

# Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

ORAL INTERVIEW

EDWARD L. DOTY

HERBERT HILL, INTERVIEWER  
NOVEMBER 2, 1967



Wayne State University  
Detroit, Michigan



INTERVIEWEE: EDWARD L. DOTY

INTERVIEWER: HERBERT HILL

PLACE: CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE

DATE: NOVEMBER 2, 1967.

D. (My records) would take up that side of the room. And unless you have that, you're going to have just the gist.

H. I'll settle for what I can get. At some future time I would like you to allow me to go through that material. This is an interview with Mr. Edward L. Doty in the Chicago Urban League office on November 2, 1967. The interviewer is Herbert Hill. Mr. Doty, when did you go to work in the Chicago stock yards?

D. 1914.

H. You went to work for the Armour Corporation in the stockyards in Chicago? You worked in their pipeshop?

D. As a pipefitter's helper.

H. Will you please tell me in your own words what the situation was for Negroes then?

D. I went to work in Armour's pipeshop as a pipefitter's helper in 1914, and worked in this capacity from 1914 to 1917. In 1917 I was promoted to a fitter with the tools, receiving a pipefitter's pay. During 1914 and 1915 there were efforts by the white steamfitters' organization to organize the fitters in the pipeshops in the stockyards. We colored men who were employed as pipefitters' helpers tried to become members of this organization.

H. How many men were there?

D. There were approximately 35 to 50, at Armour's, and there were additional Negroes at the other packers, what were known then as the big five, Armour, Wilson, Cudahy, Swift, Morris. To my best knowledge, all these five companies employed Negro along with the white pipefitters. And as I already stated a fair number of them were desirous of becoming members of this white fitters organization, and we were invited to their hall, known as Columbia, over on Poliner and 47th Street. And on two or three occasions we went to these meetings, and they looked out and saw our faces, and they slammed the door

- D. in our faces. We weren't permitted to come into their meetings. We went as a group. I don't remember the local number--there were three to four different locals in the Chicago area then.
- H. These were AFL affiliated unions?
- D. To the best of my memory. Now, during this period while we colored men worked in the stockyards, we worked as helpers, we became fitters; working as fitters we worked over a long period of time, and we, couldn't see much chance of advancement. We were used as trainees to train young white fellows and refugees who were brought from Europe over here and after these refugees worked here for six months, they became foremen, and we men, we worked there year in, year out; we didn't see any prospects for advancement at the stockyards, so we began leaving the yards on what we called the outside, out in the city. We started doing jobs out in the city.
- H. Excuse me, Mr. Doty. Was this mainly in Negro neighborhoods, or for white folks too?
- D. We worked at any jobs we could find. But at the time we came out, there was a police order at that time that no one could do plumbing work, other than licensed plumbing workers, members of Local 130.
- H. They were all white?
- D. Yes, and we colored men-- the police would see us with our tools relating to plumbing work, and on numerous times we were arrested, and we were taken to the police station, and detained for a short while, and sometimes we were actually locked up for carrying plumbers' tools with us.
- H. Were you ever detained?
- D. Yes, on numerous occasions.
- H. White policemen picked you up off the streets and took you into the police station? What was the charge?
- D. For doing plumbing work without license. None of the Negroes had licenses, at this time, of the particular group.
- H. Did any Negro have a license at this time?
- D. Yes, there was a Mr. Franklin. He had a license. This was about 1919-1921.

- H. There were some licensed Negro plumbers who had their own little operations?
- D. Well, Mr. Franklin, and later on a man named McClellan, he got his license. Later on there was another man named Jacobs.
- H. Did the unions try to use their power to prevent Negroes getting licenses?
- D. I don't know whether the union used their power, but we weren't able to get licenses. Now the way these other men got their licenses, according to the information I got they got their licenses—they were picked up so many times by the police for doing plumbing work, that some of the judges would say, "For goodness sake, give this man his license." I'm tired of looking at him." That's the way two of these men got their license. Now I understand that Cass Jacobs got his license some wheres down state. You see, in Illinois you get a state license, not a city license, so anywhere you get your license, that's good throughout the state.
- H. You yourself were detained and arrested several times? You were picked up by the police, arrested, charged with working as a plumber without a license? Were you ever brought before a judge?
- D. No. Out of this situation we men, after being harassed by the police, and after going down to the union and each time we would go down there would get the buck-passing, the run-around, so that we became discouraged. So, in 1921, we had a big party. We invited all these men down to my home at 3644 Ellis Park. We had a kind of stag party, and we had exactly 53 men to come to this party. These were all Negroes, and we stated the case we were all confronted with. We couldn't work because we didn't have licenses. We couldn't get into the union. We were being harassed by the police. So these men, they sat there, and they ate and drank, and they had a nice time, so we had a cateress. Around 9:30 we discharged the cateress, and we began talking to these men about what we had come to the meeting for. So, when we started talking about the object of the meeting—at that time there were no schools

D. who taught plumbing. There were a few white retired plumbers who taught plumbing in a few localities, but they wouldn't teach any colored men. So we had this affair to talk to these men, so that we could set up some sort of a training class. So after we discharged the cateress, and began talking to the men about what we had them there for, they had various excuses and they began leaving the meeting. Fifty of these men walked out when they found out what we had them there for, and three of we men (Hugo Williams, Alex Dunlap and myself) we started a plumbing class. Hugo Williams became the instructor. And those fellows after they left--there was talk around, "Those Negroes can't do anything, they can't do what they say they're going to do." So it was about two weeks after this meeting with the instruction that Hugo Williams gave two of us, two of us, including myself, A.W. Dunlap and I, we went down to the Board of Examiners, and we successfully passed the examination. It was 1920-1921.

H. I hold in my hand Mr. Doty's formal certification from the Illinois Board of Examiners of the city of Chicago. It's entitled "Journeyman Plumber's certificate No. 21530, application No. 4060, Serial Number 1". It reads, "Issued by the Board of Examiners of the Plumbers of Chicago, this certifies that Mr. Edward L. Doty, 27 years, 6 feet, no inches, 176 pounds weight, colored, (it has a racial designation here) has been duly examined by this board as to his practical knowledge of plumbing, house drainage, and plumbing ventilation, and having satisfied this Board as to his competency, is hereby authorized to operate as a journeyman plumber any place in the state of Illinois, in accordance with an act of the 40th General Assembly, "to provide for the licensing of plumbers, and to supervise and inspect plumbing, Approved June 10, 1897, as amended June 14, 1909, and to operate as a journey-man plumber in the city of Chicago under the provisions of an ordinance of the City of Chicago passed Jan. 31, 1898, to provide for the examination and certification of plumbers, as amended July 6, 1909, and subject to all the other provisions of said city relating to plumbers and the business of plumbing." It is signed by the Commissioner of Health, the Master Plumber member of

H. the Board, and the Journeyman Plumber member of the Board, and the secretary, and Edward L. Doty, the signature of the license. So you were among the very earliest of the Negroes to receive a journeyman plumber's certification in the city of Chicago. Would it be correct to say that you were probably among the very first in the whole state of Illinois?

Doty. That's right. Well, after Dunlap and myself went down and successfully passed the examination, and the news got around that two Negroes had done so, and were looking forward to receiving their licenses, these doubting Thomases that we had in the meeting, they came near breaking my door down to get back among us fellows. So we admitted them back. We admitted them, every one of these fifty men, into the classes and afforded them instruction, and everyone of the fifty, they went down to the Board, and successfully took the examination, and got their license. Now, after these men got their license, we had a feeling that perhaps our problem was over. But, to our surprise, we found that our problem was just beginning. We had our licenses, but we didn't have a union card. So we went back to the union—the office was at that time down on Randolph Street, though I forget the number—and they had a little peephole, and they would look through this hole, and evidently they had a string or something on the door. When they would look down the hall and see us, the door would automatically close. So we were stuck on the outside. So, finally, after going down repeatedly, and being given the runaround, one of us, got in now and then and talked to someone, and they made some sort of vague promise, but these promises weren't kept. So, after being subjected to this over a long period of time—

H. Do you have any idea how many white members there were of 130 at that time? Perhaps several hundred?

D. Every bit of that. So, after, going down to the local over a long period of time, and getting all kinds of evasive remarks and what appeared to be a run-around, we men got this courage and we said, "Well, after all, these fellows don't seem to want us in their organization, and we've got to

- D. live-we've got to eat." So we began to put forth efforts for ourselves. So we set up at that time an organization known as the Chicago Colored Plumbers Protective Association. We were chartered, by the state of Illinois, at Springfield for the Association. This was in 1926. So, after we received this charter we had discussions on this charter, and on the name of the association. We came around to the decision that the name was rather narrow. It could be that somebody else, whoever it might be, colored or white, might want to become a member of the organization. So we had the charter revised to this name of the organization you have here, the Cook County Plumbers Union. And we functioned as a union from 1926 until 1947.
- H. Did you have collective bargaining agreements with any group?
- D. No. The only employers we could work for were colored employers, and they recognized us, because they organized themselves into an association, the NEW Era Plumbing Contractors Association.
- H. Did they do that after you organized the Cook County Plumbers Union?
- D. That's right. No white contractor would give us work. After we changed the name, we took in members of other ethnic groups, two or three Jewish, Mexicans and so forth.
- H. That is, other groups who could not get into Local 130? What did it take to get into Local 130?
- D. We.., that's the big-
- H. Of course, you've just made that clear. What was the major ethnic composition of the Local?
- D. The major ethnic composition of the local was Irish-Catholic. So, now as we proceeded in our efforts we found out, here and there, we couldn't work here, we couldn't work there, because we didn't have union cards. Well, we had various conferences among ourselves. This came way up in years. I forget the year the FEPC came into being, and the President took that position that there must be no discrimination in hiring practices where defense money was being spent, or contracts awarded.
- H. That was Executive Order 8802, promulgated by President



- H. Roosevelt in 1941.
- D. Yes. Well, just a little before that, the unions came out, and they defined areas. They wouldn't let us in their union, and they defined areas where we couldn't work. We couldn't work south of 63d Street, we couldn't work east of Drexel Avenue, we couldn't work west of Wentworth, we couldn't work north of 22nd. We had to work in what is known as the Black Belt in buildings owned, occupied, or to be occupied by colored people.
- H. Now, unions decided this after Executive Order 8802?
- D. No, this was just previous to the order. Now, in 1941, we had a hearing in the Mayor's chambers. In 1937 and 1938 Dr. Isador Lubin came here and other representatives in answer to protest from our organization, plumbers, fitters, and others. We had various conferences with Dr. Lubin, and Mrs. Perkins worked out these ratios, and there was an order issued on public housing. The ratio was around 3 1/2 per cent of jobs on public housing.
- H. Now, we're in the period of WPA. Did any Negroes work for the WPA in either city or school or other construction? Did any Negro plumbers work for WPA?
- D. The only job I know of where Negroes worked was a WPA project on the eighth regimental Armory in the 35th block on Giles Avenue. We did a job there in 1933 or thereabouts.
- H. Did any Negroes work as employees of the city of Chicago? in public construction?
- D. No, not at that time.
- H. Were there any efforts made to associate with other Negro building tradesmen?
- D. Yes, we organized what was known as the Consolidated Trades Council.
- H. This was an all-Negro group?
- D. Yes, all Negro. We had in mind making that organization a national organization, but after the electricians, the plumbers and the fitters became members of the parent organization and got their pockets full of money they weren't concerned about broadening out, so that effort died a-borning.

- H. But you did organize the American Consolidated Trades Council? This was an all-Negro group for the other affiliated trades as well?
- D. Yes , for the plumbers, steamfitters, electricians, bricklayers, lathers, and plasterers, and building laborers. You see, this was an affiliated affair. It was organized in 1928, two years after the plumbers organized. It functioned from 1928 till about 1945.
- H. What were some of the things this organization did? You tried to get members into the established white unions?
- D. Yes. One of the main objects of this association was- there was only a handful of colored-

- H. Mr. Doty, in the late 1920's you started to organize an affiliate to the Consolidated Trades Council, which, for all practical purposes, was a Negro group of unions, affiliated to each other, under this auspices, for the purposes of, for what purposes? Will you please explain the purposes, and also tell us what success you had in getting Negroes in the-hitherto lily-white craft unions in the building trades.
- D. The reason for the organizing of such an organization as the American Consolidated Labor Trades Council was because, at the time of organization, there was only a small number of craftsmen of each trade. This was in the late 20's and the feeling was, at that time, that the effects of these small numbers could be next to nil, as one small group; so we organized the Trades Council to give organizational coverage to these small segments, these small organizations, so that they could use this pressure against the major white organizations that were denying them the right of membership, denying them the right to the job, denying them the right to all privileges that a worker was entitled to. Each small group, plumbers, electrical workers, steamfitters, lathers, plasters, bricklayers, all affiliated with the American Consolidated Trades Council. And it was the intention of having the organization become a national organization. But we didn't get that far. Now the head of the American Consolidated Trades Council-well, through elections we changed presidents two or three times. Booker J. Jennings was president, Herman J. Dorsey was vice-president, Edward L. Doty secretary, and we had a board of directors that numbered about five men. I can't remember all the names of the Board. Of course, we had elections every year, and the presidents were changed from time to time. We had-the affiliates, at one time, ran up to some eight hundred members, at one time. We had in mind going out to Gary and to all parts of the United States where conditions obtained as they obtained in Chicago. But there were

- D. different conditions which came up-factionalism, and the like, and the organization petered out, and we didn't get any further than being of help in getting the electrical workers, the steamfitters, and the plumbers into the white parent organizations.
- H. How did you succeed in getting some Negroes into the hitherto lily-white locals in Chicago?
- D. Well, now, I can only speak for the plumbers. For the plumbers, I think, we will have to go back to the hearing that was had by the Fair Employment Practices Committee.
- H. Before we go into that period, will you please tell of the period when Mrs. Perkins, Secretary of Labor, came into Chicago? May we go back to that? That was what year?
- D. That was in 1937 and 1938.
- H. Right! And would you tell us again what happened there leading up to the 1943 hearings?
- D. Well, when Mrs. Perkins-we had conferences with Mrs. Perkins, and in these conferences our prime concern was that they were going to build public housing in Chicago, and public housing was going to be built by taxpayer's money. Negro tradesmen being taxpayers, we felt that in the building of these projects we had the right to bid on these jobs if we were qualified. And we knew we were qualified-we had our licenses. We knew the work. The only thing we didn't have-we weren't members of the union. And that wasn't our fault. The only reason we weren't members, that we couldn't become members of the union, was that our faces were black. So on this basis we had these conferences with Mrs. Perkins, Secretary of Labor, and between the conferences with Mrs. Perkins, and with Mr. Isador Lubin, and one or two other officials from the Department, ratios and percentages were worked out. I think they came to 3.5 for the number of colored mechanics who would be used in the construction of the various housing projects.
- H. Did you get any help from the Chicago or national NAACP in this effort?
- D. No. We didn't approach them after the-we approached them back in the 30's and we got a rebuff, so we didn't approach them any more. But we did get support from the Urban League.
- Mr. Yale Foster

D. and Harold Du? were very helpful to us all the way back from the 30's up to our becoming members of all of these parent organizations. But the Chicago Branch of the NAACP didn't help. The Chicago Urban League did give us a variety of assistance. Going back to housing, when these ratios and percentages were established by the Labor Department through Isador Lubin and Mrs. Perkins, Negro electricians, plumbers, fitters, and lathers were permitted to work in the construction of the Ida B. Wells project at 39th and South Parkway. We worked there throughout the complete construction of the job, and even myself, Edward L. Doty, was held over on contractors' maintenance after the job was finished. After this completion of Ida B. Wells, I went into defense work and shipbuilding out at Calumet Harbor.

H. You were still not a member of 130?

D. Still not a member of 130; I became a member of SWOC, Local 2938, the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, and served on the grievance committee of SWOC in the shipyards for approximately two years, and I kept contact with the members of 130 because I had a promise from the business manager, William Quirk, that they would do something about admitting we fellows into 130. So I called him occasionally to remind him of the promise that they would do something about letting us into the union.

H. Would you say, Mr. Doty, that rise of the CIO Unions acted as a pressure on the AFL craft unions to change their racial barriers--the fact that you had become a member of the CIO--

D. No, I wouldn't say that because it would be amiss. Going back to the FEPC hearing, this FEP hearing was had after the completion of the Ida B. Wells project, and Mr. Quirk, business manager of 130, of the Chicago journeymen plumbers association, he was present at this hearing.

H. Who filed a complaint? A complaint was necessary to get a hearing.

D. The Cook County plumbers union and the Cook County steamfitters union; we filed a complaint to the Federal

- D. Fair Employment Practices Committee setting forth discriminatory practices by Local 130 and Local 597 of the Pipefitters Organization, what was called at that time the Steamfitters of Chicago. I stood in the Mayor's Chambers as a what-do-you-call-it, and made a statement. I was the spokesman for the Cook County prosecutor. I spoke for forty-five minutes. making factual statements of discriminatory practices that we colored plumbers had been subjected to, over the years, in various forms in various localities in the city of Chicago. I have all kinds of copies of that, of everything. That's the reason I'm telling you in this story you can only get the gist-I have rafts of material. I spoke from facts, from evidence we presented. Now, as near as I can remember, Mr. Earl Dickerson, Milton P. Webster, Elmer Henderson-Mark Ethridge was on the Committee, and there was a man from the AFL- I can't recall his name-a thin man like myself, and-this is all recorded. Practically everything I'm telling you is recorded. This is about the extent of the hearings. After the hearing was over, a short time after was when I went to the shipyards and began working there. As I mentioned, I kept contact with Mr. Quirk. Well, you know what happened to Mr. Quirk. Something happened to him and the local. He was dismissed and I give him credit. He left a message with Mr. Bailey, who succeeded him as business manager, to take care of the promise he had made to me.
- H. Was he thrown out by the white workers because he made that promise?
- D. No. He got away with some money, around two hundred thousand dollars. I kept contact with Mr. Bailey. And in 1945 I called Mr. Bailey and asked him about putting me to work. "Well, we don't have everybody working. The hall is full of men, and we can't do anything. Call me back later." Well, I called him about three month later-I was working for a colored contractor up at the old Marshall Field warehouse at Indiana and 14th street, and he almost knocked me cold when I called him. He told me to go to 39th and Wentworth Avenue Monday morning, and go to work on the Wentworth

D. Gardens project they were building there in 1945. So I went to the Wentworth Gardens project, and started working there as a journeyman, without a union card-working on a permit which I never saw. After I got started working by myself, I contacted him and asked how about giving me some help. So they said, "There you go, worrying about those other fellows. Why don't you take care of yourself?" "After all, those other men are not working too," I said, "I can't work by myself." So they told me to get another man to work over there. So I got Marion Harris, who is deceased now, and took him to the job. So we worked on the job the remainder of 1945, so the early part of 1946 I was called up by the union and told to get another man and go to Artgeld Gardens, so I got Alec Dunlap and we went to Altgeld Gardens and we put Thomas Guise in my place, no-

H. Is Altgeld Gardens an all-Negro housing project?

D. Yes, located on the south edge of Chicago, between Calumet River and 130th Street. It's still all-Negro, and they have made two additions since. And then they started to putting one Negro after another onto these housing jobs. Now this is in 1946. So in 1947 we were called down to the union to take an examination for membership. There were some twenty-five to thirty of us. So we went down and took the examination. Some of us paid for our initiation in full. At that time, to my best recollection the initiation fee was \$350. Those Negroes who had the money paid in full, those who didn't paid in installments. We paid our money in, but we couldn't attend the meetings. We were given membership cards, but we couldn't attend the meetings. So we still met out at our hall at 4631 State Street.

H. May I interrupt? My assumption is that all through this period the Cook County Plumbers Union, an all-Negro independent outfit, continued to exist, to hold meetings and to conduct operations?

- D. Yes, until we became full-fledged members of 130. In the early stages there were approximately 25 or 30. There was about fifteen in the beginning, and then two or three, and four or five at a time, so it augmented up to about thirty, I would guess.
- H. Who told you that you could not attend the monthly membership meetings?
- D. Well, I can't remember the exact official's name, but we were told not to—that they didn't want to make it too sudden. We let this ride along for about a year, and then we had a discussion among ourselves; we said, "Now, look, it don't work out right that we're paying our money, same as the white workers, our dues to Local 130, and we can't attend meetings." So we decided that we were going to attend meetings; so there was about six of us. We went down to a meeting, and we decided we wouldn't set in no fixed places, one over here, another way other there, spaced various locations in the union hall. This was at the union hall at 1340 West Washington Boulevard. So when we attended this meeting—I never will forget this man's name, but, since he's dead now, I won't mention it—he was the business agent. He came and got we fellows, one by one, and asked us to come up out of the meeting, and we went into a small office. After all of us had congregated in this office, he jumped all over us for our coming down to this meeting, without them telling us. We weren't notified, and so on, and so on; so, after this affair, a letter was written to the United Association, the national office in Washington, about how we were treated. The letter was written by some of our members, but I don't know even who signed it. Some of our members sent the letter, and on the basis of this letter a general organizer was sent here to sit in on a meeting, and we were notified to sit in this meeting at which he sat. After this particular meeting we started to attending meetings. Those of us who were interested, and some who had taken this rebuff as an insult, came; it is hard to get some of them to come to meetings even now. But that was the situation. I imagine there are now roughly around a hundred to a hundred twenty-five. In 1948,



- D. I imagine there were about fifty or sixty. These were all members of the Cook County Plumbers' Union until we revised the charter.
- H. Now, I would like you to tell me what happened to the Cook County Plumbers' Union, a previously all-Negro organization?
- D. Well, we revised the charter to the Triangle Plumbers Club. The object of our organizing the Triangle Plumbers Club was to carry on an educational program among our fellows, many of them were good mechanics, but there were certain things they weren't as proficient on as we felt they should be, and by having a club we felt we could assist them in various ways in becoming better mechanics. And one of the cardinal aims of the organization, that you must be a member of Local 130 to be a member of the Triangle Plumbers' Club. Even having that inserted, Local 130 didn't want to have that club.
- H. Was one of your aims to draw in young Negroes into your apprentice program? To assist younger Negroes to enter the industry?
- D. Oh, yes. My interest in the apprentice program was one of my undoings with Local 130--was my undoing because two or three times we had discussions on this in the Jewish Labor Committee, well, I won't tell you, because, as I said, I have a raft of material.
- H. This is very important--tell it.
- D. I made a report upon discriminatory practices, and I mentioned the fact that Local 130 didn't admit or sponsor Negroes to the Washburn trade school. I made this report to the Jewish Labor Committee, in Chicago. This was around 1958.
- H. The Jewish Labor Committee didn't do anything?
- D. Well, I don't know whether they did anything. The reason this report was made was that I was on a panel, where discriminatory practices were discussed.
- H. I heard you make the report--I was there.
- D. And Milton P. Webster, he headed the panel, and he asked me, and he asked me about apprentice training. I never did get on so well in Local 130 after that. Things went along from one thing to another.
- H. Local 130 resisted your efforts to get younger Negroes into the apprentice program sponsored by the union?

- D. Well, from all appearances, yes. We were never able to get a single youngster into the union apprentice program.
- H. Would you now tell us about other activities of the Triangle Club? Were you interested in assisting Negroes in the other crafts where there was discrimination?
- D. The club—we didn't carry on many activities. Here's what happened with the club. Many of the members of the Triangle Club, after they found out some of the officials weren't too particular about we men having this club, they became rather what you might say, careless in attendance of meetings, and so forth. I realized the value of the club, but you see the average man who was a member of the local union, he's only interested in working and in pay. To find someone interested in someone else other than himself, that is an unusual person.
- H. You mentioned the Washburn Technical High School. During this time there were no Negroes in the school?
- D. Well, I wouldn't say no Negroes. But to my knowledge, there were no Negro plumbing apprentices.
- H. Now, did you have anything to do with organizing the program at Dunbar High School, which is an all-Negro high school?
- D. No. The first instructor at Dunbar—that's when they were at St. Lawrence—was A. Hugo Williams. Then later on, there was another one of our plumbers, John Wallace.
- H. Now, did Local 130 recognize the training Negroes were getting at these segregated Negro high schools?
- D. Well, there was a kind of back door recognition. Now, local 130, later on— I forget the fellow's name who started— he was a day instructor, and he was a member of 130. Zonick, think his name was. He was a white, and he belonged to 130; he taught at Dunbar High School.
- H. The membership of the Triangle Club remained at all times Negro? no white members?
- D. No, not members of the club.
- H. Does the club still exist?
- D. We still have the charter, but since we have a new business agent, a different kind of person, I don't think they even meet .

- H. When did you become business agent for 130?
- D. I was appointed business agent in 1957.
- H. You became the first Negro business agent of Local 130. To your knowledge, has the IBEW had any other Negro business agents in any other local? Were there any other Negro business agents in Chicago, or in any other local, to your knowledge?
- D. Herman Washington served as an assistant business agent to Robert Brooks for Local 134 of the Electrical Workers, but he was never a business agent. And to my knowledge I was the only full business agent here in Chicago.
- H. You were, in 1957, appointed as business agent. Would you tell us, very briefly, of your duties. Were they the same duties as a white business agent?
- D. Well, up to a point.
- H. Would you tell us what that point was, please?
- D. All business agents, but two of us, had certain districts. But James Walden, white, he had the city workers, and I had any area where there were colored workers.
- H. So you were the colored business agent where colored men were working?
- D. Yes, I'm trying to get the classification. It was something similar to "special assignment". I think I have the thing at home.
- H. Your duties as business agent were only operative where there were Negroes employed? You were not permitted to perform any of the noble functions of a business agent where whites were employed?
- D. No, no, that isn't correct. My activities were in the areas where Negroes were predominant. Quite often there was a white contractor working in the area. I covered their jobs, as well as the other jobs. Only, in rare instances, did I cover a job where white workers were employed.
- H. Were you limited, geographically, to Negro areas?
- D. Well, the geographical areas were where Negroes lived.

- H. Right. You were essentially servicing areas in so-called black belt areas. But on occasions where white contractors had the construction contract, even in Negro areas, you continued to function, even though white workers were involved?
- D. In some instances, in rare instances.
- H. Did you ever perform the function of a business agent outside the Negro community?
- D. Not to my recollection.
- H. How long did you remain business agent of Local 130?
- D. I remained business agent of Local 130 from November, 1957, to December, 1960. I was called in, then, and I was told that the job was to be discontinued, by the business manager, Stephen M. ? : "We're sorry, but we are going to have to discontinue the job." busin
- H. He gave no reason?
- D. No, he didn't give any financial or economic reasons. He said "Everybody likes you but I don't know where we're going to put you-blah, blah, blah. He said, "How about taking a vacation?" Well, I had just come off a vacation. So I was given a few dollars, "Well, go out of town, or something; "So there was no date as to how long I was to stay or anything. I said, "Well, I have an old building out there I have to do some work on." So later on the founding conference of the NALC came about over in Detroit. I attended it. I think I met you there. I never did go down to the Local hall, I was told to go out of town.
- H. You were summarily dismissed, for all practical purposes. Did they terminate your membership in the local?
- D. No, I kept that.
- H. Now, at this point, 1960, how many Negroes belonged to Local 130 as journeymen plumbers?
- D. Maybe around 75.
- H. Were there many Negroes in the union's apprentice training program?
- D. Not at the time.
- H. Since then, have any Negroes been admitted into training?
- D. I have been told a few.

- H. We have with us Mr. Ashby Smith, director of the Urban League's apprenticeship training program in Chicago. Would you say, Mr. Smith there are some Negroes in Local 130's apprenticeship training program?
- S. Yes, there are--approximately fifteen.
- H. And when were they taken in?
- S. In the last three years. I do not know about journeymen status. I believe there were two men in the graduating class of last year who are there now
- D. May I ask Mr. Ashby if to your knowledge any Negro previous to your experience with the Apprenticeship Training Program, had cleared through to that status?
- S. Yes, these last two were in prior to our project. There seems to have been a move to get one or two in as early as 1962 or 1963. There is some record of fall-out-guys who didn't make it through, but I have no record of anyone earlier than 1962.
- H. Were you replaced by another business agent, Mr. Doty?
- D. Yes, by John Boose; J.B.Boose was appointed shortly after I was dismissed. I'm going to have to go. Before I go I'm going to give you a gist-
- H. How old are you, Mr. Doty?
- D. I am seventy-four.
- H. What is the address of the Triangle Club?
- D. I am its registered agent-at 623 Bowen-that's the official address; if you have any mail it would come to me. You see, these fellows, they're afraid of the club, because someone down there told them that thing was no good, or you'll get hurt, or something.
- H. Do Negro workers in any other skilled craft have similar clubs to the Triangle Club?
- D. No. But the bricklayers did have one, and the electricians had one. I don't remember the name of the electricians. The Bricklayers were the Brotherhood Club.
- H. Do you know about whether they were admitted to the white union?
- D. Yes-now, you see the bricklayers-they have been in the union

- D. for many, many years. Their reason for having this club wasn't for the same reason that we had ours.
- H. How about among the electricians? Are there many Negroes who are admitted into Local 134 of the IBEW? Are there many Negroes who belong to 134?
- D. I don't know-I tell you, you would have to get a hold of Herman Washington or-
- H. Is Herman Washington still there as an assistant business agent?
- D. No. He was dropped before I was.
- H. Is there a similar history of an organization if the IBEW in Chicago as in Local 130?
- D. They did have, in the Electrical Workers Club, like we have, for the same purpose. But, as I say, I don't know if they still do. I don't know of similar situations in the craft unions. Since the Detroit convention I have sort of isolated myself. You see, here's the situation: these plumbers are afraid to wave at me on the streets-these same men that I gave my shirt to-there's somebody who has put fear into them. Now here's one thing I'd like to say, while we're here. This is hard to understand: you see, I have an injured foot. I came near to knocking my foot off with a sledge hammer in 1964. I'm still under the doctor's care for my foot. I had this accidnet in April, 1964. Local 130 called me up in October, 1964. I got up out of my bed-I couldn't walk and went 1134 miles down in Alabama, and stayed down there 30 days. They had a discriminatory situation in Alabama involving the plumbers union in Northern Alabama, where these Negroes working for a public utility, the Alabama Gas Corporation in Tuskalooosa, Montgomery, Selma, Tuskegee, Okalika, Anastee,
- H. You went down there at the request of the Negro workers?
- D. And this Boose they appointed as a business agent. I went there at the request of the United Association. They didn't have nobody there. There was a situation where they had sent a number of people there.
- H. And was the problem that the Negroes could not get into the union?

- D. They had the same problem down there that we had here. They had been trying to get in the Local down there for a number of years, Local 536 of the United Association. It was a metal trades local. So these Negro workers down there- they were digging the trenches, measuring, cutting, threading, installing the pipe, the fixtures, testing it out.
- H. You mean the workers were skilled pipe-fitters?
- D. Testing it out and they were listed and paid as janitors.
- H. The AFL local refused to take them into membership?
- D. They refused until we went down there. When we went down there we had a meeting with the fellows. The president, he lived in Selma. The headquarters was in Montgomery. They met in the carpenters hall in Montgomery, but the president lived in Selma. Another officers lived in ? and another officer lived in Tuskalooosa. So I got these fellows-I pinned them down. "Now look", I said, "your story is you tried to get them to become members. Now if we can prevail on them, and get them to come to your meeting, will you admit them in the meeting? Will you talk with them, will you admit them as members?" They said Yes. Well, of course, that's an easy thing to do, to say yes. Now, these men, they had been tampered with so much, they were afraid of anyone who had on a clean shirt and a necktie. So many people had been down there tampering with them. Really, this was hazardous. The only way we could see these men-the vice president, Moman, he knew all these men. There were around a hundred to a hundred fifty Negroes involved, in several cities. You see, what happened, if there was one white man on the truck, then there would be from one to five Negroes on the truck. If there were two white men on the truck, there would be from five to seven, to twelve Negroes on the truck. And if there were three white men there might be twenty Negroes. Now these white men sat upon the truck. They played the radio, they smoked cigars, they read the papers, and told jokes, and this and that. Around two thirty or 3 o'clock in the afternoon, "Hello Jim. What's going on down there? ????" "ok"

- H. Did you get these Negroes into the local?
- D. So the men, as I tried to say, the only way we could make contact with these men—we had to go into the washroom on the public utilities job, where they were washing their face, getting ready to go home. They have no time to talk to anyone, but some of them they did talk with us. And they told us—I think they were honest—they says, "You fellows, you're just one week late. Over in the Birmingham district, the UMW had organized these Negroes" and the Negroes in this area had made commitment to the UMW, District 50.
- H. And they were joining the United Mine Workers, because they had been denied by the AFL unions?
- D. Yes.
- H. One final question, Mr. Doty. Where are the Archives? You refer to the papers, the letters, the testimonials.
- D. They are located in several locations. One fellow has some—
- H. Most of them are in your home?
- D. Yes, because I was secretary.
- H. Mr. Doty, I think you are a great man.
- D. No, the only interest I have in this story—if what I am telling here will help the Negro masses—otherwise, I am not interested. I don't think of myself. If there were more people who did what I did, there wouldn't be the Negro problem there is today.—they should bet out and do something about these problems.
- H. Would you give us a comment on two problems? Do you think the building trades are making some progress generally, in Chicago, and all over the country?
- Doty. No, not from where I stand. And Negroes are largely responsible for it, just because they don't get out and do something about it, just as I told you before. The average Negro that has his license, and is in the Union, he won't help another Negro.
- H. Do you think George Meany has provided any effective leadership in this matter?
- D. Well, I won't go into that because that's too—



- H. Do you wish to make any comment on the merger? Do you think the merger between the AFL and the CIO was a good one? You have no comment on that? Would you like to conclude with a general statement? You've had a most unusual personal history.
- D. Well, my only interest is that the information I have given you will be helpful in enlightening workers, black and white. I'm not interested in just the Negro workers. I'm interested in workers. Because the Negro worker can't exist unless the - see, the effect: the average white worker doesn't understand that his problem and the black worker's problem is identical-whenver they begin to understand that fully, as it should be realized, then we'll get someplace in the building trades and all the other trades. But we're a far way from realization of that kind of thing.
- H. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Edward L. Doty, in Chicago, Illinois. The interview was in the offices of the Chicago Urban League, November 2, 1967. Also participating was Mr. Ashby Smith of the Urban League Staff. Thank you, Mr. Doty.