the full-time president's salary, then the International would pick up the difference so that the small

local would be able to have a full-time president. The Des Moines Local had already voted in the subsidy. They were not enchanted, I guess, with the man who was there, and he subsequently resigned; and this left it open. They wanted to continue to have a full-time officer, so they started looking elsewhere. They felt they ought to have somebody from the outside of the Iowa area who could deal with their employers, I guess, basically on the basis that they knew them too well and they wanted experience from a larger local.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so is this a pattern that you have become aware of happening elsewhere? The ALA has had a reputation of grooming people with management skills, management of locals and so forth. They were quick to identify an individual's talent, and they tried to nurture that talent. Is that something that has happened elsewhere?

GALBRAITH: Yes, that. . .from Lincoln, Nebraska, our Director of Organizing came out of Lincoln, Nebraska. He went to the Subsidy Program in Texas and subsequently on to the International. He's now the Director of Organizing. Jim Roof came out of Des Moines as my secretary-treasurer when I was a local president and subsequently to Denver, and now he's an International organizer on the staff.

INTERVIEWER: Did it matter in those days, Mel, whether someone was identified with a political faction within the organization or was that kind of an irrelevant criteria for selection?

GALBRAITH: Well, I think it was, at least to my knowledge, more or less irrelevant. I know that one of these gentlement had a very strong conservative background, and we had many discussions between the two of us; today, you'd never know that he'd come from a conservative background. I think at that time we were more concerned with the needs of the people and doing a job for the organization, and by doing that job, certainly then you find out where your political bread is buttered on.

INTERVIEWER: What about the internal political questions? There was a split between New York and Chicago, and was it important during this period to be identified with either Chicago or New York, or could you remain somewhat independent of that while in Iowa?

GALBRAITH: Well, taking over as a full-time president in February of 1960, Ken Brown was already the International president. I think in Iowa, there was a very strong leaning towards the Twin City Local. However, in my term of office in Des Moines as a local president, we got along very good with Chicago, had great cooperation with them, and from a standpoint of internal politics, we were not bothered one way or the other on it up to this point. I think it started during the convention in 1961 in Miami Beach when there, as a local president, I became quite a bit aware of it. Much more so than. . . I was aware of it prior to that, but did not really become that involved.

INTERVIEWER: Was this your first convention?

GALBRAITH: Yes, it was.

INTERVIEWER: So to simply be introduced to an International convention was to be introduced to these types of questions. At the local level they weren't really manifest.

GALBRAITH: No, they were not at that point. I'm sure, if we had to take a position prior to a convention, that the membership would have wanted a recommendation and would have taken a position. But at this time going to that convention, it was no great thing as far as the local membership was at that point. This also was the convention I was asked to come early, and at that convention I was nominated to the position as International representative.

INTERVIEWER: So you knew about this in advance and you went down to Florida and you were nominated. How does that happen? Were you interviewed down there by people you had not met before?

GALBRAITH: Well, I had met most all of the International Council on trips to New York as a Subsidy officer, and at conferences. I knew them as persons and where they were from. Probably not that well. President Brown recommended me to be International representative, and at the International Council meeting I was called in and asked a few questions and subsequently appointed as an International rep at that Council meeting. You might be interested to know at this point that both President [Edward]

Swayduck of the New York Local and President [Harry] Spohnholtz of the Chicago Local were on the Executive Board.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of questions would a president ask a candidate for a representative job? What were the kinds of concerns that a president had in those days?

GALBRAITH: Well, I think his greatest concern at that point was not a political thing as far as International reps were concerned. I think he had probably already gone over most of my qualifications. He summarized them and then asked anybody if they had any questions. To the best of my knowledge they were limited questions and none of them dealt with politics. It was more or less "We understand you've been doing a good job" and that type of thing, you know. But politics did not enter whatsoever as far as I'm concerned to my appointment as an International rep.

INTERVIEWER: Was anybody honest with you about the strains on your family of being an International rep in terms of the time and travel required?

GALBRAITH: I think almost all the reps would have warned you what the strains were, but I already knew since Jim O'Neill and I had been good friends for a number of years. We'd worked together in the shop in Minneapolis; he went to an International rep; I went into the union following him, and one other man out of that shop also went into full-time union work.

INTERVIEWER: What shop was this?

GALBRAITH: This was Lund Press where I was the shop chairman.

INTERVIEWER: Now you then went back to Iowa as a primary area that you covered as a representative, or were you given another assignment?

GALBRAITH: I was appointed, effective October 1--this was in the first part of September that the convention was--I went back to Iowa and resigned and a new local president was elected and my areas of responsibility were expanded. Not just Iowa, but into midwestern areas--Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska,

Illinois, Wisconsin.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of things did a rep do, a new rep? Did you take over that position without real training or did you travel with someone?

GALBRAITH: I spent a few days with Harvey Lovin in South Bend, Indiana on some organizing. Other than getting assistance whenever I desired it, you pretty much just took over; and if you had questions you called and asked, or you had somebody come in and give you a helping hand. But the primary responsibility at that point was negotiations. We had a number of them going when I was first appointed, and I was pretty busy with negotiations there for awhile. When that slacked off, then we got into organizing around the area; and it's been going pretty much that same way. It should be a lot more organizing and a little less negotiating. But one of the problems with that is you've got members that you've got to take care of.

INTERVIEWER: So when you get called in to negotiations, do you act as the coordinator of the negotiations for area-wide agreements or just what is your role in negotiations?

GALBRIATH: Well, depending on what type of negotiations; if it's city-wide agreement, yes, you go in and represent the International. You're more or less the spokesman working with the locals--we say we're assisting them and I guess that's what it is--we try to guide them. In this area here, there are many, many negotiations that are only single shop negotiations. With the small locals you really become the negotiator. They look for you to do the total job for them in many of the areas where there are not full-time officers.

INTERVIEWER: Is it necessary for you during your first round of negotiations or first contact with the smaller locals to establish a good relationship? I mean, what were the kinds of things that you could do to help convince them that you were going to do the best job for them locally? What kinds of things did you have to do?

GALBRAITH: I don't know if it's kinds of things. What we try to do is assist them in putting together their

contract proposals, to give them guidance on where they should be going, what their relative position is in the industry so that competitively they're not hurting other cities within the area, the market-place that they compete in. I think the only way they find this out is by the actual process. I don't know what you do to sell them. You help them get their proposal together, you help them negotiate, and I guess you're judged by the results.

INTERVIEWER: Did you walk into any particular difficult negotiations or are they all pretty difficult in one way or another?

GALBRAITH: Well, in the area when I was first a rep where I serviced, most of those were the smaller locals. And in the smaller locals, if Chicago settled for whatever they settled and the Twin-Cities, we could always take the position that we not only had to have that, but more, because we were way behind. So it was not quite the same as negotiating in the big city. We did get good settlements all the way down the line, by and large, and it was on the basis that they were quite a bit behind the metropolitan locals. It gave you a good argument because air travel was coming in heavier and heavier and they could compete with Chicago; they could compete with the Twin-Cities. So you had some very logical arguments why their wage increases should be much larger than the metropolitan areas.

INTERVIEWER: Were you involved with the Lord Baltimore Press during this period?

GALBRAITH: Lord Baltimore Press was one of my first assignments as far as organizing. We had felt they had a sweetheart contract; the Printing Pressmen, the Specialty Division put up a picket sign there and got recognition. This was a long and involved process, and we did finally become the bargaining agent for that plant in Clinton, Iowa.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe that just a little bit more. Maybe we can just use this as a case study. What do you mean by the term "sweetheart" contract with the Printing Pressmen? Was this what you expected to find in the industry at this time?

GALBRAITH: Well, I had enough knowledge at this point that I would have expected them to do things like that.

International Representative O'Neill and Vice President Wallace had both worked with the people in the litho unit at Lord Baltimore in Clinton, Iowa for a number of years, and we were about at that point of where we would have the strength to win an election there. And all of a sudden the picket lines appeared, and the company granted recognition to the Specialty Workers of the Printing Pressmen.

INTERVIEWER: To cover the whole plant. . .

GALBRAITH: To cover the whole plant. They had previously covered the balance, but they had never been able to crack that litho unit out. Now they cracked the litho unit, and we filed charges. This went on for, oh. . . a great length of time. We even got the president of the Specialty Workers Union to admit--he had our key man fired out of the plant, a five-color pressman--and this finally evolved to where the president, the former president of the Specialty Local, in a signed statement to the National Labor Relations Board said that, yes, he had been involved with rigging charges so that they could fire our key man. And even this did not overturn the recognition of the Specialties for that unit. When the contract ran out, we subsequently had an election there; we won that election and then all the way up to the circuit court before we could get them to the bargaining table. Finally we won a contract in that plant.

INTERVIEWER: The contract ran out for the people in the litho section? And you carved out that section?

GALBRAITH: Yes. We carved that unit out.

INTERVIEWER: What happens is that as long as they have a contract, you are prevented from going in and carving out; but when a contract expires. . . ?

GALBRAITH: Well, there is a period of time, which has varied in the past, which is presently 60 - 90 days prior to the expiration when you can file for that unit and carve that unit out or after the contract expires, provided they haven't signed a new contract. You can carve that unit out. That's what we did. We had the hearings; we carved the unit out; we had the election, and we won it.

INTERVIEWER: And in those days the NLRB looked favorably upon carving out units.

GALBRAITH: More favorably than they do today.

INTERVIEWER: If we can go back slightly to the question of Robinson, Donahue, and Brown, were you involved, or did you know of through Ed Donahue's involvement, the selection of Ken Brown, his coming into office? Was Donahue involved with Brown's selection?

GALBRAITH: Being on the International Council, I would assume that he was involved. I don't recall too many questions. At that time I felt that from my knowledge it was between Ken Brown and Ed Donahue, at that point. I think anybody could reason why Ken Brown was chosen by the majority of the International Council at that point. . . and for good reason.

INTERVIEWER: 1963 was your second convention.

GALBRAITH: Yés.

INTERVIEWER: This is the convention in Minneapolis. Is that. . .

GALBRAITH: I think the convention in Minneapolis. . .I think first we had one in Montreal.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, oh, yes. The Montreal Convention. You attended that, this time as an International representative?

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What are your memories of this convention?

GALBRAITH: This was the issue of merger with the Photoengravers. As a new rep, of course, I had my assignments there. I was wooed by the New York local to go to their position, as well as by Jim O'Neill, who already had stated where he was at with that. I was wooed by Robinson, by Swayduck, the whole group to go to their side of the merger issue. However, after discussions with all the people I knew, including Ed Donahue and the representatives to whom I now had become known, I was very anti-against any moving toward that. We had been involved in merger talks. I believed in merger; I believed in Ken Brown's philosophy; and even though I was wooed, I was. . . had

no inclination to move with them.

INTERVIEWER: On what issues could they try to woo you? What was their position in regard to merger?

(End of Tape One, side One)

GALBRAITH: (mid-sentence) . . . he would probably wreck our historic unit. Ben Robinson had a great deal to do in establishing the lithographic unit. But all their arguments seemed to be kind of menial when you looked at the total problem in the printing trades and also when you looked at the fact that what they were really trying to protect was that they be the dominant force in a union--meaning New York, Robinson and Swayduck. And you had to know those people and be in New York and see them operate to understand this. So that my feeling was that the words they mouthed were nowhere near what they really wanted. The president of New York, and his attorney, wanted to run the organization and that I couldn't buy under any circumstances because I felt Ken Brown was doing a very, very good job.

INTERVIEWER: Mel, you were saying the logic of merger seemed to weigh more heavily in your mind than the arguments presented against merger. Can you describe for us a little bit your view of the Photoengravers and why you felt that the merger made some sense for the ALA?

GALBRAITH: Well, by this time. . .you asked me earlier if I'd been aware of any jurisdictional problems between the Engravers and the Lithographers. As an International rep I had run into a couple. It made a lot of sense on the basis that they did get into some of the litho-prep work. It also made sense that in an industry where segmented unions, representing each craft in the printing industry, that we as an organization have control over the preparatory end of both the letterpress and the litho production in the plant. Merger here in the commercial field meant strengthwise that you not only in our union could control the flow of work on both the letterpress and the litho side. If a shop had a letterpress in there, prior to merger, the letterpress could do the work if the lithographers struck; if they wanted to switch it over to letterpress, they then could run a flow of work through there. It seemed to me that would be a good first step in a total merger of a union because that now took a dominant union and gave them control over the preparatory end of both letterpress and litho. Subsequently we merged with the Bookbinders, which

now has control of the binding end of the finishing. So we're now in a much better position as a union for strength; we're now in a much better position for our membership, and I think in a much better position as far as the employers being able to. . . in other words, kind of reverse it. We now are the dominant one that controls either way, and the other unions, of course, are sliding downhill because they have not progressed as we have in this area.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have contact with the Photoengravers before the merger?

GALBRAITH: Yes, I did.

INTERVIEWER: What was your impression of a Photoengraver as a unionist?

GALBRAITH: My impression was that the Photoengravers were much stronger trade unionists than the average of the Amalgamated Lithographers. We had grown in leaps and bounds, probably a younger group, concerned with our growth and our contracts, and probably a little short on good old-fashioned trade unionism. The biggest impression I had from the Photoengravers was, not only from their International people, but from their local officers and committee people who I met during the process of merger, was the tremendous trade unionist attitude they had. I felt that would be a great plus for our membership--to get a little bit of that trade unionist attitude that the Photoengravers did have.

INTERVIEWER: As a representative, were you, following the merger, given any responsibilities for covering some of the Photoengraver locals?

GALBRAITH: Yes, almost immediately. Henry Dillon, who was a representative in the same area for the Photoengravers that I covered for the Amalgamated Lithographers, was elected to the vice presidency. So almost immediately I began negotiations for the Engravers in the midwest area.

INTERVIEWER: This would be interesting, then. The Photoengravers had always considered themselves to be, as you mentioned, strong unionists, but also elite in their craft. Now right after the merger, in comes an ALA representative. Did you feel you were on trial? Or was this just another negotiation for you?

GALBRAITH: No, I didn't feel I was on trial. I think maybe the economic conditions at that point in time, which was 1964, was on the upswing for the commercial engravers, with a larger financial base behind them. I think we were able to negotiate much better contracts. It was not then merely, or strictly, because of the merger. [It was] the economic conditions at that time and everything else. But certainly at that point in time the contracts for the Engravers started going on an upswing as far as the amount that was negotiated for the members. It was kind of hard to realize that in one city the Lithographers would negotiate twice as much as the Engravers. If you went back in the history, you would find that at one point they had the elite wages; but as time went by, the Lithographers passed them up in many, many areas.

INTERVIEWER: They were happy to get your assistance of the International, plus you didn't find any resistance to you personally as a Lithographer coming in and involved with Photoengraving negotiations?

GALBRAITH: No. No resistance, not to my knowledge, any resistance. As a matter of fact, I became. . . evidently, in demand because I got a lot of assignments to Engraver negotiations.

INTERVIEWER: Had you done negotiations with any of their employers before, or were these a new set of employers?

GALBRAITH: By and large a new set of employers. I think there were one or two of them where I had negotiated for the Lithographers with the same employers, but, by large, new employers.

INTERVIEWER: Were the employers characteristically different from the lithography employers, or were they similar?

GALBRAITH: I would say they were pretty much similar. They negotiated a little bit different on the basis that they felt they were on a downhill industry and they tried to play that up, where the Lithographers could never take that position because of the rapidly expaning industry.

INTERVIEWER: So you stayed in the Minneapolis area, but you did cover some areas that were. . . .for instance,

Cincinnati was outside of your traditional area.

GALBRAITH: Yes, I was still living in Des Moines from the time I was a rep until 1968, and this covers that period. Yes, I negotiated, not only in the area. . .I think the first negotiations were in Des Moines and Moline, Illinois, a number of areas. And then Cincinnati, I was out there on a Litho contract, and the locals were talking merger. I then negotiated the commercial contracts for the Engravers and followed with a newspaper contract. The next step, I guess, flowed from there to Washington, D.C. with a city-wide association with the newspapers and commercial and a number of the areas. I guess it runs in cycles because after quite a few of them, then I was assigned to the American Standard chain, and then you run into a lot of litho and you get to the Western chain, which is a lot of litho, and a roto plant in Mount Morris. [Illinois] I negotiated that twice prior to the big trouble we got this year.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk a little bit about each one of those separate situations. First, let's look at Cincinnati. . . Len [Leonard F] Dourson and John Gabbard and the conditions that existed in Cincinnati prior to their local merger. Was this the first time that you had met these people?

GALBRAITH: I was assigned to the Cincinnati litho negotiations, and Len Dourson was a part-time local vice president; he was a platemaker in a shop. And the president there had been a long-time vice president on a full-time basis, but this would have been his first, with the retirement of the former president, first negotiations. And I was in on the very first meeting, and they had a young committee. The president had a heart attack at that meeting, and subsequently his doctor told him he had to get out of it. They had a very, very poor salary for the presidency. I met with their Executive Board and asked them. . .under the circumstances I felt they should raise that. Everything seemed to be so low down there. In order to get a man of Len Dourson's capabilities into that presidency, the local went along with that and raised the salary and were able to get Len Dourson to become their full-time officer.

INTERVIEWER: So he became the president of the ALA local?

GALBRAITH: He became the president of the LPIU [Lithographers & Photoengravers International Union] local from the Litho side.

INTERVIEWER: And did you meet at that time with the Photoengraver side of the LPIU local?

GALBRAITH: Yes, well, at this time, I don't think we had met, other than to call or meet with them socially. We were in negotiations with the Lithographers' Association. We were able to get a very good settlement. Len Dourson, and subsequently they went to a second full-time man, Jimmy Nichols.

During this time I got to meet John Gabbard and the other local, the Photoengravers, there. Then we went into negotiations on their commercial contract in Cincinnati and their newspaper contract, and we won good contracts, and everybody got to know each other. We got into merger discussions; and after the first time it was turned down by the Lithographers, we were able to go back again, and they did subsequently merge.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what are some of the questions that arise when locals are talking about merger?

GALBRAITH: I think the biggest problem in merger is personalities. Who is going to be boss? And how will it affect them? For instance, the Lithographers--how will it affect me in my shop with a newspaper engraver in my local? Or, we're now in this shop here, we're both in the same shop, do I. . .I think it comes down to personality, one side or the other saying, "I got a dollar a week more than you." And jealousy to protect that rather than to move ahead together. It takes, in most cases, quite a bit of discussion to get over that, what I call a "personality problem". All our locals that haven't merged up to this point--I can't name one that hasn't merged--the main reason is strictly personality.

INTERVIEWER: What are, as far as you're concerned, the advantages in local merger? What are you able to see to be the advantages in Cincinnati?

GALBRAITH: Well, I think that the advantages not only of having greater financial base locally, more full-time officers, more organizing capabilities, more protection of the job? You've got to organize to keep the employers competitive. Obviously strength is one of the things a union must deal with. And in the numbers it gives you that financial strength to negotiate better contracts and better take care of your members in the job securities that you desire.

INTERVIEWER: Have you been involved in subsequent additional mergers with the Cincinnati local?

GALBRAITH: No, I have not been involved in any of the OKI merger discussions. I think Henry Dillon was in on that. I got involved with the Western operation which became almost a full-time job for me for two or two-and-a-half years.

INTERVIEWER: Was that before or after the American Standard assignment?

GALBRAITH: That would have been after the American Standard assignment.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's consider that one first, then. With both Western and American Standard, we're talking about large capital formations within the printing industry, and this is a relatively new phenomenon. You were assigned to American Standard?

GALBRAITH: I think maybe I had been assigned to maybe one or two Western negotiations, but not as the man who would handle all of them. Then the American Standard grew from that or was one of two American Standards in there; they may have been pretty much simultaneous. American Standard originated out of Cincinnati. There was a plant there called Beddinghouse.

The local had organized, and in the negotiations they ran into the conglomerate-type of negotiations where the head man from the head office comes into the negotiations. From that I entered into the negotiations, and I guess from there wherever there was American Standard I was assigned to it. I always met the same man negotiating.

INTERVIEWER: Was this the American Bank Note division of American Standard, too?

GALBRAITH: The American Bank Note is a portion of it. The one in Cincinnati was Beddinghouse. We did organize a plant in Pennsylvania with a Philadelphia local. I was in on that.

INTERVIEWER: Stern-Majestic?

GALBRAITH: No. That was one of theirs, but they had another one out in the hinterlands; I think it was called American Bank and Stationery.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's talk a little bit about that. You two people, the guy on the American Standard side, the head of negotiations, and you on the LPIU side, you show up in these plants, geographically distributed all over. Do you say the same things, or does each plant become a different set of circumstances? Is it the same question time and time again?

GALBRAITH: No. I think probably each plant is a different set of circumstances. You couldn't compare a Bank and Stationery plant in out-state Pennsylvania with, say, Printing Services of Detroit or Beddinghouse of Cincinnati or any of their other plants. So each one becomes separate. I think probably, as far as negotiating language, the man becomes acquainted with your language that you like, what he don't like, and you know you're going to have the same fight on language at each negotiations. The economics boil down to the economics of that specific industry that they're in--whether it be Bank & Stationery or Business Forms, or Commercial Printing.

INTERVIEWER: American Standard has a reputation of being quite rough in negotiations. They have a number of unorganized shops and widely geographically dispersed operations in the forms end of the industry. Is that a true characterization, that they're rough to negotiate with? Or is it like anyone else?

GALBRAITH: Well, from my experience I wouldn't say that they were rough to negotiate with. I think that they deal within the industry, but I think where they're rough is on their ledger sheet. If they don't make the type of profit that they desire, whatever that may be, with the flick of an ash, they'll close the plant and put 100 people out of work.

INTERVIEWER: But they're not tough in terms of willingness to take a strike, a greater willingness than, say, a small independent shop?

GALBRAITH: No, I think that they normally try to get a settlement without a strike. I don't think they have any reputation, at least to my knowledge in my dealing with them, of ever wanting a strike.

INTERVIEWER: And their tendency is to deal outside of groups. They don't participate in local groups?

GALBRAITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Then why would they choose to go that route?

GALBRAITH: Well, I can only base this on my experience. That was that they didn't feel that they wanted to be bound by an association, especially if that association decided to take a strike and they didn't. They would make their own decisions independent of the association. Now, they did involve themselves to the extent that they kept themselves abreast. They didn't participate in that, but they kept well abreast of everything that was going on in the association negotiations. And if the association made a settlement, you didn't have any problem of meeting those economic values in that contract with them.

INTERVIEWER: Larry Blaisdale is the head of Industrial Relations for American Standard, isn't he?

GALBRAITH: Ramsdale.

INTERVIEWER: Ramsdale. And he comes out of UAW [United Auto Workers], does he not? His background is not printing industry. He comes out of a large industrial. . .

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was it tough for him to adjust to the printing industry conditions, or did the printing industry have to adjust to him?

GALBRAITH: I think I'd have to say that he had to adjust to the printing industry. As far as language, he proposed a lot of stuff that they have in the other contracts. But by and large, as far as our language is, we

have a normal type of language for the printing industry and the normal type of security clauses for the members.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe now we can move to Western Publishing; they're an old established printing concern that used to be centralized in Racine [Wisconsin].

GALBRAITH: Their corporate offices are still there.

INTERVIEWER: But now during the time you were negotiating with them, they had moved to several other locations, including Hannibal, Missouri, and Mount Morris, [Illinois]. Where else did you find. . . ?

GALBRAITH: They have a plant in Poughkeepsie and Detroit, one in Cambridge, and one in St. Louis.

INTERVIEWER: And all are organized with the LPIU [Lithographers and Photoengravers International Union] except the Cambridge plant?

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Which is unorganized.

GALBRAITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So what was your experience with the Western group?

GALBRAITH: The Western group had. . . my original experience was the Racine negotiations, where we took a lengthy strike to try to make up some of the ground the locals had lost over a period of years. At one point the Racine plant had a higher wage scale and conditions than the Chicago local. And they had been going down, down, down. At some point in time prior to that, they had hired a guy by the name of Mel Connelly, who came out of G.E. [General Electric] and evidently was very influential in decision-making at the highest level. The Racine strike, to the best of my knowledge, was finally settled because Paul Lyle, who was the vice president at that time,

changed positions and they were able to get a different vote.

After the Racine strike settlements were reached in the other areas. Then during this time Paul Lyle was eased out of there, and now Mel Connelly calls all the shots and has for some time.

INTERVIEWER: When was this strike in Racine?

GALBRAITH: 1969.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you on strike?

GALBRAITH: Fourteen or fifteen weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So Connelly now is firmly entrenched in the Industrial Relations section. Have you had experience with Poughkeepsie? They had had a strike previous to your involvement.

GALBRAITH: Poughkeepsie had a strike in the early fifties where eventually they lost their union shop contract, contract language. The bindery union had crossed the picket lines. They had trained some of those people to become pressmen, and it was quite a mess. I had negotiated the Hannibal contract. The man who was the plant manager in Hannibal, for some reason or other, was transferred to Poughkeepsie, and he had just finished negotiations with me in Hannibal and then had to face me in Poughkeepsie. We did not have any great problem because we had hammered out all the language so that we were able to get through that quickly, and we were able to achieve the union shop back into the contract in Poughkeepsie in that negotiations.

INTERVIEWER: When was that?

GALBRAITH: This would be following the Racine strike, so that would be '69, late in the year '69, or early '70. It would have to be early '70, I would assume. At this point Mel Connelly was still not the controlling factor on that board; he was there, but he wasn't in a position, I don't think, at that point that he controlled the swing vote. It was still Paul Lyle. . .

INTERVIEWER: And he did not appear at negotiations on a local level in Hannibal or Poughkeepsie?

GALBRAITH: No. As far as I am aware of, Paul Lyle, up to this point, was still the man that the local plant managers had to report to.

INTERVIEWER: The conditions for Western in those days--let me just go back and recapitulate this a bit--the conditions were that Western had fallen behind. Where they historically had had very good contracts, they had fallen behind and in some cases remain that way today. We're talking about Hannibal's contracts, Poughkeepsie's, and Racine. You took a strike in 1969. Were you able to catch up then?

GALBRAITH: We were able to make the gains in those areas that we felt were most important to the people. Western's policy had been to move away so that everything was controlled by the company--the pension plans, the health and welfare, everything down the line. We broke that pattern in the '69 strike. We put them under a trusteed health and welfare program with a donation by the company, fully paid. We negotiated the International's retirement plan in addition to retaining the company pension plan. We were able to get substantial wage increases, and we felt we had then put them in position, we finally broke the paternalism that they had been building up over the years under Paul Lyle, with that in Racine. We were not able to achieve all of that in the Hannibal and Poughkeepsie plants although we were able to achieve the retirement program of the International Union.

INTERVIEWER: So, let's just go forward then. When was the next negotiations with Western? You signed in Poughkeepsie in '70.

GALBRAITH: The next negotiation was in Racine. I was assigned to something else at that point; and although I kept in touch with it, Vice President Dillon was in the negotiations. In that negotiations the membership, over Henry's objections and over the local officers' objections, ratified a contract that lost the programs that we had gained during the '69 strike.

INTERVIEWER: What were the threats that the company used at that time to gain the membership revolt?

GALBRAITH: Well, the normal thing was "They're going to take a strike. You'll be out on a strike, you'll lose this, you'll lose that, how much they lost before, playing against the International. Be your own man." It was real paternalism projected by the company and mass propaganda.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a threat to move operations away from Racine?

GALBRAITH: That threat's been there before. That threat is always there.

INTERVIEWER: Was the company at that time moving any new production equipment into Racine?

GALBRAITH: I don't think they were moving in on that last negotiations any new production equipment. I think that in some of the units--not ours--but in some of the units they were moving it out or projecting that they were going to move it out.

INTERVIEWER: So what was lost in the next negotiations? This would be 1972?

GALBRAITH: 1972.

INTERVIEWER: '72. Was a lot of the language and gains that you had made. . .

GALBRAITH: The gains that we felt took them away from the paternal pattern went back, you know, to a company hospitalization program that they fully run, the company pension plan tied into the union plan so that the company plan reduces itself to nothing by attrition, that type of thing. Where we lost some gains as far as press complement and various things like that.

INTERVIEWER: Was the struck-work clause a clause that was included in the 1972 contract?

GALBRAITH: The struck-work clause, to the best of my recollection, was still in the contract--not in the form

that we would like it, but in a watered-down form.

INTERVIEWER: When does the Hannibal strike then come along?

GALBRAITH: The. . .

INTERVIEWER: Is that the next strike that Western has following. . .

GALBRAITH: Yes. Merger with the Bookbinders had now become a reality, and I was assigned to the Bookbinders negotiations in Hannibal, where the contract was expiring on October 1 of 1972. We struck in '73 to '74. So I was assigned in September of 1972. In that negotiations. . . prior to that I'd been in. . .of course handled Mount Morris twice, but that, prior to merger, was a rotogravure plant where the rotogravure industry and the militancy of the rotogravure men in Mount Morris, we were able to make substantial gains there, much to the chagrin of Mel Connelly and Paul Lyle. But then in '72 their position with the Bookbinders was one that they could not accept: they wanted to take away their seniority clauses; they wanted to be able to switch them to lower paid jobs at their whim and reduce their wages; and they wanted the local to take a six-month pass on wages. The stated objective was that they had to have a task force to evaluate the plant because it was a non-profitable operation and they had to make a decision on whether they were going to close it.

But in the meantime the members were supposed to work for no increase and way inferior conditions. That went along with us not going with that, and then on January 1 the contracts with the Lithographers expired. They had been building up to the same thing with the litho people. I then was in negotiations with both locals. . .

INTERVIEWER: And this was at a time when the pattern of settlements previously had put the Hannibal local very far behind what was happening nationally. They had some of the lowest settlements negotiated at that point.

GALBRAITH: Yes. The Hannibal operation, management down there had been able to convince the local people to take an inferior settlement on the basis of

what the wage scales were in the area and on the basis that they were in a book business down there--school annual business. Prior to that, they went out of that business and went into commercial, but now they were saying they were only competing with the southern business. I guess the membership finally decided that wasn't the case at all.

Quite frankly, they weren't asking for the moon; the issue that became involved, as far as the strike, was the basis of taking away their seniority. And on the basis of being able to shift them around to wherever. . . And if they wanted to lay off a senior man and keep a junior man, that's what they could do. Obviously you're going to have a real struggle when the company tries to put those kind of conditions into effect.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds as if Western had decided to possibly close this plant. In an effort to add this to the negotiations, they were simply seeing what they could make a settlement for, as to whether this wouldn't add to the justification for keeping the plant open. Was that the case, or not?

GALBRAITH: Well, I think with the Bookbinders they wanted a six-month extension merely so they could see where the litho side was going to go. They were not being confronted with not being able to play two International Unions against each other, not confronted with having somebody cross a picket line; they were confronted with a unified position. And they wanted to see where the litho people were going to go. They threatened to close the plant from. . . well, from September 1, 1972, and kept right on agoing with that theme all the way through in hopes that the people would buy that. And when they never did, finally a strike. Prior to a strike, they tried to coerce them with economic pressure. By that I mean that at one point we had upwards to 80 percent of the people on lay-off. The company had planned to force them by economic pressure to accept an inferior contract. That didn't work, and subsequently a strike developed.

INTERVIEWER: The mayor in the town got in on the negotiations, did he not?

GALBRAITH: Well, Western would not allow the federal mediator to take part in the meetings, and it was proposed to have somebody else then--a labor professor, any type of professor. Western would agree to none. The mayor offered his services as a mediator in the strike, and Western refused to let him mediate.

INTERVIEWER: So you feel you made quite an effort to avoid the strike? The strike nevertheless came about. What happened following the strike?

GALBRAITH: Well, following the strike, they were saying they were going to phase out their operation in Hannibal, close it down. Their original position was that they were going to phase out the printing operation of the Hannibal plant. Our position at that time was to negotiate the phase-out. We were convinced at that point that that's where they were going, and we did enter into a number of meetings to negotiate the conditions of the phase-out. Obviously they were in a position not to agree to anything other than what they had to agree to by law. And subsequently, on February 1 of 1973, give or take a few days, they did finally in that interim period move all their equipment out of there and did sell that building and are totally out of the printing business in Hannibal. They started lay-off of the non-union people in May and June of 1973. I think it was November when they finally got all of our equipment out of the plant. But we continued to strike until everything was sold.

INTERVIEWER: I guess the reason I spent so much time asking questions about this is because it points to a problem that the International has in carrying out geographically dispersed bargaining. When you have five or six different plants with Western all negotiating with separate locals and no real coordinated bargaining, it creates an enormous problem. Can you comment a bit about this in relation to your experiences with Western?

GALBRAITH: When I was first assigned to Western chain, former Vice President [Gus] Petrakis was coordinating. Now we coordinated to some extent, although my personal opinion was that it was not to the level that it should have been at that point. We had meetings and we tried to get the people on the same page and we tried to tell them what was wrong with their language and that they should stand firm to get better language within their contracts. We seemed to have a problem. The local leaders of each area would agree but could not seem to get the members to go along with those decisions.

With the Hannibal strike, prior to the strike, we were well aware of the fact that we were going to have problems in every plant unless the people decided that they better unite against that corporation. Vice President Dillon and Executive Vice President Connolly [John] and myself were in every city with a Western plant, with the exception of Cambridge, outlining what the problems were and that they better unite behind Hannibal or

one at a time they were going to have problems. The membership did not go along with our thinking on this, and subsequently we had problems in Mount Morris, which is just an extension of what was going on in Hannibal. Although as I understand it, it will probably come out a little different, but I think what we're going to end up with there is a form of Hannibal, a form of phase-out on the basis that the company has made a decision. And when they make a decision, no matter what the cost, they stand behind it.

INTERVIEWER: Now what decision do you mean? They made a decision to close the plant, or they made a decision to give strong resistance to negotiated settlements with GAIU [Graphic Arts International Union]?

GALBRAITH: I think the decision is that they can't afford to close the plant in total, but to slap our hands they're going to phase out a portion of the Mount Morris plant. And it's my understanding that they're going to phase out the rotogravure end, as far as the preparatory work in the rotogravure.

INTERVIEWER: How much of a factor is the unorganized Cambridge plant in all of these situations?

GALBRAITH: Not much of a factor at all. Some of the equipment was sent out there. It sat in a truck out there, some of the equipment from Hannibal, it sat in a truck out there because they had no space for it. They've had their problems in that plant labor-wise. If you recall during the riots at Cambridge, they had their problems, and I think they've got a big spillover of that. They've got an employee problem, and it does not relate to unions or anything. It's just a straight employee problem and a production problem with people. Equipment-wise they are nowhere in competition with the Racine or Poughkeepsie plant or the St. Louis plant. They had made the decision, prior to the Racine strike, of just closing down their Detroit plant, so that was totally just closed down, they said as a non-profitable operation.

INTERVIEWER: To what degree do past problems between locals, for instance the Racine and Poughkeepsie ]locals] having bad blood between them. . . to what degree does that become a factor in asking locals to participate together in a coordinated approach?

GALBRAITH: Well, I think the company has had a policy of

shifting work, at least here and there; so that if you do have a strike, work from Racine. . . in '69. . . was done in Poughkeepsie, and that creates a real problem because their brother-members in another city are doing their struck work. That probably is the biggest factor as far as the litho end. The bindery end is another area because of the '54 strike, which deals just with the litho and the bindery feelings within the Poughkeepsie plant. It would seem to me, as far as the Mt. Morris plant, the strongest unit, of course, is the rotogravure people. The bindery unit there sure is a lot stronger now than it has been in the past, but I think in most cases they have been able to take the lesser skilled of the crafts and jam that down our throat and then try to make that go with the skilled ends of the craft. One exception was Mt. Morris where they could never move the rotogravure men to do that. It may have a major bearing on any decision they make as far as what happens at Kable [Printing Co.] and Mt. Morris.

It was an interesting thing in the Hannibal situation that, when the decision was made to phase it out, one of their top management people called me at the motel and wanted to meet with me and told me that, initially, that the figures that they were going to give me on the pension vesting I'd better check out very thoroughly because he had information that they weren't very good. He was let go by the company. . . I'm not sure the exact numbers, but very close. . . they needed twenty years as an executive in management to have a vested pension. He was very close to this twenty years, and he lost the whole works. So he was somewhat bitter. He then called me again and wanted me to meet him in a little out-of-the way place, and we discussed the profits and lack of profits in any plant. And he said there was no way that they could ever tell whether Hannibal made money or lost money because all their plants were handled in the same way. The sales go through corporate, and then corporate merely sends it out and you have to bid as an individual plant on what time and what your cost is for that job, but no profit is involved in that. If the corporate then decides that it goes to the Hannibal plant, the only thing Hannibal knows is whether they made it within their own estimate. That doesn't include profits. Profit's picture is only controlled by the corporate. And in all negotiations that I participated in, every plant lost money; yet at the end of a year they do very good. I could never figure this out. But then after he explained to me how they handled the total sales thing, that each plant does not know whether they made money on the job or not, they only know if they handled it within their own estimate. . . . So that anything you do in dealing with Western, it's almost impossible to get to the point of is the plant profitable or is it at a loss, because all those figures are only held by the corporate in total.

INTERVIEWER: So as a representative, you've really seen a full spectrum of negotiating conditions. You've dealt

with small, independent plants, small independent locals, negotiated with groups and associations and now with these large conglomerates. Do you want to reflect just a minute on these changing patterns of negotiations within the printing industry?

GALBRAITH: Obviously with the conglomerates, I think probably the real problem with the conglomerates is who heads them up and what their theories are. The Western philosophy is bullwarism, and they played it right up to the gray hilt where you'd think it would be against the law; but with a Nixon Board in there, even though they're right up there, they don't issue any complaints. I think the conglomerates--Western is an exception--I think Mel Connelley is trying to establish himself as the one man who knows how to handle the Graphic Arts Union, and his decisions are probably motivated a lot from his own personal ego. The other conglomerates, from a negotiating standpoint, those I've dealt with, I think the real problem with the conglomerates is that they don't look at the printing plant as we used to know it where it was a father-to-son deal. The only thing they look at--they could care less who was working. . .

(End of Tape One, Side Two)

INTERVIEWER: (mid-sentence) . . . is the amount of profits. . .

GALBRAITH: They are in a position to merely close that plant down, forget about the people, and write it off on a tax loss. I think this is going to be a real problem in the future. American Standard, for instance, as a conglomerate with interests all over the world, is only going to look at the profit picture of any printing plant and not on the ups and downs or not on the needs of people. As in the Detroit case where they made the decision to close that plant, it was only on the basis of not enough profit, not no profit, not enough profit. We were fortunate enough in that case to pin them down to say, "What do you want for that plant?" And we were able to get a buyer who got together with them and maintained that plant. And that plant's been operating at a very profitable picture for the man who bought it. So I think really our big problem with the conglomerates in the future is their profit picture. And if they don't feel it's high enough, it's just a cold-blooded statistic, that's going to make their decision on whether they keep a plant open or not. Many, many things could make a plant unprofitable--outdated equipment, maybe a new piece of machinery that was needed that they're not amortizing over a long enough period of time. So that it's really going to be hard to deal with these conglomerates in the future on that. Western, of course,

was a different story as far as I'm concerned. I think that's a cold-blooded conglomerate with a man out to make a name for himself, and dollars and cents he is not as concerned with as he is with dealing with the Graphic Arts Union.

INTERVIEWER: As we near the end of our interview, maybe it would be good to go back a bit and pick up the second merger that you experienced while with the GAIU. This would be the merger with the Bookbinders in 1972. Can you talk a little bit about the events that preceded that, your awareness of the issues involved in this latest merger and maybe reflect a bit as to how you've been experiencing it so far.

GALBRAITH: Well, as I mentioned previously, obviously this gives us, as an organization, control of the finishing department, the printed products from both letterpress and litho and rotogravure. Obviously from that point alone, we have greatly strengthened our position as an organization as far as representing our members. Also, I think my experience as far as negotiations with the bindery and units where we have them both, will bear me out on that. Just recently in Minnesota where we had a bindery unit and a litho unit, which was organized as a single unit, but had separate contracts, we were able to make some great gains on that. Which, by the way, is part of a conglomerate, too. Then, subsequently, we negotiated with the parent company, the main plant, and were able to win substantial gains there on the basis of both units being involved in the printing industry represented by the same union. That happened to be the George Banta Company in Menasha, Wisconsin. They were negotiating separately and we were able, with Vice-President Boerner to get them to negotiate jointly. The company objected to this very strenuously, but we did it anyway. They can't tell us who's going to negotiate. Although it does bring some problems, you can see that in the future this is going to be the only way to go.

INTERVIEWER: So you had unmerged locals negotiating jointly?

GALBRAITH: Yes. In both cases, at Hart Press in Long Prairie [Minnesota] and the George Banta Company in Menasha.

INTERVIEWER: And you feel that they were very successful and satisfactory?

GALBRAITH: Yes. In spite of the problems it might give you, they are very satisfactory. Of course, they companies

create those problems by trying to divide you. They play personalities and favoritisms. What they try to do is make it look like one don't deserve as much as the other, and they go the whole route on that. But they certainly were joint negotiations that were very successful.

INTERVIEWER: Well, companies have complained in the past, my understanding has been, about leap-frogging. They negotiate with the Lithographers or Photoengravers, and then eighteen months later they have to pick up the Bookbinders, and the Bookbinders want to match what the Lithographers or Photoengravers got, but get more. Now with the merger and you offer them an opportunity to negotiate collectively, they complain about this. Now can you explain this problem that I'm having with this reaction on the part of the companies?

GALBRAITH: Well, they may have complained about leap-frogging. I realistically couldn't believe that. Take the litho industry, which is a little different, say, from rotogravure or from commercial engraving or newspaper, where there's a single scale. The litho industry, historically, in the press rooms and even in the prep departments have had different scales of pay, you know. A five-color pressman obviously makes a lot more than a kid starting out as a helper. We've had various scales based on a competitive position in the industry. It would seem to me that the bindery end, the finishing end of the printing industry, is about in the same position, where you have some highly skilled journeymen, folders and cutters and this type of thing. And then you have some hand-finishing areas, which has historically, had a lower rate. If the companies dealt in percentage increases and if they dealt on what the competitive situation is with other employers, I don't really see how they can say, in any way, shape or form, that we would leap-frog them. I found it to be quite the opposite. The issue at the Banta Company was cost-of-living. The Banta Company didn't want the cost-of-living in to their bindery contract. But they knew it had to go into the litho because it was in so many litho contracts around the country. Their argument was that they could compete with the cost-of-living clause in their litho contract, but they couldn't compete in a bindery contract. We're trying to correct that by having in each negotiations a cost-of-living clause for all our members. I don't think their argument was valid in the first place because they know from experience that our organization has policies and philosophies and when we set out with a policy that we're going to have cost-of-living, or whatever it was, a yearly retirement program, in a great, great majority of cases, that has gone into contract. Certainly they have no reason to believe the cost-of-living is not going into Bookbinder contracts around the country.

INTERVIEWER: So you feel that one of the strengths that you can take into negotiation is that you can go in with a new idea, and with the strength of the history of your experience you can say that this is going to be a new policy nationally. And you feel that you're strong enough and have been willing to pay the price to be strong enough to go out and get these things nationally so that you can meet the argument that, if someone signs this, they will become non-competitive. You can say in good faith that this will become a national pattern-cost of living.

GALBRAITH: The history of our leadership under President [Kenneth] Brown will bear me out totally, from our education fund to our early retirement, to our negotiation policies and our coordination and everything else. Yes, our organization has a tremendous record, and, yes, I don't see how any employer can have that argument.

INTERVIEWER: Now, one of the strategies with the merger with the Bookbinders has been for the Bookbinders to catch up with the Lithographers and Photoengravers. They were considerably behind in wage settlements. Do you feel that this is a realistic strategy to pursue on the part of the International?

GALBRAITH: Well, I'm not aware of any policy to upgrade their settlement. I am aware of the fact that you have to be competitive. I am aware of the fact that within the bindery industry some of the areas are way ahead of other areas because they haven't had a coordinated bargaining policy, that some areas are lower. But certainly those areas that are lower are in a position where they can pay more and still be competitive. I'm not aware that we're going to get bigger settlements for one organization or the other. I think the criteria that we've got to look at is what is the competitive situation of the employer? Now, if he's got a real good competitive situation, then he should be getting in line competitively with the employers he competes with.

INTERVIEWER: So your feeling is that the merger with the Bookbinders has made as much sense as the merger with the Photoengravers preceding it?

GALBRAITH: Very much so.

INTERVIEWER: And has your ability to service Bookbinders been as successful as your ability to serve the Photo-engravers?

GALBRAITH: Well, not being the boss and evaluating myself, as far as I'm concerned, yes. It seems to me that we're all in the printing industry and have skills to varying degrees, whether you be a pressman or a dot-etcher or a folder operator or a feeder. We compete in the same industry, and we have varying degrees of skills, and the economic situation competitively will dictate where we go in the future. Obviously our litho coordination and negotiation has been very successful. We always have to keep an eye on where the non-union segment is and that segment that may belong to the Printing Pressmen [Union], but I think a realistic view, looking at the competitive situation, that this should be a great boon to everybody. And probably, at the start, at least in the midwest area where I've been working in the litho shops, I think there's great effort by the employers to try to slow it down as much as they can and try to coordinate nationally with the PIA [Printing Industry of America] in hopes that we don't get off to too great a start. But I think in the future that thing will evolve into the same type of thing that we have with Litho and Engravers at the present time.

INTERVIEWER: Well, as we look, you know, in the other direction, we've been looking at the historical today, let's just for an ending look in the future. What do you see to be the future of this organization and your role in it?

GALBRAITH: I look for my role to continue to be that of an International rep. I have no desires on anything beyond that. I look forward to further mergers, and I would support further mergers. We are discussing, our officers are discussing, the possibilities of other mergers and I think it will be good for all the members in the printing industry. The printing industry is too fragmented with unions. The Typographical Union has lost many, many members because they are being automated out in the newspapers basically. The Printing Pressmen have been going down hill as far as the crafts end of their organization, although they have been able to organize in the semi-skilled areas and their specialty division. But I think that I could foresee future mergers. How soon, I wouldn't know. I guess that's up to the officers and the Executive Board of the International Union. But the printing industry, which is the seventh largest industry in the United States, I don't think is going to suffer as much as many of the employers are crying about. The profits are all up this year, and I don't really foresee any great problem there. There are problems, no doubt, moving

to the south being one big basic one. We have one tremendous job ahead of organizing. And I guess it boils down that the mergers have given us a much larger financial base and should in the future reflect our organizing ability.

MEL GALBRAITH

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