INTERVIEW #1 WITH HARRY SPOHNHOLTZ

Date: August 19, 1974
Place: Chicago, Illinois
Interviewers: Alice M. Hoffman
Greg Giebel

INTRODUCTION

Harry Spohnholtz' interest in printing was inherited from his family, and he worked in printing shops at the grammar and high school levels where he lived in Chicago in the 1920's. In June of 1929 he joined Local 4, Amalgamated Lithographers of America, while working in his uncle's printing plant. During the hard years of the depression, he changed jobs often and became exposed to many areas of his trade. He finally ended up in a plant that had been non-union since the 1922 strike. He was on the committee that negotiated the first written contract between his local union and the Chicago Lithographers Association. He also became the shop delegate for his plant and a member in 1938 of a wage scale committee.

In 1947, after the resignation of his local president, Fred Zeitz, Spohnholtz was elected to the post of the financial secretary and organizer of his local. His involvement in the International began when he ran for Board member in 1949.

In the second interview Harry Spohnholtz describes the development of Chicago as a center of the printing trade and the importance of the school in Chicago as a training center. He reviews the history of the school and its operations, its influence on the full-time schools developed by the International, and its ability to keep up with technological innovations. He then describes the emergence of Chicago as a political power in the International and, beginning with his work as International councillor, his own involvement with internal union politics, especially in such situations as the withdrawal of the ALA from the AFL-CIO in 1958.

Spohnholtz traces the development of the Inter Local Pension Fund in 1949, in the establishment of which he played a major role. He discusses the events leading up to merger with the Photoengravers, his own feelings regarding the merger situation, and the local merger in Chicago.

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SPOHNHOLTZ: My name is Harry F. Spohnholtz. I was born on November 24, 1909.

INTERVIEWER I: Okay, where were you born, Mr. Spohnholtz?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I was born in Chicago, Illinois.

INTERVIEWER I: And could you tell us something about your childhood and early schooling?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I was the fourth child in a family of seven. My father was born in Chicago; my mother was born in Germany but came here as a child when she was seven years old. My childhood was. . . well, I think it was good, but maybe by today's comparisons it's altogether different. We were not a rich family by any means. We were quite poor with seven children in the family, a mother and a father, and we had my grandfather living with us for quite a while.

INTERVIEWER I: Your father's father?

SPOHNHOLTZ: My mother's father.

INTERVIEWER I: Your mother's father.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Until he finally passed away. We had a six-room house. We had lived in flats before that while we were smaller children, but then finally my Dad was able to buy a house. It was a very poor house and needed a lot of fixing. It was an old house, about fifty years old when he bought it. So as a child I did a lot of work around there at the time, learned some of the things. Then I'd been working ever since I'd been eight or nine years old at various kid jobs, you know. Worked in a grocery store, worked on an ice wagon, all that kind of stuff that you do in order to make a few dollars. Those dollars that I made did not belong to me. They were all turned over to my mother, and then she kept them until I needed a suit of clothes or something of that sort. About the only thing that I had for myself, that I was able to earn enough money for, was a new

bicycle, and that thing was stolen two days after I got it. So I was back again with an old pickup that my Dad got somewhere; I don't know where he got it.

I thought we had a pretty fair life. We got what we needed, and we did eat all the time.

INTERVIEWER I: What section of Chicago were you brought up in?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, not too far from this office building, as a matter of fact. I was born right up here on Augusta Street near Ashland Avenue. Then we moved to the other side near Humbold Park. We lived over there for quite a few years, in a couple of different flats, until we bought this house, and then we moved up on the northwest side. Well, the other side of Humbold Park was the northwest side, too, but we moved a little bit further north in the northwest side.

INTERVIEWER I: And what was the difference between these two neighborhoods?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, not so much. There was a kind of a conglomeration of everything in those other neighborhoods. Where we finally moved to, where we bought the house at that time, there were a lot of Scandinavian people around there. But they were not exclusive to that section. There were a lot of different nationalities up there.

I was always interested in the printing trades. The reason for that was, I guess, because I had several uncles that were in the printing trade. My Dad worked for one of my uncles; he was a shipping clerk. I monkeyed around with printing while I was still in grammar school. I set type, run a Gordon press, did just about everything that you could do in grammar school. Then when I went to high school, I went to Lane Technical High School . . .

INTERVIEWER I: Lane?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Lane Technical High School. Albert G. Lane Technical High School. That was at Sedgwick and Division Street. It's now the Washborne Trade School. I hoped to finally graduate from their new building that they built up on Western and Addison, but they never got that built before I got out of school. I went there, and I took a printing course. They still provided printing courses, but the only difference between a printing course is that I was assigned to the various printing departments as my shop during my high school years. I was very much interested in printing, particularly in the press room, but I never got to be a pressman in the trade although I ran Meelee letterpresses. That's all they had there. I used to get the school paper out every day, a daily paper. I'd come down to school (I had a key to the school, which was very unusual), and I used to go in there an hour and a half before school started. At six-thirty or seven o'clock in the morning I'd be in school, working in the print shop.

INTERVIEWER I: What do you think was the appeal aside from the fact that your uncles were in the business?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, printing fascinated me all the time. I don't know. I thought it would be good to know; I thought that probably later on when I was going to go to work full time, that it probably would provide me with a decent living. My uncles had a decent living out of it. One of them was the owner of a plant. My Dad worked for him.

I used to work after school, and I ran errands for my Dad down there after school. Then one summer he says, "Look, they need a boy up in their art department." He didn't try to influence me, but he says, "That's a good job. Those guys don't seem to be doing anything, and they get paid the highest wages in the place!" So he got me up there during the summer, but I had a big problem at that point (not in getting into the department and being accepted), but there was not then, and there isn't today, any part-time work in the lithographic industry. I had another semester of high school to finish to get a four-year high school diploma. I made the decision, not my Dad. I said, "I'm gonna finish my high school course, regardless. If they won't let me work after school, I can get early hours in high school, and I can be in the plant by certainly no later than one o'clock in the afternoon." I don't think my Dad influenced it, but they let me come to work after school until I finished out my semester.

INTERVIEWER I: This was what, about 1927?

SPOHNHOLTZ: 1926. August 11, 1926. That's when I first walked into the plant. I wanted to join the union; it was a union shop. I wanted to join the union then, but I did have a couple of strikes against me for the simple reason that my uncle owned the place. These German fellows that I was working with, they didn't trust anything like that, not to have a nephew come in and work in their department. They didn't want me there. It took me a while to gain their confidence. When they found out that I didn't carry any stories to my uncle--actually I didn't have much to do with my uncle, really--they finally allowed me in the union. That was in June of 1929.

At that time, when you joined the union, that's when you started your apprenticeship. There were no papers. There was nothing like that. Once accepted by the union, you started your apprenticeship. Four years later you were a journeyman. Four years later was the depression! And just about the time I became a journeyman, the plant folded up and went bankrupt. Here I was a journeyman who didn't know anything, really, because those were depression years. The type of stuff we were able to get in was not the good stuff. Of course, they kept on the journeymen that really knew their stuff rather than give the jobs and . . .

INTERVIEWER I: What kind of jobs had they been doing? Mostly commercial printing or . . . ?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, yes, commercial printing. They had both lithography and letterpress in there. Of course, I wasn't tied up

with the letterpress end. I did learn my trade there, but, you know, I lacked the experience which is a most vital thing in this business. So being the depression, now I'm out of work. I really didn't lose much time during the depression, maybe about two or three months all told. But then I took other jobs. I worked in a bindery. I tried to sell printing. That was a hard nut to crack, especially for a young kid that didn't know his way around, and there were a lot of people looking for jobs. So it was hard to come by.

However, I did get moved around. I didn't work at very many plants. I think the record out there would show you I worked in about six different plants, and those were mostly during the depression years. I was pleased one time; when the work ran out in one of the jobs that I had, after I was off two or three weeks, they called me back. So I didn't lose such a terrible amount of time during the depression, but the wages were poor, you know. At that time I was the only one working in my family, so everything that I earned was turned right over to my mother. She was the keeper of the funds, you know. I got a little bit, but, what the heck, for two bucks a week, why, you had all the comforts of home, anyway as far as going places and doing things. Then later on I started making a little more money, and I was able to buy a car and so forth and get around.

INTERVIEWER I: Did other of your brothers go into the printing trades?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, the only brother I had died at the age of eleven.

INTERVIEWER I: All the rest of them were girls?

SPOHNHOLTZ: All the rest were girls! That was another hard hill to climb, you know. You don't fight with girls all the time at home. Some were older than me; some were younger. But we got along, and we still get along as a family. There's no fights in our family, and we have never missed a Christmas Eve together. Never, at any time! From the day we were born, on!

INTERVIEWER I: So it was a very close-knit family.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes. It was a close-knit family all right, but everybody minded their own business; and to this day they do that, too. They mind their own business. Nobody tells the other one what to do. We weren't raised that way. Our mother was the disciplinarian. My father was the one, he'd give the shirt off his back if he could make somebody happy.

INTERVIEWER I: Did your mother speak German to you at home?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Very little German. The only time they spoke German at home was when they didn't want us kids to understand, but unfortunately that wasn't so with some of the older sisters because they understood German. I understood a little bit of it, and, of course, my grandfather spoke almost exclusively German. Therein lay a problem, too. What little German I learned at home

was low German. When I went to high school, I thought I'd take a course in German; and the next thing I know I'm arguing with the teacher that he doesn't say that right. Well, he was speaking high German in school.

INTERVIEWER I: You were speaking what we call Plattdeutsch.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Plattdeutsch. That's the way you say it. (He pronounces it like "Platitch").

INTERVIEWER: Did this help you in working with these German trade unionists in the shop that you first worked at?

SPOHNHOLTZ: You mean, in speaking German?

INTERVIEWER I: Yes.

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, not really, because the way they rattled it off I couldn't understand it that fast. Oh, they'd say things to me in German, and they taught me some bad German, you know. That's the first thing they teach you. But other than that, they all spoke English, some not as good as others, but they all spoke English. The communication there was in English, not German. So that way, why, I didn't pick up much from them. But they did teach me the trade. They taught me how to do it as it was being done at that time.

INTERVIEWER I: And what was your job when you left there at the time of the depression, when this plant folded up?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I was supposed to be a journeyman artist. That's what they referred to as "artist" in those days. Today they call them dot-etchers. I did have an understanding of other processes than the one we did, but I wasn't that good at it. I did go to the local school. That I paid for myself because there were no funds for that. It was fifty bucks a course or something like that at that time. And I picked up staining methods. . .

INTERVIEWER I: Staining?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Staining. That was at Sherwood Lithograph Company. I didn't know too much about staining because we used it very sparingly in the plant that I was in. Sherwood used staining quite a bit.

I picked up all the branches of the trade at that time because I liked to work in different areas of the trade. What I became really good at, even while I was an apprentice, was making corrections on press plates, on the press. Anything--half tone, lettering, all of that. Corrections on the press. And not everybody could do that, or even wanted to do it, because you had to crawl up on the press, on the plates on the cylinder on the press; you had to be a contortionist to get around. I was a lanky, skinny guy at that time so I could get in between the units and lay down on the press and do whatever . . . you only have a small spaee to work in. I enjoyed that, and I was called on repeatedly. I never told

anybody I could do that, but in other jobs that I had, if there was a press correction, they found out I could do it; so I was called.

INTERVIEWER I: Okay, well, now, it's in the middle of the depression and you are working . . . what, you said you worked at six different places?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I think so, about six.

INTERVIEWER I: So what was happening? These plants were folding up and then you would get another job or what?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, not all of them. Some of them are still going today. Some are merged with others. But the demand for help was zero, and half of the union was out of work. So once an apprentice got a chance, you know . . . you become a journeyman, but in those years you weren't a journeyman yet. Nobody looked at you like a journeyman. I lacked that intense experience that I would have gotten had business been good, because then the type of jobs would have come my way. But when you've got good, qualified, experienced journeyman around, you didn't get that kind of work. So that's what it amounted to and that's why I had a little difficulty during the depression after I lost the job that I originally was apprenticed at.

But I finally got situated with Edwards & Deutsch, and I was the first union man that the union supplied to Edwards and Deutsch. This is still during the depression years. And they had a lot of map work over there. They were doing map work for Goush Company. So I worked nights over there, working on maps. And I got to be the straw boss on nights in charge of the stripping department at that point--opaquing maps, making road maps, you know, and doing all this work. I'd get my instructions from the boss when I came in. I worked all kinds of hours there, depending on what was necessary. I got laid off very briefly there at the end of the map season but then they called me back again and I continued working there.

Then in 1936 I decided to get married. I had some problems about that because I was the only one at home who was working. I guess one of my sisters started working, too. But my father says to me, "Look . . ." (So did my mother.) "You've been going with the girl for a long time. If you want to get married, don't stop because you're helping out here. Just go ahead and get married."

INTERVIEWER I: Was your father on relief at that time?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, he wasn't on relief. I don't think there was such a thing as relief. Everybody fended for themselves. Since most everybody was out of work at one time or another during the depression, if they needed help and they were part of your relations, you just had to help them out if you were able to. My folks did it for quite a while. They gave my aunt and uncle fifteen dollars a week to sustain them. He was a paper cutter, and there was just no work around. So we went through that . . .

Anyway, I got married. Then I had the gall . . . (now this is what you do when you're a young kid, see) I said, "Look. . ." I had a good boss in what they called the engraving department. It really was the stripping department. I said, "I'm sorry, Bill, I've got to work days; and I want to get back in my own department where I belong. And I want to work in the art department there (the same company.)"

So I got married, and I go off for a honeymoon for two weeks. And I said, "I'm coming in at eight o'clock in the morning when I get back. And I'm going over in that department; and if you don't want me, then I'll be out of work!" Well, as luck would have it, I was okay; and they kept me on there. And I became straw boss in that department. I had a Bohemian boss at that time. Bohemians and Germans aren't supposed to get along nohow! But I don't know. . . he thought I was his fair-haired boy or something. I was a fair artist, I think, in my time, dot-etcher or whatever you want to call it. He had a different process over there, so I had to learn that one, too. And that was a tricky kind of a process that he had, but it worked.

So I learned the process. Then I got to be straw boss, and I finally talked him into going on a vacation. He never took a vacation. So I was in charge; anytime he was away, I was in charge. He never could understand how I got more out of the guys when he was gone than he could ever get out of them. I did, you know. . .

INTERVIEWER I: How did you?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I let them go their own merry way. I'd just say to them, "Look, we got to have that job ready for the plate-making department by so and so." They didn't mess around. They got it ready. They got it ready. I think his method was somewhat different in that he would tell them, "Now, look, don't waste time. Don't waste time. Keep going." Well, I didn't crack that whip. I didn't feel I had to. What the heck, I wasn't the real boss. So everybody worked for me. So that was fine.

INTERVIEWER II: So Edwards and Deutsch's first experience with a union man was very beneficial to them?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I guess so. They had been union way back. But the 1922 strike--I wasn't around then--the 1922 strike really hurt the Lithographers Union. So they were one of the stalwarts in the non-union plant part. They had quite an organization here in Chicago and elsewhere around the country. And boy, if they put you on the blacklist, you didn't get a job in one of those plants because everything went through their association. I forget what it was called now. But they had a strong union. And talk about the employers, it was just impossible! But the National Labor Relations Act came in, and the people in the plant had a chance to vote on whether they wanted a union. So we started getting the unions back in some of these plants. So from 1922 'til 1934, I believe it was, Edwards and Deutsch didn't have a union. They were non-union.

So when the union finally was able to get an agreement

with them, Fred Zeitz, who was then the local president, sent me over there. And I refused the job. They only wanted to pay me fifteen dollars a week. I says, "No way! No way! Fifteen dollars a week!" So I came back to the union. I reported to them. He says, "Look, please! I've got to get a man in there. I want to show them that the union can furnish them a man. Will you go in and take that job? I don't care if you stay on just a week or two. Will you go in there and go to work?"

Well, I did. I was supposed to get fifteen dollars a week, but, as I say, I had a good boss there. He went down to the superintendent and told him, "You can't keep this guy on for fifteen dollars a week. Give him twenty-five dollars a week." So I made twenty-five dollars the first week. I made thirty dollars the second week; thirty-five the third week. A five-dollar raise was incredible in those days! I never asked for it! They just gave it to me!

INTERVIEWER I: In order to keep you?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I guess so. I never threatened to quit. I always got paid top buck over there. Always. I made more than anybody else, always five dollars more, always. They never took it away from me, either.

INTERVIEWER II: Was the range of pay per week as wide as that would indicate, between fifteen dollars and thirty-five dollars a week? That seems like such a wide range. Was that pretty . . .

SPOHNHOLTZ There was no wage scale. There were no contracts in those days. You got representation in the union. You'd sit down with management and try to come to some agreement. And they'd agree what the going rate should be, but in my branch of the trade very few fellows ever made just scale. Scale was a minimum, and that's what we had preached into us. That's the minimum. Can't work for less. So every fellow that ever worked there got some kind of a premium over what was the going rate.

In 1938 I was part of a committee that set up the first wage scale that we ever got out. We made up a committee. We wanted to get a wage scale so that every member would know what he should be making for whatever job he was on. As a minimum. At that time I agreed to a rate that was, I think, ten dollars less a week than what I was making. At that time I was making seventy-five dollars a week, and we set the scale at sixty-five. That was in 1938. And we got up our own wage scale.

The first contract that we had as a local union, as I remember, was with the Association. They formed an association here, the Chicago Lithographers Association, the employers that is. We finally got together with them in 1941, and in 1942 we finally signed a contract. That was the first signed contractual document that I ever remember. I was on that committee, I'm proud to say.

INTERVIEWER I: Let me ask you. You stated before that you were interested in joining the union from your very earliest days as an apprentice. Why were you inclined toward unionism as a young man?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, even from kid up, not so much that some of my uncles were members of a union, but I just felt that the only way you could ever get anywhere in a trade was to be in the union of that trade. And I don't know whether I ever set it as my goal, but I just thought that I'm too little, too small, as an individual employee, not to have some kind of representation, somebody speaking for me. And you could do that through a union because the union represents all of the members. And I think that's one of the big strengths that an employee can have. I think that's what drove me into wanting to be a union man right from the start.

INTERVIEWER I: Did you have friends who were union members?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Not really. I had one fellow who is now an employer. He's still working. One of my boyhood friends. He became a photoengraver. He got to be a rotogravure man, and he and six other fellows started their own business. It's one of the big trade shops today in Chicago under union contract, and he's still a member of the union.

INTERVIEWER I: And did you talk union business with him?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, rarely. After we got married, we kind of drifted apart from one another. Once in a while we see one another, and I've gotten to see more of him since we merged locally. Of course, I attended some meetings where he was at and so forth. We never talked much unionism between us. Another close friend of mine was a member of the Musicians Union, and I had a brother-in-law that was a member of that union. But that was almost a must, you know, belonging to the Musicians Union. You couldn't play any place without being a member.

So that's the only real close ties with union people that I had. I think I kind of went independently and made up my own mind. This was part of my upbringing anyway. We were taught to make up our own minds.

(END OF TAPE I, Side 1)

INTERVIEWER I: Let's start in with your first activity in the local here. Now, you mentioned that Fred Zeitz was the president . . . .

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER I: . . . when you first joined. Is that right?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER I: And how did you begin to become active in the local here in Chicago?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, it wasn't by any particular design. I was kind of picked up, I guess you might say. I got this job over at Edwards and Deutsch. They had elected their own shop delegate at that time; and since I was the first union man to come in there from the outside, they looked up to me a little bit for that, you know. When they wanted to find out anything about the union, well, they came to me because I had been a member.

Then when the delegate over there gave up the job . . . he joined the service, that's what he did. He was out as a delegate, and another fellow became the delegate over there for a short time. Then he became a boss, and of course, he couldn't be delegate. Then they elected me delegate. We had about 125 employees over there, so it was no small shop.

INTERVIEWER I: And this was after you had the contract during the war?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, it was before the war.

INTERVIEWER I: Oh, it was before the war?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, I can't remember the year exactly. But I was a shop delegate, and I attended all shop delegates' meetings. I attended every meeting of the local. Even when we had two meetings a month; I was just interested. They started looking to me; and first thing you know, I started getting on some committees. As early as 1938 I was selected to be a member of this wage scale committee. Then I got appointed to other committees.

At one point--I don't know just when it was--Zeitz called me in one day, and he wanted me to take a job in the office. I said, "How do I do that? They're all elected jobs." He says, "Well, I'd like to appoint you as another man in this office." He needed three men at that time, and he only had two. Zeitz was there, and Canary was there full time. So he wanted me to be an official of the union. He says, "I'll appoint you. I'll appoint you to the job. Then you can run for election. If I appoint you, the chances of you being elected are pretty darn good."

INTERVIEWER I: What was he appointing you as? Secretary?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, I don't know. He dreamed up another title here. Well, there was financial secretary and organizer. I guess secretary or something like that. He would appoint me; I forget the title he dreamed up. Well, anyway, I turned it down, not because I didn't like Zeitz, because I thought he was a heck of a great union president. I turned it down because I had a good job going for myself. I could probably have been a boss over there or foreman of some sort. And I liked the work. I liked to work on the bench. Being confined in an office didn't sound to me like it was too thrilling a job.

Then later on he resigned from the local presidency here. When he resigned, I was on the local Council Board here at that time. I don't know why he selected me. He called me in ahead of the

board meeting he was going to resign at, and he showed me his letter of resignation. I was just flustered. I couldn't believe that he was resigning, but he had some trouble with the International, disagreements, real tough disagreements with the International. I'm not sure I knew what they were all about.

INTERVIEWER I: Was this when President [William] Reihl was. . . was this under his presidency, or was this when [Andrew] Kennedy was still president?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I think it was under Reihl. I think it was. Kennedy, I think was president when I became a member of the union, but I didn't know much about him then. I know he was supposed to be an exceptional man, well-liked by everybody. Of course, the secretary of the International was a member of the Chicago local here, Bob Bruck. We never saw much of Bob Bruck. He was up to a meeting once in a while, once in a great while. And he and Zeitz didn't hit it off so great.

This fellow, George Canary, was in the office under Zeitz. And when Zeitz resigned, Canary called me in, and he said "Gee, I'd sure like you to run for the job." I mulled that over in my mind. Finally I said, "Okay, George. Since Zeitz is going out, I'll take a crack at it. I'll see if I can get elected." I would not be appointed; I just didn't like appointed jobs. I had a thing about that, that's all. I wanted to be elected.

INTERVIEWER I: Now, there was an older man . . .?

SPOHNHOLTZ: John Miller.

INTERVIEWER I: John Miller, uh-hm.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah, but he was a vice-president in name only. He was vice-president, and he was a nice, true union man; but you know, as far as conducting any business of the local, he was incapable of doing it. Well, he worked as a pressman in Croname Plate Company--that's a metal decorating company. He was incapable of taking over. He didn't want it. He didn't want it anyway. He could have had it, but he didn't want it.

So Canary ran for the job as president, and I ran for this long title--financial secretary and organizer.

INTERVIEWER I: Did you have opposition?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah, four or five guys ran against me. I think I got a majority of the vote anyway, not just a plurality. I was in by a big margin. The records here would show you what the results were.

INTERVIEWER I: Now, when was this, Harry?

SPOHNHOLTZ: 1947.

INTERVIEWER I: 1947.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah. I came in in May of 1947. And the last act that Zeitz told me, "You run and you'll get in." We had a crazy set of bylaws at that time. He wrote them! (laughter). But we had to change the bylaws because it provided for eighty-five dollars a week to start in a union job. Then every year it went up--I don't know--five bucks or something like that. I says, "Look, I'm averaging annually now $125.00 a week in 1947." I worked a lot of overtime for that, but, what the heck, all these union jobs are overtime anyway. And now I was gonna be on salary.

So knowing that and taking a chance on just what he promised me--that's all--he got the bylaw underway before he went out, and it passed. I got $125.00 a week as financial secretary and organizer, retroactive to the day I came into the office. So I had to take eighty-five dollars a week for two or three months while all this bylaw stuff went on--all secret referendums, you know--but I had made up my mind, "If that's what the boys want, if they don't give me the money, well, okay, I'll work for eighty-five dollars a week. That's what it is." I wasn't about to say anything about the rules. Those are the rules; and if they change them, okay. Well, they changed them.

INTERVIEWER II: I bet you never saw a forty-hour week, though.

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, I don't think I ever did. In those days, we had a school, had to sustain the school; that was strictly operated by the local. And we used to print stationery and envelopes for locals around the country. Many a Saturday and Sunday I was down in the basement room of that old building, cutting the stuff up and packing it and shipping it out and all of that stuff. I worked a lot of hours.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, I think that the labor movement in Chicago was in considerable ferment during this period of time, and I wonder if this affected the local. Or was the local more or less autonomous and concerned primarily with the affairs of the Amalgamated Lithographers?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I guess this is my own prejudiced view. When I came into this local, I had no thought of the International whatsoever. To me my world was Local 4, Chicago, and what came out of the International didn't impress me at all at that time. I was never impressed with an International job of any kind or being on any kind of a committee of the International. Not in those days.

But then after I became an officer of the Local, I had to learn that there was an Amalgamated Lithographers of America. My world was Local 4, and that's all. Canary used to . . . well, we used to eat lots of lunches together, and he used to say, "Look, the right name is Amalgamated Lithographers of America, not Local 4, Amalgamated Lithographers!" (Laughter) So he finally got me convinced that there was an International and that it was worth something.

Then the son of a gun, when he became president, he finished out his term of office on the Board of the International. Then we go to a convention in Minneapolis, and he says, "You're running for Board member on the International." "I don't want it, George. You know more about that." He says, "I've been on it for ten years. That's enough."

INTERVIEWER I: When was this?

SPOHNHOLTZ: 1949, I think. Anyway, it was a convention in Minneapolis. The first convention I ever went to was in Colorado Springs in 1946, right after the war, and I served on some committees. And boy, you know, we hadn't had a convention all during the war, and every local must have had a dozen or two resolutions in for the convention. I was appointed for the Law Committee, and I'd studied all these things. Fred Rose was the chairman at that time; he was a VP from the Mountain Region. So I got my indoctrination into the International there to begin with. Also I learned something about conventions at that first convention.

INTERVIEWER I: What did you learn? (laughing)

SPOHNHOLTZ: You can't believe what other delegates necessarily tell you! I was surprised. We had some resolutions in there, and I was sure I was convincing a lot of delegates that they should vote for those resolutions. They'd "yes" me to death. When the vote came to the floor, they all voted against us! So we lost the resolutions. Maybe it was just as well we lost. I don't think they were too good resolutions. They couldn't have been; the convention threw them out. I thought "These things will sail through. We'll come out with flying colors." Baloney!! These guys all promised me, but that isn't the way they voted.

I learned some other things later, too, in the International. On the Board I had the same thing happen to me. I was the only guy voting on Canary's side at a meeting we held up in Minnesota some place. No, it was Apple Valley, California.

INTERVIEWER I: Oh, yes!

(END OF INTERVIEW)

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Harry Spohnholtz #I

INTERVIEW #II WITH HARRY SPOHNHOLTZ

Date: August 21, 1974
Place: Chicago, Illinois

Interviewer I: Alice M. Hoffman
Interviewer II: Greg Giebel

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INTERVIEWER I: (Begins in mid-sentence) . . . four topics, I guess: the development of Chicago as a center of the printing trade and the eimportance of the school here in Chicago as a training center; the emergence of Chicago as playing a political role in the International; the events leading up to merger; and finally, the development of the Inter Local Pension Fund, in which Mr. Spohnholtz played a very crucial role.

All right, do you want to talk about what was happening in Chicago in terms of the development of the trade as you came into the trade during the depression?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I first walked into a shop in 1926 and then in 1929 became a member of the local. At that time I didn't know much about anything International except the role that Chicago played in it, and I was very much interested. The local here had a school which was established in 1924. It was a rather makeshift affair because the equipment was borrowed and loaned and whatnot, and given to the school from various suppliers or companies. And it was strictly union operated, for which our membership was charged a fee to go to the school, which I also attended. We had instructors that were taken off the bench and did the instructing.

That kept on going, and along about 1947 there was a meeting in Swampscott, Massachusetts, for which the then president came back and was trying to get together with employers on getting a joint school started here. I believe we were the first and only ones to get together with employers. At that time we even had open-shop employers participating in the school. A tuition fee was charged for the school. It started at the old Glessner House here in Chicago. Again, it was a bunch of loaned equipment mostly, wherever we could put our hands on it to make a complete school. The facility down there was . . .

INTERVIEWER I: What was the name of the place where you had the school?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Glessner House. (Spells it for the interviewer) That was an old building down on the south side of Chicago near the Loop, and it's still standing, as a matter of fact. It was one of those mansions that was on Prairie Avenue, which was a very elaborate estate in its day. Converting a mansion over to a schoolroom was a little less than desirable, but at least we could get the place for nothing.

INTERVIEWER I: You couldn't beat the price! (laughing)

SPOHNHOLTZ: Couldn't beat the price. We didn't have any money. So we ran the school for a few years on tuitions alone, and amazingly we had quite a few students.

Concurrently with the establishment of the school which, as I say, also embraced open-shop employers, although they really didn't have much to say about it--we said we need a way to make sure we have students in the school. So against a lot of local opposition we passed the rule, a bylaw, which required all apprentices to attend school. The requirement was four semesters of schooling, three for certain courses, but for the most part four semesters. We ruled out feeders going to the school because our pressmen were a little vit afraid that if we taught pressmanship to feeders, the next thing they'd be going out taking jobs as pressmen or wanting jobs as pressmen and upsetting the balance between pressmen and feeders.

So we continued that way for a number of years until we said, "Well, even this is no good." The Veterans' Administration, of course, furnished a lot of tuition fees for the people, and we did get some money, of course, from the employers, charging the employer the tuition fee for his students. Not all employers sent people to the school . . . they didn't have apprentices; some plants didn't want apprentices, not because they had to pay for the schooling but they just didn't want apprentices in the plant. So, we started charging an amount per employee, regardless of whether they went to school or not, and that's still inexistence today. For each employee the employer pays so much per month to the school. That's the way most of the schools are set up around the country today. It's per employee, not per student in the school. Although at the time I didn't think too much of the idea, it turned out to be a very good one; I finally acceded to it.

INTERVIEWER I: Did that have an effect, do you think, on making employers more willing to have apprentices?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, I don't really believe it did. In fact, we had some very strenuous arguments with employers at that time because they didn't want apprentices and had no intention of putting them on. There was only room for so many jobs in the industry anyway and they weren't going to make apprentices hand over fist. So we had opposition from the employers; we also had opposition from the membership. But nonetheless it did pass and it was established.

Then when we build this building--we moved into it in 1956--we already had arrangements with the employers that we would move the school from the Glessner House to our building, which we did. This provided

a lot better facility. We had the room here; it looked like we had all kinds of room to start, but like everything else, it gets too small.

That went on, and the school was improved right along. The latest equipment was always on hand. In fact, we had many equipment suppliers vying for the opportunity to put their equipment in the school. It was an excellent showplace for their equipment. So we got the newest equipment; never paid a nickel for it. But we had a little problem when the International started their program and started to get a lot of schools, full-time schools, around the country. But we still get most of the equipment for free; and what we don't get for free, we pay a very nominal fee for. They're glad to get their equipment in, so we have the latest in equipment; and it keeps getting continually replaced with anything new that comes out.

INTERVIEWER I: How many schools are there now all over the country?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I believe at the moment there's about nineteen or twenty of them around the country, what you could call full-time schools. But there are, I believe it must be, about sixty or seventy schools now around the country, and because of the smaller locations they're not able to operate a full-time school. So they might have an arrangement with the plants in their vicinity for teaching apprentices or journeymen in that location. But the programs are uniform across the country, and we developed those programs here in this school. So we were very proud of that.

When our facility got to be too crowded, overcrowded, especially with the advent of merger with the Photoengravers, and more officers and that in the building, since the Lithographers always had a lot of money--the Photoengravers didn't have so much--when we got to putting all the funds together, we had sufficient money to try to acquire the land, demolish the buildings, and then put up our own new building. Between the land, demolishing work, and getting up a new building, we invested about one million dollars in the school. We provided the building; we provided arrangements with the employers, to which they agreed, that the school would assume the taxes on the building, pay for their own maintenance, and a number of other things that go along with owning a building. So that's the arrangement that's made today. It doesn't cost the local virtually anything to have the building. The bills of the building are paid by the school, and the school has sufficient funds now to operate on a financially sound basis.

That bring us up to today. We're continually changing courses in the school. We now have a roll-fed press, brand new, given to the school, loaned to the school if you wish to call it that. It's all set up except for the roll stands, and they're coming in this month, I believe, if they're not already in. We will be able to have classes on the roll-fed press, which is a very expensive piece of equipment. It's brand new, and it is a Harris Cottrell (brand name), two-unit press, four plate cylinders, along with the ovens, the folders and everything else that is necessary to have a good roll-fed oepration. There's never any commercial work done in the school. That was an agreement way, way back.

INTERVIEWER I: Does it do any of the printing that the local requires?

SPOHNHOLTZ: None of the printing that the local requires. We buy it all on the outside. The only printing that they do that's usable is for their own material that they need in school They print their own letterheads and any bulletins or brochures. That's done in the school. It's usually done in connection with projects for teaching at the same time.

INTERVIEWER I: Now, where do you find the teachers, and do the employers have anything to say about who teaches?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, the employers have supposedly as much as we have to say, but they really leave it more up to the union. They okay every teacher. The teachers are drawn from the craft itself, all union men, and they're the best craftsmen that can be found for teaching purposes, if nothing else. You got to be able to teach. Then we indoctrinate them into teaching, which, of course, a fellow from the bench may not know everything about. So we bring in people for that from the various colleges and universities around the country to give them a briefing about methods, how to teach. That's not a full-blown program obviously, but it really doesn't have to be. They're not educators, per se. They're teaching a craft. But how do you get your story across and how do you get your points across? Now we've developed these manuals for the International that we always had anyway for ourselves, most all of which have been developed by the school. And we have various teaching aids and so forth.

So I don't know exactly how many we have today, but we usually run somewhere between sixty and eighty instructors part-time. There are three full-time instructors in the school who handle certain divisions. Then we have a full-time director of the school. They're all union members. We didn't start out with a union member as a director, but while it served its purpose at the time, it got to be quite outmoded. We had a couple of non-union directors who were playing both sides too much and frequently went to the employers. We said, "That's the end of that. We want a union director now." And that's what we have. We've had several of them now, and that works out very well for our purposes, from our side of the picture. It works well for the employers too. After all they all have union shops now. There's no non-union employers involved any more, although people from non-union shops are not necessarily prohibited from getting into the school. But it's quite a bit more difficult for them to get into a course. If a course is loaded, they're just ignored, that's all.

INTERVIEWER II: What do you see to be the future of the school in relation to the Bookbinders locals which are now part of the GAIU?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, at the time I retired they were talking about it too, because they have a program. And of course we have the Bookbinders in the building here, with offices in the building. They would like to get started. We probably could accommodate them, but there would be this problem of finance, for one thing, and the acquiring of equipment. Some of that bookbinding equipment, if you

want to do it right, requires a heck of a lot of room. I don't know if we have that much room in the building unless we built another floor on it, which we could do. The building is built for that purpose; so's this one.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, one question . . . I've heard a number of people allude to the notion that they would like to see more workers' education in the union. By that I mean courses in labor economics, labor history, the administration of the union, how the financial secretary of a local should function, etcetera. John Stagg has talked about this; Marty Grayson alluded to it at lunch. I'm wondering if your cooperative relationship in the schools with the employers makes it more difficult for you to use the schools in that way.

SPOHNHOLTZ: I don't think it really would make that much of a difference. We might get a little flak from the employers on that, but we have other programs that satisfy Chicago needs. We have regular programs going on here in Chicago. Now, some of the smaller locals . . .

INTERVIEWER I: You mean run by Roosevelt University or something?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, no. They're run by ourselves. We're a little jealous that way, I guess, or prejudiced or whatever you want to call it. No, I would say that we've never really tested it out on employers. We've often talked about it, but then we always wind up developing our own programs. Now, we did run seminars here, but we think our programs for shop delegates and special meetings and things of that sort . . . we give every newcomer a thorough indoctrination in the union before he's sworn in so that he knows what it's all about, or should know. Then we have a newsletter that goes out every couple of months, and we have a number of things that go on that keep the membership informed. We have compulsory attendance, which means our meetings are very well attended. It's compulsory, yes, but if a fellow doesn't come, he just pays five dollars for every quarter that he doesn't come to one meeting.

Now, we use our general meetings for education and union activities, affairs, and operations. When we put a program out, just like the building of that building, officers don't go out and spend a million dollars of a local's money without bona fide approval from membership. And for that we ran special meetings with slide presentations so that they had visual deals; we had reports from the various city agencies and metropolitan agencies as to the future of this particular neighborhood that we're in; and we had a thorough search of where the plants are. This is a big city, and it covers a lot of territory; and many of our members live in suburbs. So we wanted to be sure that we had good access to the school. Now, if you put it up in an area where there's a lot of plants, that might sound great; but we have plants in the Loop; we have them mostly northwest and north, and west, and not too many on the south side, although we have a number. So this seems to be a good, all-around location for most of the people. It's convenient to expressways in all directions, and we have a large parking lot, which we wanted. So we can accommodate everybody.

One point I'd like to make is that while this school was

started primarily for the education of apprentices, making it compulsory for them to go to school, (it used to be almost all apprentices at one point) today about sixty percent of all the students are journeyman being brought up to date.

INTERVIEWER I: Right. And this reflects the tremendous technological innovations.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes. Journeymen are never forced to the school. They come of their own volition. They don't have to pay anything because now the school's on a good financial footing. I can remember the day when an employer and I went down to the bank and borrowed $15,000 on our own signatures just so we could pay the salaries in the school. Luckily we got paid back! Otherwise we would have been on the hook for $7,500 apiece. So you know, everything wasn't peaches and cream at the school to start with, especially on the finance. We could get the members to donate their time, which they did at the beginning. Now we pay the instructors.

INTERVIEWER II: Is one of the reasons that the school has been so effective for upgrading skills of long-standing members because Chicago has continued to grow and introduce new technology? I'm aware of at least two schools where it is more difficult to attract the older members to come in and give up their time even though it's free, it's still their own time--because, I think, they feel less certain that many of the new technologies that are expressed in the school will be as demanded as they are elsewhere.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, on that score, we've had some sad experiences here in Chicago with members who did not want to keep up their education. Now, we have continually preached to our members . . . and I know Ken Brown does it whenever he gives a speech, in talking about that. He says, "Be prepared to relearn your trade three or four times during your career in the business." When hand transferring went out the window and photo platemaking came in, we had some four hundred hand transferrers at that time that were . . . if they didn't get out of work right away, they were certainly going to be out of work real quick. So they had to relearn. Now, that was a gradual transformation, but to the fellow that's out of work, it's a deep depression. So they went to the school. That really was the big impetus to get these people to go to school. So they learned stripping; they learned photo platemaking; they learned camera work; and they were able to transfer the job around from hand transferring to some other branch of the trade.

Now we've had so much innovation come into this business with the advent of the scanner and the roll-fed presses, various different kinds of plates. And each one of them is a new process. There's no company that has all of the different things under one roof. They go for certain types of plates and they go for certain stripping methods and they have certain types of work. So I think we've made our membership aware that, [just] because you've got this fine job today and are well-satisfied, that necessarily you can have this job ten years from now.

Take for instance the sheetfed pressmen. When the seventy-six and seventy-eight-inch, four-color presses were their ball, here in the city, the roll-fed press came in. I mentioned that roll-fed work prior to the advent of the big influx of roll-fed presses was somewhat a cheaper type of work or a poorer quality of work. It was a matter of getting the ink on the paper. For what it was used for it was fine, but it wasn't the big thing that was in demand.

Now today you do quality work on a roll-fed press that runs at a much greater speed than sheetfed presses. As a result, there are very, very few, if any, big sheetfed presses coming into Chicago today. They're being replaced by the conventional thirty-six or thirty-eight-inch roll-fed press, and they run up to as many as sixteen plates that you can put more on if you want. That's eight units. They print four colors both sides at the same time, and they do it at tremendous speed with excellent quality. They can cope with any sheetfed operation that's going.

INTERVIEWER I: Okay, well, I think that one of the things that's interesting . . . you commented yesterday that throughout this whole period your world began and ended with Local 4.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah, that's what I thought! (laughing)

INTERVIEWER I: And you know, the International didn't intrude on your consciousness very much here in Chicago. But along about 1947, '48, '49, you began to take on more of an International role, and at this time, the ferment between Blackburn and then the coming of President George Canary. I wonder if you would want to describe your moving into the International scene at that point and what you saw as the problem and how this related to your relationship with George Canary.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, when I came into the office, I was the second full-time man just like George Canary was before. When [Fred] Zeitz resigned, Canary became president. He asked me to become an officer. I ran for the job and got it. I wasn't exactly crazy about taking it at that point, either, because my wife didn't want me to take it. But since then that all went by the boards and it's fine.

Then at the next convention Canary told me, "I'm not gonna run for councillor any more." He was on the International Council. He said, "I want you to run." Okay, I ran, and I got elected. That's when I became involved, started really getting involved with the International. There were also some things that started to change in the International at that point. Blackburn had become president. He was a nice fellow and a good, strong union man. But I think he rather lacked the qualities of leadership which meant making firm and hard decisions and carrying them through. There were a number of us on the International Council at that time who, more or less . . . well, I wouldn't say we ran the show, but if we got our heads together and wanted to put something forth in the International, it usually was done. And that included the president in New York, Swayduck, and the president in San Francisco, Brandenberg, and myself. Plus we also had very good cooperation

usually from the Canadian locals; they usually went along with us. So we started building up the Council to where it meant something.

Then there were a lot of different ideas projected. We revamped the whole International system at that time, the administration. We used to have vice presidents of the various regions. We got rid of those and just made them vice presidents. That caused a furor. Each vice president had his own bailiwick at that time and wanted to keep with it. But in spite of vice presidential resistance, it was passed, and we did away, not with the regions, but we did away with the vice president of a certain region.

INTERVIEWER II: When was this?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, I don't know just exactly what year. I think it was probably somewhere in the early fifties . . .

INTERVIEWER I: Right.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Then we started setting up departments in the International. I always thought that was a pretty good idea. Then our International, the way I saw it, began clicking and made some sense. There were a number of controversies, of course, as there always is, and disagreements and then finally agreement somewhere along the route, compromise or whatever. So we started setting up the International organization.

Again, I mention that, while Blackburn in my opinion was a very fine union man and he did his job as best he could, I just think he lacked that quality of really taking over the leadership and making it click. Then there were a few things that he did which the Council generally didn't like. I think he didn't tell the truth to the Council at one time during the Poughkeepsie strike. Instead of getting approval for the strike benefits, he paid them for several weeks before it finally got before the Board. He tried to cover that up at that point, and then it was unearthed that he had approved them. So there was a lot of dissension at that point. Well, it finally got approved. But it was the idea, instead of going to the Council, he did it on his own.

Then I wouldn't say that people were necessarily getting disenchanted, but some of the other councillors, usually the leaders in the larger locals, were coming around asking Canary whether he'd care to run for president. I don't really believe that Canary necessarily thought that he wanted that job, but I think he shared some of our views that he could change the International around a little bit. He finally consented to run, and he defeated Blackburn by a considerable majority.

At that time I had a heck of a time because Blackburn had come to me, "Can I get the support of Chicago?" I said, "John, how the devil can I promise you support from Chicago when Canary is the fair-haired boy in Chicago? I'm going to recommend that our members vote solidly for Canary." Well, he was disappointed at that because we were the second largest local at that point. New York went for Canary with all of the fanfare that New York can go for somebody. They even printed yellow ballots and yellow envelopes--

canary-color, you know. (laughter) And they turned in an overwhelming vote. So did we. Of course, Canary had a lot of friends in the Central Region particularly. He also had some friends elsewhere, Philadelphia being one of them. Philadelphia was the fourth largest local. And with that many locals on your side, the larger locals, it didn't matter too much what the smaller locals wanted because they didn't have enough votes. So Canary got in.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, I think that as an outsider, it seems to me that there's something of a pattern here that goes from Blackburn to Canary to Slater and really only gets interrupted with the presidency of Ken Brown. And that is that Local One puts forward a candidate that they want--Blackburn in one instance, Canary in the next instance, Slater in the third instance--and in each case becomes dissatisfied with that candidate or turns against him for some reason or other, no matter who the candidate is. I'm wondering why should that be? I mean, after all, George Canary was their candidate in the beginning.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I don't know whether this is proper for an interview, but you're correct in your analysis of it. They would go whole-hog for a candidate, get him elected, and then in a very short space of time turn against him. I didn't think at the time perhaps so much of it, but later on, reflecting back, and analysing it much as you have, I think it amounted pretty much to "If we help you get in, you do as I want you to do, not as you think, but as I want you to do." I think therein lies that kind of a situation. I can tell you now that Don Stone was on the hook, too, at one point. [Marty] Grayson, I believe, was on the hook at one point. Grayson was secretary-treasurer. Don Stone was editor who became secretary-treasurer. Boy, oh boy! there was criticism galore on the type of minutes he kept until it got so ridiculous that we had a stenotypist come in. If you ever heard Swayduck talk, I don't know how many stenotypists, no matter how fast they were, could ever put it all down. And besides they'd have to put down 'expletive deleted', you know, most of the time.

INTERVIEWER I: Moreover it would be more than anybody cared to remember about what happened at that meeting! (laughter)

SPOHNHOLTZ: I can remember Swayduck sitting at the Board meetings. He'd get so wound up! He'd turn to me and say, "Harry, get me off the merry-go-round!" (laughter) So I'd have to butt in there and shut him up so that we could get on with whatever we were trying to get on with because he'd go on and on and on.

Well, I think that's what happened mostly. I think it's because after they went for a candidate, if he didn't do what they wanted him to do, then they just went off of him. Canary was not that kind of a person. He had his own ideas, right or wrong, and he was gonna be a leader, and he wasn't going to take orders from anyone, not orders. He would listen to everybody. In that way he was very fair, but he never gave me any advice as a local president. I used to see him; he had an office here in Chicago and it was easy to see him. Still he'd say, "Harry, you have to make up your own mind."

INTERVIEWER I: How did you feel about this question of moving the INternational office from Chicago to New York, or not?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I'll tell you. Tempers got so high here in Chicago that . . . and Canary didn't care for New York. He had his office in Chicago. Mostly it was not so much that he wanted the office in Chicago, but mostly it was the fact that we wanted to bring the International membership to awareness that there was some friction within the International that they probably didn't ever hear about. Since most of us didn't go making speeches around the country, this got to be pretty difficult. So at that time--I think I mentioned this to you, but it might not be on the tape--I was taking a vacation in the summer up in Minnesota. And [George] Gundersen, who was a little bulldog, (gets a hold and don't want to let go), couldn't find anything in the constitution about anything like that, and I was away on vacation. He sent me the constitution and a whole bunch of blank paper and says, "Write something!"

INTERVIEWER I: Write something with respect to where the headquarters ought to be?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, we wanted to get this out to the membership. Wanted to get it out. A referendum was the greatest thing. That would give us an opportunity to explain the resolution. First of all, it would have been very unusual. Now, if you're gonna send a resolution out, you got to have an issue. The only issue that I could think of . . . we had been talking about moving the International office to a number of locations. So I got out this . . . I figured that's an issue--move the office from New York to Chicago. At that time they were in the process of buying that building. Swayduck got a hold of a picture of that building, forced it on Don Stone, who I believe was the editor at that time, and made a cover out of it. Before there was a sign on the building, he dubbed in a sign right across the building on the cover. That came out just before the referendum. As irony would have it, who signed the papers to buy the building? George Canary. (laughter) He was the president, so he signed the papers.

But anyway, the initiative was very hard to put across, to get it to be legal under the constitution. I was pretty proud of that job because the attorney couldn't find anything wrong with the resolution. And we were able to get the necessary number of locals and the necessary percentage of members of the locals to sign a petition for that resolution.

INTERVIEWER I: Now, this was a resolution to provide for the initiative?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No. The initiative was in the constitution.

INTERVIEWER I: All right.

SPOHNHOLTZ: But in order to make it effective, make it operable, you had to get these signatures from, I think it was five--it might have been seven--locals. I think it was ten percent. Maybe I got my numbers mixed up; maybe it was seven percent of the total membership of that local. Now, we achieved that in Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis and Philadlephia, I believe. . . well, we had a number

of locals. So it satisfied the requirements of constitutional initiative. Then the International had no other alternative but to put it out.

INTERVIEWER I: All right, now, what did they put out specifically?

SPOHNHOLTZ: They put out a resolution to move the office from New York to Chicago. We lost the referendum, but I, to this day, believe that the whole idea of that being put out by initiative and going to referendum by the entire membership alerted the membership that something is haywire. See? Something is haywire.

INTERVIEWER I: Here's the Journal coming out with a picture of the New York headquarters. Did George Canary campaign actively for this referendum?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No. I don't think he did. We did a little campaigning here in Chicago but not so much . . .

INTERVIEWER I: You and George Gundersen did?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER I: Yes.

SPOHNHOLTZ: We did some. We made calls to various locals and asked for their cooperation, you know, even if they didn't sign the petition.

INTERVIEWER II: I would have thought that all kinds of locals would have been calling you up and saying, "What's going on here?"

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, that happened, too. That happened too. We said, "Look, we just think the International's being run too much by the attorney and Local One. Something's got to be done about it." So we made them aware and woke them up.

INTERVIEWER I: Okay, well, I don't know whether that brings us to this famous Apple Valley, but for some reason or other, Local One decided that they would have to take some kind of very definite action against George Canary.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah, I forget exactly what it was now. I know it was heated.

INTERVIEWER I: 1958? Wasn't that Apple Valley?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, I think so.

INTERVIEWER I: Yes, it was '58.

SPOHNHOLTZ: About 1958.

INTERVIEWER II: Did it involve his withdrawal from the AFL-CIO?

SPOHNHOLTZ: It might have. You know, I remember the meeting; I remember the double cross I got from every single guy around the table; but I'll be darned if I remember the issue. And it was a big issue then, and I know I was the only one that voted in Canary's corner at that meeting. So the issue was lost. I think it might well have been withdrawal from the AFL-CIO, although that really happened in Philadelphia. The actual withdrawal was in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania.

INTERVIEWER I: So that out of that, then, comes the decision to remove George Canary and put in Patrick Slater?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No. There was never any decision to . . . you couldn't have removed Canary. He had never done anything wrong. He was the most honest guy you'd ever want to meet. You couldn't get at him for . . . you couldn't force him to resign. Nobody forced Canary to resign. That came about at Cleveland at what was supposed to be a policy-making convention. Canary had conferred with me before. He said, "When I go to Cleveland I'm going to resign." He had just been sworn in in Apple Valley! This is only a few months later that he resigned. He gave me some of his reasons for resigning; he couldn't get along with Robinson; he wasn't going to listen to Robinson dictating to him; he wasn't going to listen to Swayduck dictating to him. I don't know, he really had it in for Don Stone. I don't know quite why, but I think that Don Stone was trying to do everything that Swayduck and Robinson wanted him to do. I think really that was it. Canary had a quirk about him in that, if officers were elected and he was going to be the president, he thought the officers, while they could disagree with him, should, in the final analysis, support and help him. I guess he felt that wasn't being done.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, it's interesting that at this Apple Valley convention, you know, all of this comes to a head over some peripheral issue apparently, because you can't quite remember whether it was withdrawal from the AFL-CIO or whether it was over the question of projected mergers being discussed or just exactly what the issue was, except that it coalesced around New York versus Chicago somehow or other.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, more or less. I'll tell you where you'll find that information. You'll find it in the minutes of the Apple Valley meeting, just what the issue is. Maybe I've made a mistake, but I never deliberately asked to be recorded, you know, on my vote. I might have at that meeting, but I used to think that was kind of silly for a guy to say so. If we lost the issue, we lost the issue. That's all.

INTERVIEWER I: But the point is, it wasn't the issue itself.

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, I don't think so. I think it was a matter of getting Canary in line. Now, at that meeting, prior to taking . . .

(END OF TAPE I, SIDE 1)

INTERVIEWER I: [We were] about to talk about the issue of withdrawal from the AFL-CIO itself.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes. That meeting was held in Philadelphia--the International Council meeting was--at which time a letter of withdrawal from the AFL-CIO was drawn up; and the Board voted in favor of it. I don't know which side I voted on. I probably did not vote for it, but nonetheless it was adopted by the Council. An arrangement was made to meet the AFL-CIO Board up in the Pocono Mountains some place. I believe it was the Clothing Workers' place up there.

At that time Milt Williams from Philadelphia was on the Board. He was a staunch Canary supporter, and he thought he was really having it put to him. He didn't want to get out of the AFL-CIO. He consistently said "That's the wrong thing to do." So I can remember riding up on the bus with Milt Williams sitting alongside of me. He was telling me, "Harry, this is a dirty thing to do to Canary, to have him present a letter of withdrawal which he doesn't believe in at all."

So we went all the way up there to the meeting. George Meany calls us in. The whole Board is there. Canary prefaced his remarks briefly by saying that they wanted to bring to the attention of the AFL-CIO certain things and so on. As soon as he got to his letter . . . he didn't have much to say before that, and as far as certain people who were on that Board, they didn't want him to say anything, just read the letter. Well, he started reading the letter; somewhere very early in the letter it said that the Amalgamated Lithographers are withdrawing from the AFL-CIO. George Meany got up and said, "That's all! You're out!" [He] excused us; no chance to explain anything. As soon as you said "withdrawal" to George Meany, who must have had some inkling of what was coming, as soon as that word "withdrawal" came out, he said, "That's all! You're excused! You're out!" No vote of the Board. Just out! (laughter)

INTERVIEWER I: (laughing) Well, when George Meany says it, that makes it unanimous.

SPOHNHOLTZ: So that was it. Then all the way back Milt Williams was telling me, "That's the wrong thing to do." Milt Williams in my opinion, is a very staunch and able union leader, and he's been born and bred in unionism, primarily through the Textile Workers, with his dad, and the Weavers, you know . . .

INTERVIEWER I: Uh-hm, Carpet Weavers.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Carpet Weavers. So he thought like I do, I think, that an independent local is almost nothing. They're a local; they have their rights and all the rest of it. And I was very much a local man, as I mentioned before; but I was beginning to understand the mechanics of an International, what they can do for the locals around; and then I saw some things they actually did for locals. It worked pretty well. So that was that. We were out of the AFL-CIO. Then it was a matter of joining the CIO . . . no . . .

INTERVIEWER I: No, this was after merger.

SPOHNHOLTZ: After merger. So there we were, foot-loose and fancy-free. It was through merger with the Photoengravers that we got back into the AFL-CIO.

INTERVIEWER I: You came in by the back door! (laughing)

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah, came in the back door. We also inherited a few other things which I think are going to go by the board sooner or later.

INTERVIEWER I: Now, this also meant--or did it?--being on the outside as far as the Allied Printing Trades Council was concerned?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yeah, I think that's a good thing.

INTERVIEWER I: No, but I mean did withdrawal from the AFL-CIO at that point in 1958 jeopardize affiliations with the Allied Printing Trades Council?

SPOHNHOLTZ: We were never in it.

INTERVIEWER I: You were not in it at that . . .

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, we came in through merger with the Photoengravers.

INTERVIEWER I: With the Photoengravers again there, too?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Right.

INTERVIEWER I: Okay. All right. Well, I think that running through all of these various convention proceedings are discussions of the Inter Local Pension Fund. Maybe you would just want to trace that from its beginnings. I think you were involved from the very beginning.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes. Well, I don't want to take credit for the idea of an inter local pension fund. I would give that credit to Canary. He wanted to start a pension fund. But he says, "It ought to be International." Well, we finally came to the conclusion, after investigating it, that getting International approval for one fund was impossible. Now Marty Grayson called a meeting in Detroit, our secretary-treasurer.

INTERVIEWER I: When was this?

SPOHNHOLTZ: It was in '48 or '49, probably the latter part of '48 or the early part of '49, very early part.

INTERVIEWER I: Right.

SPOHNHOLTZ: So we attended that as did quite a number of other locals. Some of the larger locals did not attend. They were for pension funds; it wasn't that they were against pension funds. I believe New York already had their pension fund started by that time. They didn't want any part of the International . . . as far as the pension fund was concerned. Canary says, "It really should be International." How do you make the thing International if you can't get the vote? Too many locals were not enthused about a pension fund at that time.

So we got together here in Chicago in the spring of 1949. A number of locals came out, May 1, 1949. We went in with a proposition to the employers, which provided for the withholding of two and a half dollars a week from the employee's wages and then giving it to him in the form of a separate check. The reason for that was because there was a big question, since the Taft-Hartley Law hadn't been in effect too long, as to whether it was legal for them to withhold anything but dues. So we started out with the idea of an assignment, signed by the members--we passed bylaws in the locals that were involved--which required them to do this, required them to be members of the pension fund. There were five locals--Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Cincinnati, and Cleveland--that originally chose to be part of the Inter Local. Simultaneously, since all our contracts expired at the same time, we went on with this proposition.

There was one fly in the ointment. Cleveland had gone in for two dollars a week, as opposed to two and a half. All the other locals went with two and a half. That, then, was finally approved by the employers and, of course, by the members before we went in, so automatically, once we got agreement from the employers, it was part of the contract. We all got agreement. We had a little problem with Cleveland because they had two dollars a week instead of two and a half, but they were able to go back in and have it made two and a half dollars a week; and then we adjusted it to give them credit for as many weeks as they had collected before we got the fund going.

Now, we worked on that pension fund, mostly here in Chicago, but also in other locations. Finally we got to almost the complete draft of the pension fund indenture and rules in the city of Cincinnati. We had Murray Latimer for the actuary, and he gave us a lot of good advice. Our attorney, the same fellow that I had some real tough arguments with, drafted the legal document, which was good. It had a lot of good advice in it. It's still in there today, unchanged.

We then established the pension fund and formally adopted it. We had three plans at that time that were put out to the membership, one of which was recommended by the trustees, or the committee; at that time it was the committee. The plan that we had submitted as a committee, the one we recommended, was adopted. And it became in force in December of 1950. In January of 1951 we started paying out money.

Now each local had kept this money to themselves. We had no depository for it. So just like we did here, they kept the money separate. Then after we established a trust indenture, then the office was set up here in Chicago and still is. And the money started flowing in. Since that time. . .

INTERVIEWER I: You mean after that the money was pooled from all over?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, then it was all pooled into the Inter Local Pension Fund. The money started coming in here. We started paying out pensions, which were very, very small in the beginning. For one year anyway, no active member could get a pension; you had to be in one year before you could get anything. But for those who were already retired and exempt, they got paid right away; and they got paid 15 dollars a month. Then we worked up a formula for a reduction of that. Then after five years we eliminated the reduction so that if you're not in by that time, you can't get anything for your exempt members.

So that was on a sliding scale. Philadelphia was the first local to come in after the trust indenture was adopted, and they only missed by three months. Their contract was to be up in March, I guess it was, the end of March. So they came in at that time.

INTERVIEWER I: While it sometimes seems as if things are happening in a particular union sort of by themselves, if you look at the total picture, 1949 was, after all, the big year for pensions in the labor movement. The Steelworkers took a long strike to achieve pensions--119 days in 1949. There was also a strike in Canada in which the basic issue was pensions. I'm wondering if you were thinking about this here in Chicago and having these discussions with George Canary, what kinds of advice you might have gotten from other unions. That is, for example, how did you happen to choose Murray Latimer as an actuary?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, he came well recommended. I believe it was the attorney that suggested him.

INTERVIEWER I: Robinson?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Robinson. We knew about attorneys; we didn't know about actuaries. So we really didn't know of anybody. I don't think any of us knew what an actuary was at that point. So since Murray Latimer had a lot to do with the Railroad Retirement Board and a lot to do with Social Security--he was one of quite a few actuaries that were in on that whole business--we thought he ought to know something about pensions. We did not go to other unions because we wanted a union-run fund. What other unions were doing at that point was negotiating with companies to establish a pension plan which the company controlled. We didn't want that. We wanted something to say about our pension plan. So we made it a private pension fund for the locals that joined.

INTERVIEWER I: So in other words, what you're saying is you chose Murray Latimer for the same reason that the Steelworkers chose him, not because the Steelworkers chose him? In other words, you looked around and picked out the smartest actuary you could find, and the Steelworkers did the same thing. The plan and the things that you worked out with Murray Latimer were very independent from the kinds of things that the Steelworkers did.

SPOHNHOLTZ: That's right. Very much so, yes.

INTERVIEWER I: I think that's an important point to make because otherwise people can sort of see 1949 as the big pension year and everybody gets pensions and Murray Latimer is the actuary and the pensions are all the same. This is a very important point to make, that the Lithographers actually devised with Murray Latimer a very different kind of pension plan.

SPOHNHOLTZ: I think if we were influenced at all, it was by the fact that New York had already established a union-run pension program. Now, they tried to establish it jointly originally. The employers would have no part of it. So they went on their own. We established ours following the same independing thinking, that we wouldn't have the employers in it. And the employers didn't want to get in it. They fought our pension fund tooth and nail in the beginning. All kinds of lawyers came out, saying it was illegal and all the rest of that stuff. Nonetheless they weren't about to take a strike over it. So they agreed to the deduction.

INTERVIEWER I: Except in Canada?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Except in Canada, yes. Well, by that time, that was, I believe, maybe a year or two later; and I think the Canadian employers saw the wisdom of being a part of it. We went for joint programs here really, like the educational program and the health and welfare program, and we would have gone jointly with the employers. But they wanted no part of it. Then we had a fight on our hands to get it established by contract so that they'd do these things to make it possible. We learned early in the game that one of the things is, if you're going to run a pension fund, you have to have some kind of a guaranteed income. So, since we couldn't get it out of the employers, the best we could do was get it deducted from a man's wage. We had the checks turned in unsigned, and we endorsed them here. We got approval of the banks to do it, and to this day it's being done that way, although many of the companies today are now remitting the pension fund in one lump sum.

The guy that first broke the ice on that altogether was [Edward] Donahue up in Twin Cities. When they came in, which was not too long after it was established, he went up there and, contrary to recommendations of "do it this way," he says, "I'm not gonna fuss with that. I want one check a month from each employer." And he got the employers to agree to it! So he started right off collecting from the employer (chuckling) with one check. And I guess virtually all of the checks coming into the Chicago local now and most other locals are in one-check form.

INTERVIEWERI: So what you are saying is, while you would have been willing to go along with an employers' pension fund, you really feel that it was very lucky that they did oppose you on that?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, I think so. It drew our members together very strongly. While it started out at very low rates . . . well, take for instance Twin Cities. When George and I went up there (Canary, that is) to talk to them . . . see, George was the

chairman, and I was the secretary. We were supposed to be the guys with all the knowledge about pension funds. Well, we knew something about them, being involved in it.

Well, we went up to Twin Cities. This fellow, Donahue, you never could trust just exactly what he was going to do at a meeting. I don't think you can trust what he's going to do today, but he's a darn good union man. I don't mean that in any derogatory form at all. He changed the whole setup from separate checks to one check. We got up there; he's got three different insurance companies up there, and we weren't exactly prepared for this! (laughter) Canary says to me, "Shall we walk out of the meeting now?" Because we didn't want to get into a debate with insurance companies. I says, "No, we're here now, and Donahue wants to get in the Inter Local. I know he wants his local to be in there, but he wants the members to decide for themselves."

So okay, each one of these guys gets up and makes his spiel from the insurance companies. Canary got up, and I got up. So when the debate is over, the presentations are over, they're going to take a secret ballot vote at that meeting. They had a good attendance at the meeting. One of the insurance company guys turned to Donahue and says, "After Spohnholtz got up there and he gave this brotherhood talk, I've got no way of winning this thing. I'm gonna lose!" He did! (laughter) So did they all! Because I talked more unionism than I did pension funds. Oh, I gave them pension fund stuff, too. I told them at that time, like I told any other local that I spoke in front of, that . . .

INTERVIEWER II: Just to reassure you at this moment, we heard a similar story about another local that called in . . .

SPOHNHOLTZ: St. Louis?

INTERVIEWER II: No, it was even another one . . .

INTERVIEWER I: Pittsburgh.

INTERVIEWER II: Pittsburgh. They put three other competitive funds on the board, but they blinded it, just did it A, B, C, and D. And the membership voted overwhelmingly for the Inter Local Pension Fund . . .

INTERVIEWER I: And then after they had voted for it, the president said, "Well, this is what you voted for." They voted for the Inter Local Pension Fund, but he didn't tell them beforehand. You know, it was just this plan, that plan, third plan, fourth plan, and put the figures up on the board. And they voted overwhelmingly because the Inter Local Pension Plan was the best plan.

SPOHNHOLTZ: First time I've ever heard just how they came out with Pittsburgh.

INTERVIEWER II: You had two good things going for you--good pension and a brotherhood speech.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, we surely had to convince our membership that we could do better in the Inter Local than any insurance company or any company. And we assured them that if we are able to ever increase the amount . . . and we expected assuredly that we would, and we had actuarial reports which said it would be on its own, from Murray Latimer, at that time, that within three years our pension fund would be able to weather the worst depression this country has ever seen. And we had just got out of one not too long ago. He says, "By that time you'll be able to sustain yourselves indefinitely, probably with some changes, but certainly you won't have to reduce it. In all probability you'll be able to increase it." I forget just how many increases we've had in the pension fund, plus the change in rules. Probably the most expensive change in the rules was when we reduced the age from sixty-five to sixty-two. But we've constantly been improving it, and it will be improved still more, in my opinion.

INTERVIEWER II: You made mention of an interesting statistic off the tape before, and that was that after two years and eleven months . . .

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, yes, right at the moment, at the rate that's being paid, regardless of how much money a man has paid into that pension fund, if he retires at age sixty-two or over, he will have received all his money back in two years and eleven months. Anything beyond that is pure and simple gravy as far as the pension fund's concerned because it doesn't get reduced.

INTERVIEWER I: Now, let me ask you. What about efforts to have the New York local participate in the Inter Local Pension Fund?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, we didn't really make any effort to get them to participate. We did sit down with them, though, and get an agreement with them that, if one of the Inter Local members transferred to New York, he had the right to make an election whether to stay in the Inter Local or join the New York pension plan. Likewise, the Inter Local agreed that if a New York member moved to one of the Inter Local participating locals, he would have the same right to elect. So that part of an agreement was there.

INTERVIEWER I: Is that still true?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I believe so, even though they're not in the union anymore. At least they recognize it, it seems.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, it seems to me the whole question of pensions is involved very much in the merger discussions, first of all because there was a tremendous amount of fear that the pension program of the Photoengravers would be some kind of a threat to the Lithographers' pension program as merger was being discussed. But also it occurs to me that the tail was wagging the dog a little bit in that some of these locals who were in the Inter Local Pension Fund, who might have been inclined to go with New York at the time of merger, were held by their participation in the Inter Local Pension Fund. Do you agree with that statement?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Yes, I agree with that. Very definitely I think those locals that were in the Inter Local Pension Fund at the time New York pulled out, among them were some locals--and they even sat as trustees on the board--they would have been inclined to pull out of the Inter Local and join with Number One.

INTERVIEWER I: Pull out of the International?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Out of the International.

INTERVIEWER I: Yeah.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Probably join up with Local One, if it hadn't been that their members had equities in the Inter Local. In some cases there were not great equities, but in some cases there were. I think that might have occurred, but I think the Inter Local very clearly won. The fact of the matter is, when the Inter Local was being formed, that was one of the big points we wanted to be sure about--that once a member was in, he wasn't likely to pull out of the union, even as an individual, because he would lose his equity in the pension fund. Now, maybe some day that might get changed, but by this time everybody's got a pretty good equity in it.

INTERVIEWER I: So it became an organizing point as well?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, yes, very much so. I know there are some changes coming before the Inter Local now. In fact, the executive committee is meeting today, mulling these things over in another city, and they'll come up with, I'm sure, some recommendations to come before the board. I'm very proud of that Inter Local Pension Fund. I don't know how we had the brains or the knowledge to establish a real good, sound, hard fund for the membership. Today there's no problem with it at all.

The last big to-do I had with the pension fund locally was when we went from two and a half dollars to three percent of gross. We had a big, big meeting that evening, and it came through proposals for a new contract. So when the membership voted on the proposal, if we got it in the contract, they didn't vote again. They couldn't vote it out. I think the key at that meeting was when one of our fellows who was making about three hundred dollars a week gross at that particular point with his overtime says, "You mean to tell me that, instead of paying two and a half dollars a week, I'll have to pay nine dollars a week?" "Yes, sir!" Well, you know, nobody else in the room was making three hundred dollars a week. So he just made our point for us! Of course you get credit for all that. Put in nine dollars, you get nine dollars' worth of credit. Today you don't hear anything about it.

Now the Photoengravers are in the Inter Local Pension Fund, but you're right about that being an issue on merger. It was a great issue, particularly among the Lithographers. The Photoengravers didn't mind. They didn't like their pension fund anyway, and they had vote after vote trying to vote it out, you know, and distribute the money, whatever was left. But that always got defeated. So they still had a pension fund. Now the Inter Local

has made it possible for the Photoengraver to come in at two percent of gross, and he stays in the Photoengraver pension fund. He's in both of them. That may have to change in future years. Two and half dollars is approximately three percent of the wage that we started at in 1950. We had to raise it, that's all, because we were falling behind in what we could provide. Three percent provides the pension.

INTERVIEWER I: How did you feel, yourself, about merger with the Photoengravers as it might affect the pension fund?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I never had any fears about it because we had continually said to our membership and the membership of any local that was in the Inter Local at that time, if the Photoengravers want in, they would not be taken in if it adversely affects the Lithographers' pensions. Now we knew that there was no way of bringing them in at that time. We knew pretty well, although we were going to investigate it, that there was no way that we could really bring them in without affecting the Lithographers' equities. So we weren't about to recommend it to our membership as Lithographers.

INTERVIEWER II: And the Inter Local Pension Fund was separate from the merger. The merger was with the International, and so this was always considered as a separate question for the membership.

SPOHNHOLTZ: I don't think there was any fear that merger on an International level would affect any of the pension funds. That was made pretty clear, and the membership understood that; certainly the delegates did. And the vote should express that. But when it came to local mergers, that became a burning subject.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, not only that, but Swayduck did some demagoguing about that . . .

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, yes, he was pretty good at that! (laughter) Sure, he wanted the merger to be defeated. So he was the guy that spread it around the country, trying to get the International merger defeated. When the International merger was approved and then the locals began to merge locally, again we gave the local memberships the assurance that that wouldn't occur until and unless the actuary said it's on a par. So now those locals (Photoengravers) that want to get in the Inter Local can get in.

INTERVIEWER II: What did you feel about International merger?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I was all for it, knowing full well that particularly the letterpress division in the Photoengravers was . . . well, to use an expression, "dying in the bag." But I never expected that it would ever go out, and it still isn't out. I don't think it ever will. But it's a declining membership; all the statistics prove it.

We had no trouble here in Chicago merging locally. And, of course, as I'm sure you know from the record, one of my proudest moments in the International was to be chosen to be chairman of the Lithographers' merger committee and to present the whole matter of merger to the convention. At that time Harry Conlon, who is now an officer in this local, was chosen chairman of the Photoengravers' committee. We worked hand-in-glove at the committee meeting a whole week before the convention and at the convention, so that our timing on the various issues and articles almost came out perfect. And we got the things across, and I guess we [Lithographers] finished a few minutes before the Photoengravers. We had the conventions in the same hotel. When it was once approved, then we met together. So we came out just beautifully on that. That I think was, besides many other proud moments that I had with the International, one of the proudest ones.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, I notice that at the convention in 1959 there was a merger discussion with ITU. [International Typographers Union]

SPOHNHOLTZ: I guess there was some.

INTERVIEWER I: Yeah. Elmer Brown, president, stated that he was prepared to say that the ITU was willing to merge completely and fully. What happened to that?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, that isn't the only meeting that we ever had with the ITU.

INTERVIEWER I: Right.

SPOHNHOLTZ: We had frequent meetings with the ITU, trying to get together. I'll tell you what all of those meetings boiled down to, in spite of what Brown said--Elmer Brown, that is. "Fully prepared to merge completely and fully with the ALA." There was always one catch in all of the discussions that ruled that part out. When you join the ITU, you adopt their constitution, lock, stock, and barrel, with no changes. The only place it gets changed is at the conventions and by referendum of the ITU membership.

Now, that isn't the way our International was set up. We think it's a very democratic organization. Of course, the ITU thinks theirs is, too, but we never could see it that way. So you could have meeting after meeting after meeting with the ITU, and it always would wind up that you adopt the constitution, no changes. You adopt their constitution and their rules.

INTERVIEWER I: So in other words, you felt you would be absorbed by the ITU?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, sure, we'd be paying per capita and have nothing to say. Oh, we'd have delegates to the convention and we'd submit resolutions, but what are you going to do with a 50,000 membership of the ALA and a 110,000 membership of the ITU? You know, the votes aren't there, so quit kidding yourself! You're not going to get them. The Lithographers would vote for the Lithographers, and ITU would vote for ITU, and that's the end of that.

INTERVIEWER II: Did the Photoengravers basically accept a document that was similar to the ALA constitution?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, more or less, but really it was done with committee. They had an outmoded constitution and even bylaws in the International and locals, so they were more than willing to accept much of our constitution. However, we too compromised with them on some of their operations.

INTERVIEWER I: Well, I know that in '59 and '60 and '61, when these merger discussions were going on, Walter Risdon and Edward Nyegaard were talking about merger, and some people have felt that their deaths set the whole thing back. Do you feel that, or do you think that the merger discussions were more broadly based at that time so that they were really able to go forward without them?

SPONHOLTZ: Well, I don't know that the Photoengravers as an International necessarily had any great debts. I don't think so. But to those of us that were deeply involved in the merger, certainly speaking for myself, I thought that money was the last thing that should stand in your way if the idea of merger was good. Now, we'd have never merged in Chicago if we had looked at money. We had money here; the Photoengravers had little or none. They had tremendous funds in their benefit programs, but nothing in the general fund. I say nothing! Very little. We were surprised after the merger; they were a month behind on International per capita tax which virtually wiped out whatever they transferred to the general fund because we wound up paying that.

But aside from that, that stopped merger in many locals. They wanted everything on a pro rata basis, fund for fund. But in most cases the Lithographers' locals had more money than the Photoengraver's, except for the benefit programs, the local benefit programs. Many locals aren't merged today. Philadelphia's one of them. It's a big local, a big Photoengraver local. (chuckling) Milt Williams, I'm sure he'd forget all about money! I'm sure he'd forget about that. I don't mean that he'd forget about it completely, but, you know, he'd work something out on it. But the Photoengravers, they don't want to do that.

Now, there's many, many locals like that, but those that you could finally get through to and discount what you have in the various funds and you begin to put them together, there are ways of getting the monies together. We did it here. And we've never had a question from the Lithographers' side, although we gave all of our people the information, we've never had any question from the Lithographers' side, other than the pension question, that raised any kind of flak at all on the money side.

INTERVIEWER II: One of the questions that's raised nationally is that some Lithographers fear the loss of jobs to Photoengravers. Is there any sign of that having been even raised at some point in Chicago?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, yes, yes, because the Photoengravers had considerable unemployment, particularly in the letterpress part

of the trade. Very clearly and definitely that was being given up to lithography, or rotogravure. However, when it actually came to merger locally, today in this local--I'm sure it's still in the other locals as well--those things can be worked out. Now, for instance, there was a separate letterpress contract for the Photoengravers that they had that covered the photoengraving portion of the business, and of course we had the Lithographers' contract. But the Lithographers' contract was a city-wide contract, so after merger locally we decided to put those two segments together. We put it together under a photo platemaking contract. So now for the trade shops--and all photoengraver shops were trade shops--they now work under one contract. We have worked out interchanges of men with them so that they can work in the various branches of the trade, and we do place photoengravers in lithographers' jobs and in some instances lithographers in photoengravers' jobs.

If you're going to make that successful, you can't go picayunish about it and start picking things apart. It's simple to find arguments against doing something. But to make it work, you got to have a feeling on both sides that you are going to make it work.

INTERVIEWER I: Right. Then these other things become problems for which there is a resolution, rather than obstacles.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Oh, sure, sure. We had little or no trouble merging here. Primarily the Photoengravers admitted to us, at least the officers did, that their bylaws were archaic; they liked our methods of doing business. And they liked our setup here; they liked our board operations. And, the money . . . yeah, we had to work out money problems, but they were no major obstacle. We decided we were going to work them out!

INTERVIEWER I: Yeah. Well, in lots of places merger breaks down over the issue of who's going to be president.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, that was never an issue here.

INTERVIEWER I: Why not?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I'll tell you. You see, it depends on who you're dealing with, really. Conlon came to me very early in our discussions. He says, "Now, obviously you've got lots more members than we have. You've got to continue to be president. We'll set up a new office--executive vice president and I'll go for that." So upon merger, that's what we did. He never attempted to say "Who's going to be president?" He said, "You're going to be president," meaning me. So you know, that issue was settled between the two of us, just like that.

INTERVIEWER II: Were there any old jurisdictional wounds that existed before that were hard to patch up or . . .?

SPOHNHOLTZ: I don't think there were really any jurisdictional wounds. It's like everything else in the trade. One branch of the trade says I'm better than the other branch of the

trade. The Photoengravers said they were better than the Lithographers, and we said we're better than the Photoengravers. That kind of chiding goes back and forth as everyday shop talk.

INTERVIEWER II: But no raids or crossing of picket lines or lack of respect for each other that you had to bury?

SPOHNHOLTZ: No, not at all, no. If there was a strike of Photoengravers in the shop, the Lithographers said, "We're with you." Likewise, the Photoengravers. There was never any question about that, even while we were still under separate contracts. No question about it.

INTERVIEWER I: So maybe this question also has something to do with something that we talked about, you know, how good a union town is a town? For example, we always talk about Chicago as being a very first-class, trade-union town, and Philadelphia is not in the same way. There's always been friction between the AFL and the CIO and so on and so forth, and it is not as . . . you know, you wouldn't put it in a list of good union cities. Maybe this is a factor, too, in terms of merger.

SPOHNHOLTZ: Well, I think so, but I think much of that comes through early indoctrination, probably before my time even, that you just didn't cross a picket line, no matter whose it was. I know that to be true because we have contracts in shops where are other unions not at all associated with us in any way. They might be members of the AFL-CIO. But that didn't make any difference. If they went out on strike, so did our fellows. And we got the employers to understand that our fellows wouldn't go through, even before we had picket line clauses in there.

Take strikes by the Steelworkers at Continental or American Can. We had a little more trouble with American Can, but Continental was very good. We really didn't have any trouble with American Can either. So obviously you can't work if the Steelworkers aren't working. So our fellows, they usually excuse them for not going through the picket line. We got around that by the company's cooperation that said they laid them off. Then they could get state unemployment benefits . . . well, not without waiting for a bit, but they understood that so they walked out with the Steelworkers, not on their issues, but just because they weren't going to cross the picket line. The couldn't work anyway.

INTERVIEWER I: Right. I guess there is one question that I might ask you, and that is at the time of Slater's presidency I notice that Ben Robinson was made an honorary member of the ALA. How did you feel about that?

SPOHNHOLTZ: Not good! (laughter) Let me tell you this. I don't know whether it'll appear in the records. I don't think it will. When Canary resigned in Cleveland, I did not object to accept his resignation immediately because we had to go until his successor was elected. And he wanted an election. At that point we accepted his resignation . . .

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Harry Spohnholtz #II