SOUTHERN ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

in cooperation with

THE 20TH CENTURY TRADE UNION WOMAN: VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

with

BROWNIE LEE JONES

American Labor Education Service

by

Mary Frederickson

Program on Women and Work

Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations

University of Michigan - Wayne State University

Ann Arbor, Michigan

VITAE

BROWNIE LEE JONES

Brownie Lee Jones was born in Sarcocksie, Missouri, on September 7, 1897. Before she turned six, her family moved to Wagoner, Oklahoma. Because her mother died around 1905 and her father died when she was fifteen, Brownie Lee and her brother lived for many years with her father's parents. An adventurous and thoughtful grandfather and a stern grandmother influenced Jones, adding stability and continuity to her childhood.

Jones attended the Academy of the Oklahoma College for Women, normal school, and then the College itself. After graduating in 1920, she moved to Denver with "eyes open . . . going to look for something interesting." While she was attending classes at the local labor college, the YWCA board requested that Jones set up an Industrial Department for the women in Denver's expanding industrial work force. After several years in Colorado, she worked as the YWCA Industrial Secretary in Flint, Michigan, in Richmond, Virginia, and finally in San Francisco, California.

After leaving the YWCA in 1938, Jones held a variety of jobs. She worked for the California State Department of Welfare with agriculture workers in the Visalia Valley, with the National Youth Organization, the Democratic Women's Council, the Office of Price Administration, and the U.S. Army Department of Health. In 1944, she returned to Richmond as Director of the Southern School for Workers. As Director, she and her staff sponsored educational programs on legislative procedures, grievance settlements, and union policies and contracts. Together with union members and community members, they ran literacy school, anti-poll tax campaigns, minimum wage hearings, and voter registration drives.

By 1950, some of the School's work had been subsumed by the educational departments of the unions. After closing the School, Jones worked in Frank Graham's campaign for Senator in North Carolina and then spent several months with the Virginia NAACP setting up poll tax committees. In late 1951, Jones returned to California and continued in workers' education during the next decade through the American Labor Education Service. A significant amount of Jones' work with ALES involved international programs, and she has traveled to Japan and China. At present she is living in San Francisco and working with the U.S.-China People's Friendship Association.

Oral History Interview

with

BROWNIE LEE JONES

April 20, 1976
San Francisco, California

By Mary Frederickson

INTERVIEWER: You were born in Missouri in ...

JONES: In 1897.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you born in Missouri?

JONES: Near Joplin at a place called Sarcocksie Prairie. At least, that's on my passport.

INTERVIEWER: What were your parents doing in Missouri?

JONES: Well, my father, when I was born, was on his father's farm, one of his father's farms. He was also a surveyor. Then we moved to Oklahoma when I was very young, about four or five, something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Had they been in Missouri for a long time?

JONES: Yes, both my mother's and father's families had been there for many years. In fact, my mother's father had come into this country from Ireland and when he got here the Civil War was on and they were rebels, so he joined the rebels, the wrong side. (laughter) My grandfather, who was born in Tennessee and grew to the age of fifteen in Tennessee, when the Civil War started, he and his father came north to fight against the rebels.

INTERVIEWER: So, you had grandfathers on either side.

JONES: Yes, and they never spoke. They never spoke to each other until my brother went to World War I.

INTERVIEWER: They were in the same area and their children married and they would never speak?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember very much about either of them?

JONES: I remember both of them very well.

INTERVIEWER: Were they near you when you were small?

JONES: Well, I stayed with my mother's father and mother when I was very, very small, from the time I suppose that I was two until we moved to Oklahoma, because my mother was quite ill. She was a very frail person. I stayed with them until we moved to Oklahoma. Then I would go back every summer and visit them. My mother died when I was about nine or ten, I've forgotten, and we moved in with my other grandparents, my father's mother and father.

INTERVIEWER: You came back to Missouri then?

JONES: No, we moved into Oklahoma with them.

INTERVIEWER: When you were smaller and around both of you grandparents, what did you get from their stories of the Civil War and being on either side?

JONES: I did not even know anything about the fact that they were on either side until, as I said, my brother went to war and then someone told us that the two grandfathers met and had a discussion about it. But that was the first time. My grandmother was southern, the grandmother who was the mother of my father. She was southern and he [paternal grandfather] had been on the northern side during the war. Never once did I hear the Civil War mentioned in our family, because, if it had been, there would have been bloodshed, I'm sure. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: How did those grandparents meet?

JONES: Well, I have some of their letters; they are precious letters. He met her when he was stationed somewhere near where her home was in Missouri. He was writing to invite her to come to a dance and she finally decided she would and that's the end of that story but, for a long time, my grandfather tried to find where he really wanted to be. He didn't want to stay in Missouri, so he went into Arkansas. She wouldn't follow him there, no sir, she wasn't going to live in the uncouth state. So then he moved into Indian Territory and I suppose that they built and we moved down there....oh, I must have been five or six when they built and then we moved down because my grandfather had established a mercantile store, a cotton gin, a bank and a grocery store.

INTERVIEWER: All in Oklahoma?

JONES: Yes, in a little town in Oklahoma.

INTERVIEWER: How did they make the decision to go to Oklahoma, do you know?

JONES: Oh, he just wanted to always strike out, you see, and see new areas. He was very ambitious, shall I say. But he died very poor because he got involved in too many things; he owned too much land and just died very poor.

INTERVIEWER: Well, do you remember the move from Missouri to Oklahoma?

JONES: Not at all. I haven't the faintest memory. I know that we did not go immediately. I know that they were established there. Then we moved and we had a house that in today's terms would probably be a block away. My grandfather's house was on one of the town's squares and it had a big yard, barns, and horses and what not.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember your father telling you about his life when he was small?

JONES: Not very much, because my father died when I was young, too. I was about fifteen when he died and I don't remember very much of his telling me about his life. He was an invalid for many years before he died.

INTERVIEWER: Did he go to college?

JONES: Yes. He went to Drury College in Springfield, Missouri.

INTERVIEWER: What did he study?

JONES: I haven't the faintest idea. I know that he used to read himself to sleep in Latin or Greek, but I don't....none of it rubbed off on me. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: So, he went to college and came back to his father's farm and worked there?

JONES: He always worked with his father.

INTERVIEWER: So, he worked on the farm and, when they went to Oklahoma, he worked in the bank and store?

JONES: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Was he ever interested in politics?

JONES: Yes, very much. I remember going to the station to see Teddy Roosevelt. I don't remember when that was, but I remember going.

INTERVIEWER: Was he a Republican?

JONES: No, he was a Democrat but he voted Republican in that election and my mother was furious with him. I can remember that because she was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat.

INTERVIEWER: Did he ever run for office himself?

JONES: Yes, he ran for office once and he was defeated--I think it was when he was very young--for county surveyor or something like that, back in Missouri before they ever went to Oklahoma.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the town that they settled in Oklahoma?

JONES: Wagoner.

INTERVIEWER: When they were there Wagoner was pretty small, wasn't it? Were they sort of the pillars of the town or . . .

JONES: It's always been very small. (laughter) In fact, it's smaller now than it was then. Once it claimed to be three or four thousand, but I'm sure that it's smaller now.

INTERVIEWER: Were you father and grandfather both active in running Wagoner?

JONES: My grandfather wasn't, no. He was active only in his business; he would go down in the morning and in the afternoon he would meet an old friend of his and they would go into the old friend's hotel room and play cards all afternoon. Then he would come home and look at his garden. They always had a contest going on who could produce the first melons and who could produce the first asparagus. He wasn't interested, really, in running the town. My grandmother was not a very polite and nice lady. She was a lady but not very nice. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Harsh?

JONES: Oh, very harsh.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you when your father died?

JONES: I was fifteen.

INTERVIEWER: Did you live with you grandparents after your mother died?

JONES: Oh yes, we lived with them after my mother died and then when my father died I lived with them then until my last year in high school. I must have been seventeen I guess, because I didn't start school until I was eight.

JONES: My last year in high school, I only needed two credits and a man that my grandfather had enjoyed a lot when he was superintendent of schools in Wagoner was then the president of what was called the Oklahoma College for Women. They had an academy as well as a college. So, he said that it was silly to stay there for two credits; why not go down there and see if I was going to like college. So, I did. That's how I happened to get to the Oklahoma College for Women.

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to ask you a couple of things about your mother's life. Did she come from the same sort of circumstances as your father? Were her parents farmers in Missouri also?

JONES: Well, my grandfather was never a farmer. When I say farmer, I mean that he never worked on a farm in his life. He just owned farms. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: He ran farms.

JONES: No, he didn't even run them; he had somebody else running them, you know. He had a bank in Neosho, I know that. Then he sold that out and moved into Arkansas and then from Arkansas, I guess, into the Indian Territory. My mother's father, I don't really know what he did. I know that he owned--(and this was very much a disgrace to my father's mother)--he owned a big livery stable in the town*, but he didn't run it. But I do know that he broke dozens of horses for people always. He just loved to break a horse. That was one of his preoccupations. But they were both older people when I began to be interested in what they had done.

INTERVIEWER: What did your mother do? Did she go to college?

JONES: My mother and father went to college and eloped from college because their parents didn't wish them to get married. They both went to college but I don't know the name of the college my mother attended.

INTERVIEWER: Where your mother went?

JONES: Where they both went. I can't remember and I can't remember the name of the town. It was a Missouri college, I know that.

INTERVIEWER: Drury College? You said . . .

JONES: No, that's where my father went to college. He went to college there before he came back to Neosho and met my mother. I don't know....I remember seeing a newspaper article about their being married and about what devils they had been in college. They

---

*Neosho, Missouri.

JONES: rode their horses up the steps to the president's office and tied their horses to the president's door. (laughter) Oh, I don't know, you know, just crazy things that you hear about.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about your mother or hearing about her? Did you have brothers and sisters?

JONES: I had a brother.

INTERVIEWER: Was she active in politics herself: did she campaign for suffrage?

JONES: No. I don't think that she knew the word. I don't think she did. I doubt it. No, she was very gay; she loved parties and she and my father were good dancers and they went to all the dances everywhere. That's all I remember.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think that she would have thought about what you went on to do? Do have any feeling for that?

JONES: I wouldn't have any idea. I know my father would have been interested because I can remember him saying to me once, "Now there are three women that I certainly hope you will get to know in your lifetime." One of them was Jane Addams, who I did know and I slept in her bed for six weeks in Chicago at Hull House when I led a student-in-industry project. One was Elizabeth Christman, who was the head of the Women's Trade Union League, and the other was Mary Anderson who went on to be head of the Women's Labor Bureau [Department of Labor].

INTERVIEWER: How did he know about these women?

JONES: Well, he read constantly. He was really a very well read man.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that had something to do with your going in that direction?

JONES: No, I don't think so. They were just interesting women, women who were interesting to him. That's all. No, I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Did your family have people working for them in the town of Wagoner or before that in Missouri, in the house?

JONES: Oh, you mean servants?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

JONES: We all grew up with the same mammy, if you want to know the truth. It's a very bad word, you know, now. When I was little she lived with us; Lucretia. She had been my father's nurse and she died when I was in college.

INTERVIEWER: Were you incredibly close to her?

JONES: Oh, yes. We thought there was nobody else. She was a dear person.

INTERVIEWER: Did you maintain contact with her during the time you were in college and until she died?

JONES: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Who were your companions as a child? Your brother? Or did Lucretia have children?

JONES: We used to play with Lucretia's children. She used to bring them with her many days when she came. She lived in the house much of the time but part of the time she would go home and she would bring them back. I can remember my mother, one day she was very ill, and she called me into her bedroom and she said, "I want you to play in the backyard." I said, "Why?" She said, "The neighbors don't like it when you play in the front yard with Lucretia's children." I can remember that decidedly, you see. But we always lived, until I went to college, in very segregated communities, you know. Thoroughly segregated.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember anything about the way that your parents treated servants as being different from the way that other townspeople did?

JONES: I don't know. I think that, in general, everybody that I knew loved the people that worked for them. Of course, it was a benevolent kind of thing. It wasn't a genuine equal proposition, but I don't remember anyone ever being unkind at all to anybody. I can remember one time, when we were in Oklahoma, my father said to me, "I dislike so much the fact that when I'm walking down the street and a Negro is coming toward me, he steps off the sidewalk for me to go by." I can remember him having said that. There are just different little things like that that you remember, but they are all so far, far back and that's what you remember best, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Did Lucretia and her family move with you to Oklahoma?

JONES: Lucretia came with us and then she would go back home often. When she got older, she couldn't stay long, you know, but she would come down for awhile and we had two or three other people who took her place, but they were younger Negro women. There was a succession of them and I just don't even remember.

INTERVIEWER: Your mother died so early. I was sort of wondering if you modeled your behavior after her or after your father?

JONES: I don't think I modeled my behavior after anyone. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Who was the adult you were closest to?

JONES: My grandfather, really.

INTERVIEWER: Your father's father?

JONES: Yes. I just worshipped him. He was a great guy.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you like him so much?

JONES: Well, he was very thoughtful. He knew that we were unhappy without having our mother and he just tried so hard to do things for us. He got a tent and put it up out in his yard so that we could play and be completely out of the house, out of my grandmother's eye, because she was very strict. He had a farm and he built us a lake and put a rowboat on it so that we could learn to row. Always on Sunday afternoons, I would go to one of his farms with him. I just loved him and I loved the country. I was meant to be a country gal, I think.

INTERVIEWER: But you were never that close to you grandmother, then?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Was the church an important part of your life when you were growing up?

JONES: It was a very controversial part of my life. My mother played the piano for the Episcopal Church and so, she kept the Episcopal Church going in Wagoner until she died and after she died, nobody kept the church up. My grandmother insisted that I go to the Methodist Church and I would come home from Sunday School and church and my father would say, "Now what did you learn today?" I would tell him and he would say, "Well now, you know that is all a very lovely story, but you don't have to believe it if you don't want to." He was really an agnostic and completely unchurchy. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: But your grandmother was a very religious woman?

JONES: Yes, I think so.

INTERVIEWER: She took it seriously?

JONES: Oh yes, she took it very seriously. And my grandfather was really the pillar of the church because he made it possible for them to build the church.

INTERVIEWER: That was the Methodist Church?

JONES: Yes. I think it was because of her that he did it. I don't think that he was really engrossed in religion.

INTERVIEWER: Well, to you personally, did it mean a lot to you when you were small?

JONES: It didn't mean anything to me, really.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any feeling, other than your father saying that he wanted you to meet Jane Addams, Elizabeth Christman, Mary Anderson, of the forces which were in your family that pushed you into....

JONES: I don't think that my family pushed me into anything. I went to work just before my grandfather died, I went to school, of course. He had me go to school. I went down to the Academy of the Oklahoma College for Women and that summer I came home and I was determined that I was going to work. I went to normal school and got myself a job and taught school. My grandfather was very interested. He said that no woman in the family had ever worked and he wanted to be sure before he left that I could take care of myself. I can remember him saying that. Then, the next year he died. Before he died, he said, "Now, you will go back and finish college." He had property in Kansas City at that time and I had gone up to Kansas City and I was working for Hall Brothers Engraving Company and they were determined that they were going to make an engraver out of me at that time. He said, "Now look, you are going back to college," and I said, "Yes, I will." He went home from Kansas City and was never conscious from the time he got home until he died. So, I really took that seriously, when he said that I had to go back. So, I went back and worked my way through the next three years.

INTERVIEWER: This was still at the Oklahoma College for Women?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was that school like?

JONES: Well, it was small. It is now called University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma but, at that time, it was a woman's college. We were around three hundred students. As I said, the president was a man who had been very fond of my grandfather and he helped me.

INTERVIEWER: What did you study while you were there?

JONES: Well, almost everything I studied was in English or Drama. Of course, you know that you have to have some required things and I sweat blood over some science and languages....I had five years of Latin, I know. Four in high school and one in college.

INTERVIEWER: What had your experiences been like in the schools that you attended before you went to the Academy?

JONES: Well, we had wonderful teachers in Wagoner. We had three teachers who were Rhodes Scholars. Now, that was really a phenomenal thing to have had happen to a child because they were marvelous people. One of them was Clyde Eagleton, I think that to this day he is part of Columbia University. One was a man by the name of Alexander, he was terrifically nice, and the other person, I've forgotten the name, but there were three and they were just fascinating people and meant a tremendous amount to the students.

INTERVIEWER: Is that when you found your interest in English and Drama, under those people?

JONES: No, I suppose that I've always been interested in English, but my grandfather read constantly. He never went away from home that he didn't bring a book back. We all read.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any teachers at the Oklahoma College for Women who especially influenced you?

JONES: Well, one who influenced me terrifically has just died and she was a woman with whom I had most of my English. She was a terrific person.

INTERVIEWER: What was her name?

JONES: Her name was Carolyn Laird. She lived out here until she died; she died around the tenth of February. She had written to me at Christmastime and I knew she was ill and I wrote back immediately and said that I was going down to San Diego to have a week with an old college friend and that another of my college friends was coming and we were all coming over to see her. She was looking forward to our coming because she wrote to my Indian friends and said that she was so glad that she was going to see us all and then before my friend had her program down there, she was gone and we had the program, of course, over at the Casa. [The Casa de Manana, La Jolla]

INTERVIEWER: What was the program?

JONES: It was an Indian program. Teata is an Indian who has given programs all over the world. I feel....I don't know it for sure, but I think that probably Miss Laird had been instrumental in having her brought there. She comes out to California every year and has a regular circuit out here.

INTERVIEWER: Her name is Teata.

JONES: Yes. She was Dr. Clyde Fisher's wife, who was at the Natural History Museum in New York....very well known person in the field of natural science.

INTERVIEWER: What was the atmosphere like at the Oklahoma College for Women? What were they training women to do?

JONES: I would guess that most of the girls who were coming out of that school were going into teaching.

INTERVIEWER: Well, after normal school, were you planning to . . .

JONES: I knew that I didn't want to teach. (laughter) My last year in college I took shorthand and typing, which of course was not done for credit; it was just because I wanted to do something else. Then I went to Denver right after graduation and I, too, was striking out in a new place. I got a job in Denver as a stenographer for an automobile firm. Then I worked in a bank and then the YWCA asked me to come and start an industrial department for them.

INTERVIEWER: In Denver?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have any contact with the YWCA before that?

JONES: Well, I had in college. I knew a number of [YWCA] people in college. They would come in and out, college secretaries.

INTERVIEWER: Were you active in that organization on campus?

JONES: Oh, semi.

INTERVIEWER: Was it more religious or was it more oriented to social problems?

JONES: Oh, it was not very religious, no. It was pretty much social problems.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in college, did the women get into debating social issues a lot?

JONES: Oh yes. And of course, remember that was during the war and so we were really very much involved in war work and what was going on.

INTERVIEWER: Were you opposed to the war?

JONES: Well, we weren't opposed to the war; we just wanted to bring our brothers and our friends home, that was all.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

JONES: Well, I think a war never is very close to you, unless you have somebody in it. And at that time, I don't think that we had any feeling against World War I, or even World War II to tell the truth, but I certainly am opposed to wars since.

INTERVIEWER: What about suffrage or women's rights? Was that an issue when you were in college?

JONES: Well no, we could vote after 1919.

INTERVIEWER: But on the campus, the women weren't interested in suffrage as an issue?

JONES: No, the teachers talked about it and we listened, you know. We were interested and we did know what they were voting for, but it wasn't an issue for us. I studied a lot of sociology in college, too, under a very wonderful woman, Dr. Anna Lewis, who went on to the University of Oklahoma.

INTERVIEWER: Were you interested at all at that time in settlement work or the Women's Trade Union League or . . .

JONES: Oh, yes. Jacob Riis and all those people, you know. I just read everything that they wrote. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Did you think about doing that sort of work?

JONES: I didn't think about doing that myself, no. I was just terribly interested in it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do any writing while you were in college?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Who were the authors that you read?

JONES: Oh my, who were they? I couldn't tell you to save my life. I know that I've read all my life.

INTERVIEWER: What about any of the expatriates? Hemingway or Fitzgerald?

JONES: Oh yes, we read Hemingway and Fitzgerald and of course, that was later, really, that I was involved much in reading about them, not while I was in college. I really wouldn't know.... all I know is that I spent most of my time reading plays. I read plays and I read plays and I read plays. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Was the church at all a part of your life at college?

JONES: Oh, I had a Sunday School class for awhile; little boys. I don't think I taught them anything, but we went on picnics every Sunday. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Were you at all politically active in college?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any sense of where you were going or what you were planning to do?

JONES: Not the faintest. I had my eyes open and I was going to look for something interesting, that was all.

INTERVIEWER: Were you at all interested in race relations at that time?

JONES: Well, I don't think that we ever thought in terms of race relations. I know that I never was anti-any race. I never have been.

INTERVIEWER: But the YWCA in Oklahoma was not oriented to any kind of interracial work?

JONES: Well, we didn't have any, in the school, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what about Indians?

JONES: Oh, they were just part of us. I went to high school and, in my class, there were only two of us that weren't Indians.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were the minority.

JONES: It wasn't in the whole class, but in the agricultural section. I took a gardening class with the boys because I wouldn't take home economics. I was the one girl in that class and all the boys were Indian except one, so there were two of us that weren't Indians.

INTERVIEWER: Why wouldn't you take home economics?

JONES: Oh, I didn't like it.

INTERVIEWER: The whole time that you were in Oklahoma growing up and in college, was there any feeling about....well, what was the feeling regarding the integration of Indians into white society?

JONES: Well, we lived in the Indian Territory, you see. After all, it was their territory and our good friends were all Indians. For instance, on the farm that we used to visit quite often, that Grandpa owned, he had a Buffalo White Killer and his wife, Maggie, and I would go out and spend a week with them. He would take me out while he was looking over the farm and I would stay a week and he would come pick me up and bring me home.

INTERVIEWER: So, unlike the relationship that you had with the servant in your family, Lucretia, which you said was one that in the treatment of your parents and grandparents was a paternalistic, benevolent thing, your relationship with Indians was not that way?

JONES: No, I think it was straightforward. He [Buffalo White Killer] was the manager of the farm and that was it. I do remember how the Indians used to come into the store and how they always wanted to be sure the Captain was going to be there. Everybody called Grandpa "the Captain." He had been a captain in the Civil War and, somehow, that had stuck. They always wanted to see the Captain and they were always very good friends. I know that he helped two or three Indian boys go through school. I know that for a fact but no one in the family knew it but me.

INTERVIEWER: Why didn't they know it?

JONES: Well, they wouldn't have been interested if they had known and he never talked about it. I just knew that there was a school for Indian boys and he was keeping two or three boys up there. It wasn't discussed; it wasn't a big thing at the time.

INTERVIEWER: So, it was really a relationship of equality, then?

JONES: Well, I suppose that it was as near equality that you can have if you have more money that somebody else has. I don't know. They were in relationship to people who worked for him. I know my brother when he came back from the war was very close buddies with many of the Indian people that he knew.

INTERVIEWER: What about at college. Were there Indian women at the school?

JONES: Oh yes, Teata came from that school. She was there when I got there, graduated the year before I did.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you were working in Denver and the YWCA contacted you about setting up the Industrial Department and you did that in Denver?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Who first contacted you? How did the YWCA find you?

JONES: Well, I had belonged to the Business Girls Club at the YWCA, the local YWCA.

INTERVIEWER: In Denver?

JONES: In Denver. It was a group of staid, middle-aged women and I used to play around with the secretary of the business girls department and she said to me one day, "They are trying to get me to start an Industrial Department and I just cannot take on more work. I am going to see if they will hire you to do it." So, they did and in no time flat we had a good sized industrial department. It was pure fluke, I didn't know anything about it. They taught me all I knew about it.

INTERVIEWER: How large was this department that you set up?

JONES: Well, I know that we had around 400 girls in it.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they come from? Which industries in Denver?

JONES: Well, Denver had an enormous overall factory and we had some small plants. Not big factories, but small plants. We had a big meat-packing plant. The person who had really been pushing for a [YWCA] Industrial Department was a woman whose husband owned the meat-packing plant. She said, "Nobody does anything for those girls. Why don't we start some work with them?" So, she got the [YWCA] board to say that they would do it, you see. We never did get many meat-packing girls in, but we got some. Even so, it was her influence that really got the board to start an Industrial Department.

INTERVIEWER: What was the goal of what you were trying to do with them? Were you trying to get them to join unions? Or were you trying to get them a little culture or . . .

JONES: Well, we had an incipient labor college in Denver at the Methodist Church. Even before I went to work for the YWCA I had been regularly going down to the labor college and going to the labor forum.

INTERVIEWER: How did you happen to get interested in that?

JONES: Well, because there were interesting speakers that they brought. They brought Anna Louise Strong and people like that. I was interested.

INTERVIEWER: Why was it incipient?

JONES: Well, the labor movement did not really embrace very many women at that time in Denver. It was nearly all men in the labor movement but there were women tailors, women garment workers, and some people out in some of these small plants. They were not too well unionized. Well, when we started the Industrial Department, I guess that it was about the first or second year, William Sweet ran for governor and he was a liberal man and the labor group wanted to endorse him. We had no channel. So, they started a labor paper and several of us used to read copy for the paper and do what we could to support the paper and we were all supporting the labor college, of course. The University of Denver....a nice, conservative, I think, Methodist university, I'm not sure . . .

INTERVIEWER: But a private college, isn't it?

JONES: Yes, a private college....had a very fine man by the name of Colston Warne, whose name is familiar to everybody, and he taught

JONES: economics at the labor college. So, Frank Palmer, who was editor of the Labor Advocate, brought a bunch of boys that he was interested in and I got a bunch of my girls interested and we would all meet for supper and then go to the labor college together and Colston and Frank would steer the whole group through what we were going to have for the evening and I'll never forget those lessons that we had at the labor college in banking. It was just simply thrilling. It was so exciting, so revolutionary to me, who knew nothing about what happened to money, but that was how I really began. I couldn't have been in a better climate to learn about the labor movement than I was in that Denver YWCA.

INTERVIEWER: This would have been around when?

JONES: I finished college in 1920 and then worked, as I said, in an automobile company and the man that I worked for was killed in a fatal automobile accident. Then I went into a bank to do bond consolidation filing and I didn't know a bond from a chicken. (laughter) But at any rate, it was in January of 1923 when I really went to work in the Denver YWCA. You see, I had been in the labor college and working on the labor paper before I went to work in the YWCA. Then we started our Monday night suppers at the YWCA with this girl and boy group and going on to the labor college.

INTERVIEWER: Were you trying to put pressure on the labor movement to integrate more women into the ranks?

JONES: No. You didn't need to pressure the labor movement in Colorado at that moment. They were trying to get anybody they could get in the ranks. They were glad to work with the women. There were, I would guess, about probably three or four hundred women actually working in good sized plants. I think the overalls plant must have had two hundred workers and then the other smaller plants....we had a candy factory, too. Bower's Candy. That was a big concern. I would guess that we must have had maybe a thousand women workers.

INTERVIEWER: In Denver?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And you had four hundred in the [YWCA] Industrial group?

JONES: Well, it was around four hundred. Now, some of those women who came into the industrial group were doing household employment. We brought those [women] right into the same group, but there weren't many of them. As long as there was an Industrial Department in the YWCA, household employees were a part of it.

INTERVIEWER: How old were most of these women?

JONES: Well, I would say....I must have been about twenty-five, something like that and they were all about my age or maybe a couple of years younger. We were all not too mature yet.

INTERVIEWER: What were the conditions that they were working under? You know, in 1923? I've read lots and lots about the horrible conditions in the South, especially in textiles but in garments, too. Was it the same sort of thing there?

JONES: Well, you see, these garment workers were in a union. They were in United Garment Workers at that time....they really had a union and it was a good union. I've forgotten what their wages were, if I ever knew. I'm sure that I must have known, but I know that it was a good deal more than most women in town made, and certainly more than the clerks in stores made. By the time I left Denver, even the clerks were organizing and that, you know, was pretty far back. I left Denver in 1926. Twenty-six or twenty-seven. And went to Flint, Michigan where the women were not organized. That's when they began organizing unions in the automobile industry.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to go back to Denver for just a minute more. What were the issues that you were dealing with in the Industrial Department? Was equal pay an issue, for example?

JONES: No. Not equal pay, but minimum wages were an issue and then, remember, Colorado had had the Ludlow strike. That was really one of the prime things that had everybody in the labor movement excited. That happened three or four years, I guess, before I reached Denver.

(End of Side A of Tape 1)

INTERVIEWER: Were most of these women married, or were they living with their families or by themselves?

JONES: Many of them were married. I know of no girls who lived alone.

INTERVIEWER: Could they have supported themselves on what they made?

JONES: I would guess that they might have been able to. I would guess so, because it didn't cost so much to live in those days, you know. They couldn't have had an apartment; they could have had a room.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work with them, talking about participation in the union?

JONES: Oh, we sent them to labor college, that was when Bryn Mawr* was open and we were recruiting students for Bryn Mawr and . . .

INTERVIEWER: What was the effect on students from going to Bryn Mawr? Do you remember anything about that?

JONES: Yes. We had about three students in the years that I was in Denver that went to Bryn Mawr.

INTERVIEWER: How did you pick people to go?

JONES: Oh, we would have a number of people who would apply and then we had a committee that raised the money to send them and the committee would make the ultimate choice.

INTERVIEWER: But what were they looking for?

JONES: They were looking for women who had some kind of leadership and could demonstrate it, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember if the women who were picked to go were very different from the other women? I mean, were they unusual women?

JONES: Well....two, I remember, were unusual in that....one of them is now in a nursing home. She was a very unusual person and very dramatic, a very fine leader, a Jewish girl, Goldfield. Then I think that one of the twins went. We had twins in the Industrial Department, the most beautiful girls that I ever looked at in my whole life, and one of them went. They were always leaders, those two girls. They could really get people stirred up. I think that we must have had another person, but I can't remember who it was.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when they came back....did they get a lot out of the experience?

JONES: Yes, they were trade union people, all three of the girls. There was a fourth person and I'm not sure about it, I think that person went after I left, but I'm not sure. They were very active in the labor movement. They wrote for the labor paper; they spoke at conventions; they were quite active girls.

INTERVIEWER: What was the relationship between the women in the Industrial Department who were in unions and those who weren't? Were you working with people on two different levels?

JONES: No, there were no conflicts and as many people went to labor college that weren't in trade unions as those who were, really.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any attempt to organize the domestic workers?

---

*Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers

JONES: Not that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: How did the board of the Y in Denver react to the Industrial Department?

JONES: Oh, they were very interested in it always. I know that I wanted to leave the year before and they said, "No, you just can't. We are building our new building and we are going to build a whole section that the trade unions have dedicated to the Industrial Department and you've just got to stay." So I did.

INTERVIEWER: Why were they so open to this whole idea of an Industrial Department?

JONES: I don't know why they were. I suppose just because they were nice people. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: I mean, again, I'm comparing it in my mind to the situation in the South.

JONES: Well, you see, women in the West were not as tied as women in the South were.

INTERVIEWER: Tied?

JONES: Tied to tradition, tied to patterns. You see, the South is older than the rest of the country and there is more tradition, more patterns of behavior, and everything.

INTERVIEWER: Was unionization, not just for women, but unionization period, sort of a more accepted pattern for workers in the West?

JONES: Oh, much more so. You see, we didn't have these people coming down from New England setting up factories to avoid unions and fighting them. That had happened there. And of course, Ludlow*(1913-1914), remember, was a very dramatic thing for Colorado to have experienced. Then we had Judge Ben Lindsey, who is one of the world's great liberals.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that for the middle-class or upper-class women who were on a board of the Y . . .

JONES: Well, we had an industrial worker on the board, and the business girls had a business girl on the board . . .

INTERVIEWER: But I mean, was the board more likely to be controlled by these other women, such as the woman whose husband owned the meat-packing plant?

---

*The Ludlow Massacre (1913-1914)--"open shop"

JONES: Well, all I remember is that I know that three of the best friends I've ever had were members of the board. They were just wonderful people.

INTERVIEWER: But they had reacted to Ludlow? That's what I'm trying to get at.

JONES: Oh, yes. Oh, indeed they did.

INTERVIEWER: They were horrified by the whole thing. Maybe their work in this was sort of a way of mitigating that feeling.

JONES: Well, I don't think that they thought of it in terms of mitigating their feeling. I think that they would have done it anyway.

INTERVIEWER: But they did have this . . .

JONES: They had this bad reaction to Ludlow. I know in 1924, that a very, very stupid thing happened. Somebody put up a coal exhibit in a window downtown and one of these lumps of coal in there was obviously a human skull that had turned and blackened like coal. Oh, the town just raised cain about that. I'll never forget seeing it for the first time and it didn't stay there long. It wasn't really a human skull, but it just looked like one, you see, Then you see, that's Josephine Roche, you remember her name?

INTERVIEWER: Josephine Roche? I don't know her.

JONES: Well, she was active in government many years later. Josephine Roche started the Rocky Mountain Fuel and Iron Company....I think....well, anyway, it had a different name from the Ludlow group. So, we conducted all kinds of campaigns to increase her sale of coal and boycotting the other company. I remember a very active campaign.

INTERVIEWER: Were these carried on by people like Ben Lindsay?

JONES: All kinds of people in the town, yes. Denver was a very liberal spot at that point.

INTERVIEWER: Was Denver unusual for Colorado, the most industrialized place and . . .

JONES: Well, it's about the only industrialized place at that time in Colorado.

INTERVIEWER: Were the industrialists at Ludlow out of character with the rest of . . .

JONES: Well, they were eastern, you know. Weren't they Rockefellers? Yes. They were eastern and it was all in their manager's hands. The Rockefellers never came near it, you know. It was just a horrible company town.

INTERVIEWER: So even the industrialists in Denver would have . . .

JONES: Well, there were no big industrialists in Denver then. Now, of course, there are. Everything in Texas has moved into Denver now, practically, and there are loads of big industrialists, oil men there. But at that time, Denver was....oh, I don't know what the population was, but it was just a small-sized city, really. And it was a city of colleges, too, you know. Boulder was near and the University of Denver. I didn't last in Flint very long.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to leave Denver and go to Flint?

JONES: Oh, I still had itchy feet. (laughter) I wanted to see the world, you know, and I knew the only way that I could ever move around was to have a job doing something.

INTERVIEWER: So, you went to Flint and you were still working for the YWCA?

JONES: Yes. And of course, there they had all kinds of women in the automobile plants. I lasted from twenty-six or twenty-seven until about the spring of twenty-eight in Flint. A very short time.

INTERVIEWER: You were running an [YWCA] Industrial Department and did you have young women, the same as before, or were these trade union people, most of them?

JONES: No, most of them were not trade union. They were just really organizing the trade unions in the automobile industry at that time. That's when the sit-down strikes and things were going on. The YWCA was a pretty conservative group there and they didn't like the fact that we sent industrial girls to the industrial summer school at Ann Arbor, I guess it was then. So, they said that I was organizing a union of household employees and I said, "I'm sorry I haven't succeeded." (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Were you trying to organize one?

JONES: No, not at all. We always talked about standards for household employees; we had done that for years and years in the YWCA. At any rate, they made it very clear that they would like to have me resign. I said, "Well, you can fire me, but I'm not going to resign." So, they didn't rehire me that year. Then I went to Richmond, Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: You were transferred with the Y?

JONES: No, you're not transferred; you just choose a YWCA. They let you know where the openings are and if they are interested in you, you write back. That's where I met Lucy Mason.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So, you came to Richmond in . . .

JONES: 1928....to thirty-two. There were tobacco workers there predominantly. That was the group in the YWCA.

INTERVIEWER: In Lucy Randolph Mason's* book, To Win These Rights, she says that as an industrial secretary at the Richmond Y, you were "unusually successful in opening people's minds to progressive ideas." She says that you contributed a great deal to making the Richmond association a social force in the community during the time that you were there.

JONES: Lucy was the real social force. You know that. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: When you came in 1928, was she the Industrial Secretary?

JONES: No, she was the Executive Director.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And how long had she been there?

JONES: Oh, quite a while. I think that's the only YWCA that she ever worked in. Then she went with the Consumers League* and from there to the Mine Workers.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like when you first got there? Did you get along well with her?

JONES: Oh, yes. Wonderful. She was one of my very best friends, or was until she died. In fact, I had gone over to Atlanta to see her and I stopped by to see another friend along the way and they said, "Did you know that Lucy died?"* I said that I was worried because I hadn't had a letter for some time. So then I did not continue on.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when you went to Richmond in 1928, how did you see the work of the YWCA there compared to the group that you had been with in Denver and the group that you had been with in Flint?

---

*Lucy Randolph Mason, YWCA leader and public relations organizer for the CIO. See her book To Win These Rights.

*National Consumer's League

*L.R. Mason died in 1959 [1882-1959]

JONES: Well, it was a very, very good group because many of the women in the YWCA were beginning to be interested in the unions, and the tobacco workers [union] sent organizers down through the area. So, Liggett and Myers* and....what was the other one....well, quite a group of people from the two large plants were very much interested in unions. Now, they didn't organize right away. I would guess that probably they were not fully organized even when I left in thirty-two. I don't think they were fully organized. But also, some of the textile workers were beginning to organize. Not the southern textile workers....by that, I don't mean cotton makers, but the people who were working in the clothing factories.

INTERVIEWER: The garment workers.

JONES: Esther Peterson was down organizing, and somebody else.... I've forgotten her name, but she used to be the Industrial Secretary of the YWCA and left the YWCA to go in as an organizer with somebody else, with the Amalgamated [Clothing Workers of America], I think it was at that time.

INTERVIEWER: But you don't remember her name?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Could it have been Gladys Dickerson?

JONES: No. Let's see, what was her name? I don't think that she was the Industrial Secretary for very long. She was there for a couple of years. I haven't the faintest idea what her name was.

INTERVIEWER: She had been there before you?

JONES: Yes. She immediately preceded me.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see the work that the Y was doing in Richmond as really effective? Was it satisfying to you as far as . . .

JONES: Oh, I just loved working there. I was very fond of it. We had a terrific board. What a wonderful board. It was during a bad depression. You remember those years were very bad years. In twenty-eight and twenty-nine, there were these long lines of people standing in line for food, and members of the board would go down and take cameras and take pictures, you know, and try to bring into people's minds what was going on. Then, we had a wonderful young group of board members who always went to industrial conferences with us and they taught at some of the conferences and they were just terrific women.

---

*Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company

INTERVIEWER: So, it was similar to the situation that you had in Denver where the board supported the work of the Y.

JONES: Oh, very much. You see, they wouldn't have kept Lucy if they hadn't been supporting Lucy, too.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Do you remember a Mrs. J. Scott Parish?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't she president of the board for awhile?

JONES: In Richmond?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

JONES: I don't know. I can't place her anywhere. I just remember the name. I don't remember her.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any particular people?

JONES: I remember Mrs. Fred Scott who always used to....she is dead now; she died of cancer, but she was a marvelous person. When they had hearings in Richmond, just before I left the Southern School, she testified at the hearings for integration. She was a marvelous person.

INTERVIEWER: Were most of the members of the board women?

JONES: All of them were. I think that they usually are in YWCAs. I don't know of any men.

INTERVIEWER: About how many industrial workers were involved in Richmond?

JONES: I haven't the faintest idea. I know that we had a household employees' club, which was a good sized club. We must have had maybe 150 or 200 tobacco workers in the industrial club. Then we had one smaller club and that was younger workers.

INTERVEIWER: How much contact did you have with these people? You were the Industrial Secretary and also sort of educational director there?

JONES: No, I wasn't educational director.

INTERVIEWER: Just Industrial Secretary. That was enough?

JONES: (laughter) Well, we had classes always with the industrial groups, you know, and we had lending libraries.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of classes?

JONES: Well, we had classes in economics, simple economics. We had classes for people who wanted to study drama. We put on many plays. They did Tom Tippet's Mill Shadows the year after I left. We also worked on Green Pastures. And we had a chorus. We brought in different people to teach.

INTERVIEWER: As Industrial Secretary were you sort of heavily involved in the interracial work that the Y was trying to do?

JONES: Well, I don't think that I was heavily involved; I was involved. I remember that we had a Negro YWCA and a white YWCA there. I remember when I was planning for a discussion series that I was going to have for our staff meeting, I had suggested a Negro professor to take charge of the group and I think that some of the staff were a little rebellious, but they got over it. I don't mean that they were rebellious, I mean that they thought it was kind of a funny choice for me to make.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have exchange programs between the two Ys or anything like that?

JONES: They always had exchange staff meetings. We didn't have exchange programs, no. I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Did the black YWCA have anything resembling your industrial department?

JONES: I don't remember what they had, really, I remember that the secretary was a very good friend of mine. They had one executive director and then she had several part-time workers, I think.

INTERVIEWER: What was her name, do you remember?

JONES: I haven't the faintest idea.

INTERVIEWER: The household employees group that you had, were they black or white?

JONES: They were white.

INTERVIEWER: You don't hear very much about white household employees in the South.

JONES: Well, you did in Richmond and many of the girls were children of immigrants that came over after the war and they had settled up and down the Virginia valleys and their fathers were farmers. Many of the girls had gone through high school and whatnot, and they didn't want to work in factories and there was no office work for them, so they went to work in homes. I know that Mrs. Fred Scott had a beautiful girl who worked for her for years, a wonderful gal. I would guess that there must have been at least twenty, twenty-five white girls in the household employees [group].

INTERVIEWER: Had any of them been in different jobs and lost their jobs because of the Depression and had to go into domestic work?

JONES: I don't know. They were very young, I doubt if they had.

INTERVIEWER: What was the relationship that the Y had with the Richmond Urban League?

JONES: Well, I don't remember that. I'm sure that there was an Urban League at that time, I can't remember whether there was or not. I know that there was when the Southern School [for Workers] was founded, I mean when we moved there, but I don't . . .

INTERVIEWER: You don't remember working with them at that time?

JONES: No. I don't remember it at all. I know that some members of our staff were very anti-segregation, I know that. I don't remember any demonstration of any kind.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the Richmond Association....Lucy Mason wrote about it when she was talking about you in her book . . .

JONES: Well, yes, I remember the Association but I probably wouldn't have thought about it the same way that she did.

INTERVIEWER: What was the Richmond Association?

JONES: Well, it was a typical YWCA of that time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, she was just referring to the Richmond YWCA?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I'm sorry. That's my mistake. I thought that she meant an association consisting of different groups in Richmond.

JONES: No. The YWCA.

INTERVIEWER: I was thinking that it was a super organization of different . . .

JONES: No, but there was an organization of that kind. They had just begun to have the Community Fund and there was a council of women on the Community Fund and many of those women were the women that we took down to the bread lines during the Depression and got them very much interested in what should be done about the unemployed. I found some of those funny old pictures the other day. There were long, long lines of people standing in line waiting for food. I know that one of our Community Fund directors was named Arthur Guild. Now, his wife, June was a....well, in the South, she would be a radical. In San Francisco, she would probably be a mild liberal. (laughter) She was really always leading some kind of a discussion or something on the plight of people. I think that he died and she came out West, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: It seems to me that in Richmond, there were a lot of middle-class women who were very involved and very concerned. Did you think that at the time?

JONES: Well, I knew that it was true because we had a Sunday night discussion group. I have never been in a group that was as exciting as that one. We had people from West Hampton College. We had lawyers, we had high school teachers, we had health workers, we had....I was the only one from the YWCA in the group. There must have been about fifteen or eighteen of us. We had it every other Sunday night for discussion and it was a fascinating group. Now, since then, when I went back to be at the Southern School, two of the families had broken up, the wives had been in this group. There were men and women in the group. Two had died and some had moved away; but it was a very exciting group of people. We worked on all kinds of things. For instance, one woman's husband worked for a rubber factory somewhere, so she brought us contraceptives and the [YWCA] Industrial Department shared the contraceptives around among the club girls. (laughter) How that happened--we had one girl who had an abortion and almost died, and that got everybody really uptight about abortions, and we decided that it was time to do something about it. A lot of these girls were married but they had to go on working and they couldn't stop and have children.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any hint as to how widespread self-induced abortion was among the women?

JONES: No, but we know that it was widespread. We did know that.

INTERVIEWER: That was the main form of birth control.

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were they open to the idea of other forms of birth control?

JONES: Oh, yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Eager to get ahold of it?

JONES: Yes. Well, even when I came out to San Francisco, it was very difficult for girls to get hold of contraceptives.

INTERVIEWER: Did the Y ever get into any trouble for doing that, or was it all really under cover?

JONES: Well, we thought that it was under cover, but when I went back to the Southern School, I went over to the hospital one day and was talking to one of the doctors and he said, "You don't remember me." I said, "Yes, I do." He was very familiar to me, but I couldn't place him. He said, "Well, you remember when you had contraceptives at the YWCA desk?" (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: How did he know?

JONES: Well evidently his wife was in the group that knew we were being furnished them. I'm sure that he was a very liberal guy. We had a very liberal industrial committee.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that so many men and women there were into these kinds of....for the South, as you said, "radical" kinds of activities?

JONES: Well, Richmond isn't fully a completely southern city. Even if you go down to Norfolk or other places like that, there were many more dyed-in-the-wool southerners.

INTERVIEWER: Were most of these people like Lucy Mason who had very long traditions in the South, or were they from somewhere else?

JONES: Well, most of them had pretty long traditions in the South. I know that. I can verify that by things that were said and done in the group. They had long traditions in the South, but they were young women who had played with ideas a lot. They knew what they wanted out of life.

INTERVIEWER: Were they very much aware of breaking tradition?

JONES: Yes, very much.

INTERVIEWER: And eager to do it or afraid to do it?

JONES: Not afraid, but cautious. They weren't recklessly going out and throwing themselves in front of a train; they were taking a little caution. I know that we had two or three people from West Hampton College that were just the most stimulating women, terribly interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever know a woman named Dorothy Markey, or Page was her maiden name?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: She went to West Hampton College. I just wondered if you might have known her.

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered if you could give me some more hints about Lucy Mason and what she was like to work with, how she was perceived by other people, and how she went about doing her work.

JONES: Well, Lucy was truly a southern woman, but she was a liberated southern woman. She was really a southerner and she played on the fact that she was a Randolph, you know. She was well received. People loved her. She was very easy to work with, completely easy to work with.

INTERVIEWER: Was she a hard worker?

JONES: Oh yes, she worked very hard. She didn't know too much about doing any discipline of staff or anything, you know. Everybody just went their own way, but we all had our own ideas and they seemed to merge pretty well.

INTERVIEWER: Was she a creative person? Was she into new things and different ways of doing things?

JONES: Oh yes, she had worked with the Consumer League and been all over the country. She knew what people were doing elsewhere and could overcome opposition in a very remarkable, typically southern way, you know, you think that you're not giving in but before you know it, you have. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: She manipulated people obviously, or not?

JONES: She didn't even realize that she did it herself, I'm sure of that. I'm perfectly sure that it was not an intentional thing; I think that it was something that was just born in her.

INTERVIEWER: I've wondered many times about her work with the CIO and I . . .

JONES: I didn't know much about that. You see, I left the YWCA before she did and, by that time, I was out here.

INTERVIEWER: But when you went back with the Southern School, did you ever hear anything about the kind of work that she had done?

JONES: Oh, several people that were on her committee I knew. But I did hear a lot of....every now and then, I would hear people say, "Well, it's not like when Lucy was here." You would always hear that complaint from good friends. I know that I was on one committee at the Y and they didn't call a total committee and they fired the industrial secretary, or decided to reemploy her, and the rest of the committee who weren't at the meeting all began telephoning me and saying, "Well, this never would have happened if Lucy were here." I've forgotten what it was all about now. I'm not sure what it had to do with. It had nothing to do with labor or anything in that field.

INTERVIEWER: What was her relationship to the Southern School for Workers?

JONES: Well, she knew Louise Leonard* very, very well and we used to raise money at the YWCA to send girls there, and Lucy was always very helpful with that. I think that she probably visited the school and spoke there several times. I'm not sure.

---

*Louise Leonard [McLaren] - YWCA Industrial Secretary for the Southern region from 1920-1926; founder and director of the Southern Summer School for Women Workers, 1927-1943.

INTERVIEWER: What about when you came back to Richmond with the Southern School? Did she come in and out, or did she ever participate?

JONES: Oh, she was gone by that time; she was down in Atlanta.

INTERVIEWER: But I thought that she worked with you in some way.

JONES: Well, I don't remember her ever being in Richmond while I was there. Now, she may have been. I just don't remember, but I think that I would have remembered it. I saw a lot of her in Atlanta.

INTERVIEWER: But she was enthusiastic about what you were doing?

JONES: Well, she was interested. I don't know whether she was enthusiastic or not.

INTERVIEWER: There was one other thing that I wanted to ask you about Lucy Mason. Did you ever know anything about her being a mystic or into the supernatural at all?

JONES: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was she into that when you were with her in Richmond?

JONES: Well, she had been....yes, she was. She used to always tell me about talking with her friends, you know, those that were long gone.

INTERVIEWER: Was that sort of a strange aspect of her personality or . . .

JONES: Well, it didn't bother me, you know, I would listen and be interested, but that was all. I know that she had one friend, Katherine Gurwick, she was always talking with Katherine.

INTERVIEWER: Was anyone else into that?

JONES: Not that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: I was reading some of her correspondence and she started writing about that and I just found it unusual. I was wondering if the people around her knew about it.

JONES: I don't think that many people did. Maybe a few may have.

INTERVIEWER: Did she ever try to get you into it?

JONES: No. I'm too pragmatic for that. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: When you left Richmond in 1932, where did you go then?

JONES: Here. [San Francisco]

INTERVIEWER: You came here with the YWCA?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And did you start an Industrial Department or come into one that was already set up?

JONES: I started one. There had been a reorganization of the YWCA done by a committee of people from the national staff and they had recommended that there be an Industrial Department. They also recommended that I be asked to set it up. It happened that on that committee was a very good friend of mine, needless to say, or otherwise they never would have known that I existed. Then, another friend of mine was asked to come out as a result of that. So, we kept writing back and forth, "Well, I'll go if you'll go." I finally ended here.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the other friend?

JONES: Annie Watson who took over the International Institute. She was a marvelous person and did a magnificent job in San Francisco in the social work field, just really a terrific person.

INTERVIEWER: Did she leave the Y and go into social work?

JONES: Well, the International Institute left the Y while she was director, but she was always very active in the social work councils. We all were at the Y, too. That's how we knew each other.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have trouble deciding to leave Richmond?

JONES: I never had trouble deciding to leave anything. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: It had been good for awhile but you were ready to leave . . .

JONES: Well, you know, you always want....San Francisco was someplace that I had always wanted to be and so I decided that that was the thing to do. And you get stale after awhile, you know, working with the same group. You may introduce many new people to the group but still there is always a big hangover of people that you know intimately and so you always want to move on.

INTERVIEWER: Well then, when you came out here and set up the Industrial Department, what was the situation here? Did you have the support of the board?

JONES: Oh, yes. We had a very good board.

INTERVIEWER: What were the women involved in, what kinds of industries?

JONES: Well, they were practically all trade unionists. They were in the biscuit factories and they were in clothing factories. We helped a lot in organizing demonstrations for a higher minimum wage and we watched the women go and come in the Chinatown factories to see how many women carried home goods and couldn't ever find them taking home anything to work on and yet we knew that they were doing homework. So, we found out that what was happening was that the Chinese children would come by from school and put their mothers' homework in their school satchels and take it home. Then we got up early in the morning and had a line of women there from the union and some of us from the Industrial Department and we took the case to court. The case was dismissed because one Chinese woman testified and immediately the case was dismissed. We were furious and we went up the Attorney General's office and the City Attorney's office and said, "Why this?" He said, "Would you have had me punish that girl? She didn't know what she was saying. She was Chinese, she was having to speak through an interpreter and that wasn't what she was saying at all." This woman was saying that she had never seen homework being taken out and she was very happy with her wages and whatnot. Everybody knew that she couldn't really be saying this truthfully.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any relationships with the Chinese women?

JONES: Well, we had a Chinese YWCA.

INTERVIEWER: Was that part of the Industrial Department? I mean, was there a Chinese branch like there was a black branch?

JONES: There was a Chinese branch; there was a Japanese branch; and there was a central branch, and the Mission Street branch.

INTERVIEWER: Well, how did your Industrial Department . . .

JONES: Well, you could join any one that you wanted to. I took one night in each one.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So you were Industrial Secretary really for all of these.

JONES: Yes. I was head of the Industrial Department and then we brought in an assistant.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know the Chinese women and talk with them? How did they feel about this group taking the case to court?

JONES: Oh, they were delighted. The Chinese women wanted to see it done.

INTERVIEWER: Were they worried about losing their jobs?

JONES: Well, those women were not, because they weren't the ones intimately involved in the garment industry. They were doing other kinds of jobs, restaurants and things like that. But they knew that once you could crack it, you know, you were really helping all of Chinatown.

INTERVIEWER: So, the women that you were working closest with were not in the sweated trades?

JONES: Well, one woman was in a very sweated trade. She was in one of the garment sweat trades and she went to work when she was nine or something and they used to hide her under the table when the inspectors would come through. So, she really knew the whole inside story of the garment industry.

INTERVIEWER: And she was trying to get help to crack it?

JONES: Yes. You see, even the people that didn't want to lose their jobs, their families even wanted it. They just knew that these people were being imposed upon. I've forgotten what the settlement was. The judge got a settlement for all these people and I've forgotten. It was an enormous amount of money, but they had to pay then for working more hours.

INTERVIEWER: So, what happened when the one Chinese woman spoke and said that she was very happy and the case was thrown out? Was this another case that you were talking about?

JONES: No, that was the same case.

INTERVIEWER: It was brought back again and settled?

JONES: No, no. The judge just went to the division of Industrial Welfare and made the settlement happen. He said, "You've got to get this settlement." So, they did. They went after these factories and got it. They did it that way, I'm sure. It was a long time. I suppose that we must have worked on that case for three or four months and then in the meantime, the ILGWU started organizing and they started working in the factories and they got a Chinese union. But still today, the Chinese are not really organized, the garment workers. There is one union, but there are dozens of shops, as you well know. Only last year, the papers were full of Chinese girls walking out of a factory in this neighborhood just down the hill here. I think that they were being organized and they walked out.... I think that walkout occured three or four months before there was some settlement. Then there is still not a strong union. The Chinese people are hard to work with in many ways. It's so hard to learn their language, you know. I understood from my Chinese friend down the hill here, who comes by every other day--in fact he was here about twenty minutes before you came--he says that the man who was organizing them did such a poor job of organizing. I don't know whether that's true or not, maybe the organizer just couldn't get at the Chinese way of life enough to know how to do it. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: When you were working a different night a week with each of these YWCA groups in the thirties, were any of the groups together at all, did they ever meet together? Did the Chinese groups tend to stay together and . . .

JONES: Oh, the Chinese girls tended to stay together, but not as much as the Japanese. The Japanese group stayed to itself more than the others. That, I think, was due really....well, there used to be an old saying in our Department, "Well, you have to ask the girl's grandmother." The grandmothers really did settle things for them pretty much. Now, we could go to their branch and we could do any of the activities that we wanted, but their grandparents wanted to keep them in the neighborhood. They didn't want them running around. The Chinese were much more....well, I remember when the war broke out, the Chinese girls were the first to volunteer to go down and picket the Japanese ships, you know, with all kinds of other girls and all kinds of people in town. The Chinese girls were quick to do that.

INTERVIEWER: Did the YWCA employ any of the Chinese women or the Japanese women as secretaries?

JONES: Oh, yes. All of them were staffed by their nationalities. We also had many Chinese on the staff otherwise. We had dance teachers and various things. I know that our loveliest modern dance teacher when I came out here was a Chinese woman. The national YWCA had a very wonderful Chinese woman who managed the office and was in charge of their national office here.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any interaction between the industrial women that you worked with and the business women in San Francisco? Was there a business woman's club, too?

JONES: Well, I had both in my department. Yes, there was a . . .

(End of Side B of Tape 1)

INTERVIEWER: Had that been the case in Richmond?

JONES: Well, you see, the only one there was the Negro branch and we did have meetings. I know that we had meetings, but I don't remember where they were held, but I know that we always had staff meetings together.

INTERVIEWER: No, I meant between the industrial women and business women.

JONES: In Richmond? I don't know....I really don't know whether we had much interaction or not. I think that we had more friction, really, than interaction, because we would both want the same room the same night....(laughter) I think that was it. It had nothing to do with the individuals in the group; it was just that we were always fighting for space in that little building.

INTERVIEWER: What about in San Francisco? Were you involved with clerical workers at all? The organization of clerical workers or office workers?

JONES: Well, I wasn't involved in any of it, no. I had nothing to do with working with office workers at all while I was here, except in the clubs. But I do know that we had a number of union workers in the clubs, but we weren't involved in the.... I'm sure that we had workers who belonged to Local 3. I don't know whether we had with the other big local or not. I'm not sure. That was so long ago. I think they were just getting underway with the office workers. Office workers are slower, you know. If anything could be slower than southern textiles, it is an office worker. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: How long did you stay in San Francisco with the Industrial Department?

JONES: I left in thirty-eight.

INTERVIEWER: And why did you leave?

JONES: Because I wanted to try and see what it was like down in the Visalia Valley.

INTERVIEWER: And you were still with the YWCA?

JONES: No, I went down with the State Department of Welfare which had set up an office for agricultural workers in the Visalia Valley, where the Okies were all pouring in. I worked down there for about a year, I guess. Then they cut the staff and I left.

INTERVIEWER: What was your job? What did you do?

JONES: Casework. Admittance for welfare.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of that? It was a different experience for you.

JONES: Oh, it was a wonderful experience. You've read Carey McWilliams' Factories in the Field. It was all during that period of time. First of all, we had a political group that had been meeting at the YWCA for months and months and we had elected a man that we thought was going to be a real liberal. That was Olsen. On the day of his inauguration, he had a slight stroke or something and his son really took over for him and he became very anti-liberal, really. But at any rate, he had set up this relief situation. So, I thought that it would be good to learn a little something about how you did that. So, I said that I would go down. The first paycheck that I got was so much more than I thought it should have been, It wasn't much I assure you, but it was much more than I thought and so I said....I went to the director and said, "I don't understand this. I was told that this was what I would make." He said, "Well, go cash this check and they can't take any of it back." So, I went out and cashed the check. The next month, the same story. The next time that I went back, I said, "I think there is something really wrong." He said, "No, they decided that you had enough experience to put you in this category and they just automatically put you in it." I said, "Well, I don't know any more about casework than a jackrabbit. I'm learning on the job." He said, "Well, just forget about it. Everybody else is too."

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel good about what was being done for these people who were going on relief?

JONES: Well, you know that at that period of time we had....now, whether this was a state or national law, I think it was national, but all the immigrants that came into California had to prove if they did not have a visa, did not come in properly, they had to prove that they were here before 1922 or something like that. My main job was to verify the fact that these people had been here and we had all kinds of records that you could look at. I only lost one family that couldn't prove anything.

INTERVIEWER: Had they come in recently?

JONES: We knew they had come in recently. You could usually find something; you could find a funny old picture and say, "There, he worked on the railroad and he was eleven years old." (laughter) So, it was kind of fun. But then when they had to cut staff, I was not due to be cut but there was a man in our office that really was worried. Well, he was married and

JONES: had a family and he was going to be cut. I said, "You know, I'm through." I'd learned what I'd wanted to know.

INTERVIEWER: Was anyone there at the time working to try to improve the conditions of farm workers, improve the hours or the pay?

JONES: Yes, we had Dr. Kreps, down at Stanford, and then we had Dr. Paul Taylor over at the University of California, we had all kinds of groups who were working on the farm labor situation.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get involved with any of them?

JONES: Oh yes, I knew a lot of those people. I wasn't heavily involved because I was employed most of the time, but you know, they would go up and down the state talking with people and getting data so that they could take the case to the legislature or do whatever they thought had to be done about it. Of course, there are still some of the same people, you still see Dr. Taylor, you know. He's working against this group that has so much land in the Valley, you know, where there are supposed to be 160-acre farms on which you get your irrigation free. So, he is really a terrific man.

INTERVIEWER: Then, when you left the job in the Valley, where did you go?

JONES: I can't remember to save my life. I probably came back here and worked for the....Women's Council, I think. Let's see.... '38, '39.... oh, I worked for the National Youth Organization next. I did a project down in southern California and that didn't last long. That was in a segregated area, oh boy. Practically everybody in my group was Negro, because the town in which they had this wouldn't even let....no, it was the town that had another project similar to mine that wouldn't let a Negro stay overnight in the town.

INTERVIEWER: Where was this?

JONES: Down in southern California, out of Los Angeles. One of those small communities down there.

INTERVIEWER: What was your project to do?

JONES: Well, we were teaching girls so that they could get household employment and boys so that they could work on farms. We had a staff, but it was a very poor staff, badly staffed. I didn't last long. I just couldn't take it; it was terrible. So I came back home and we were getting ready for an election and I worked with the Democratic Women's group in working on that election.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a big New Deal supporter or a big Roosevelt supporter?

JONES: Oh, yes. I worked in all his campaigns. Then I went on the OPA* for a while as the acting consumer representative in the western states. That was the vilest job, it was a most reactionary group.

INTERVIEWER: Why, what did they do?

JONES: They didn't want price control, but they were running it, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Did they make sure that it didn't work?

JONES: I think they did. (laughter) They certainly made sure that I didn't work. I just got so mad that I quit. Then I worked in the Health Department for a while, I mean the Army's health department, sending shipments overseas, drugs and whatnot.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever join the Army?

JONES: No. I wasn't in the Army, I was just in the health department. Then I went back to the Southern School. The only way that you could get out of a war job, you know, was if you were going back to teaching. Did you know that?

INTERVIEWER: No.

JONES: Well, in California that was true. The only way that you could leave on your own, you had to have a good excuse. Either illness, or your family needed you or you could go to be a teacher because we had such a shortage of teachers. So, I said I was going to teach and went back to the Southern School for Workers. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering how you were contacted about becoming the director?

JONES: Well, Louise [Leonard McLaren] had known me for a long time. She wrote to me and asked me.

INTERVIEWER: Had you been good friends?

JONES: We were friends; we weren't close friends, but friends, yes. I had known her and had known her husband and I would say that we were good friends in one way, but not very close friends. I didn't know her background or family or anything until I moved to New York later after she had left.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know anything about why she decided to resign?

---

*OPA - Office Price Administration

JONES: I haven't the faintest idea. I have a feeling, and now this I'm not at all sure about, but I have a feeling that she thought that the summer school plan wasn't quite sufficient. Because when she wrote to me she said something in terms of the effect that the board was thinking of setting up an office in the South from which they could conduct education in various communities. I never would have gone to work in the Southern Summer School because I didn't believe in spending all that amount of money for one six-week experience for one person from a community. I just thought that it was wasted money. Now, that's an awful thing to say because I think that our Bryn Mawr girls did an awful lot for the labor movement, but somehow in the South, going back to where you had no unions to connect with....to me, it seemed....well, I'm glad to hear that so many people did feel that it meant a whole new life for them.

INTERVIEWER: But it was still an individual experience rather that being a community experience and a lot of those people eventually left their community.

JONES: Yes, I know they did. In fact, some of them did end up in the labor movement as organizers and doing very good jobs.... I've often been so proud of Polly [Robkin], I'm so glad she lost her job at Amalgamated. Did she ever tell you how she lost her job?

INTERVIEWER: No.

JONES: She walked into Gladys Dickerson's office one day with a Wallace* pin on and, oh boy, Dickerson had a fit and had her fired. So, I heard that she had lost her job and I called about six or eight people on our board and said, "Let's hire her." They said, "O.K., go ahead, we'll take your word for it." I sent her a telegram, "Stop by Richmond on your way home." She did.

INTERVIEWER: How did you first meet her?

JONES: I haven't the faintest idea. I had been back in the South for two years with the Southern School. I suppose that I met her through Southern School things. I just don't know where we first met.

INTERVIEWER: After [Louise] McLaren resigned and you took over in 1944, what was her relationship to the school after that?

JONES: Well, I don't know that there was any relationship, really.

INTERVIEWER: Did she support your work or help you in the transition?

---

*Henry Wallace, Progressive Party candidate for President in 1948.

JONES: Oh, she gave me names of people, you know, that she thought would be interested. She came to several of the....you see, I used to have to go to New York and raise money every year, she gave me names of several people and she would to to some of the meetings.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of work did she go on to do after she left the school?

JONES: Frankly, I don't remember. There was some job somewhere but I've forgotten where it was. Then she worked with ALES*, you know.

INTERVIEWER: The board actually made the decision to move to Richmond in forty-two. Do you know why they decided to move to Richmond in particular, and to have an office in the South? Do you know of any other people on the board who might have thought, as you said you did, that the Southern Summer School setup was really not effective?

JONES: I don't know and I didn't know that they made that decision in forty-two. You must have gotten that from the papers. I didn't know that, because it was forty-four before she [Louise] wrote to me.

INTERVIEWER: When she wrote you, had they already decided to go to Richmond?

JONES: Well, I don't think so. I think that I decided Richmond. I think that there were a number of places they were thinking about. I thought that Richmond was where you could get more leadership to bring in when you needed something done.

INTERVIEWER: When you returned to the South, was it difficult for you after you had been on the West Coast for so long?

JONES: No, not at all.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to pick up a lot of the contacts that you had had in Richmond before?

JONES: I picked up several of them and then I just plain got so busy that a lot of them I didn't hold.

INTERVIEWER: Were you sort of working in a different group than you had been before?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was your relationship to the YWCA during the years you were with the Southern School?

---

*American Labor Education Service

JONES: I was on the board, as I said, until they fired this person.... then we discovered that they dropped the Industrial Committees, so that was the end of that. There were one or two people who were on the staff there that I was friends with all that time, but I didn't do anything with them.

INTERVIEWER: You left the board when they dropped the Industrial Department?

JONES: I wasn't on the board, I was on the committee, the Industrial Committee. They just got rid of us, you see, by dropping the department. I don't know whether they dropped the department or just got rid of the secretary. I never did know. And to tell you the truth, by that time I was so much more involved with the other organizations in Richmond that I was working with.

INTERVIEWER: Was Eleanor Copenhaver* involved with that?

JONES: I don't think so. She may have been, but I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: When you first became director of the school in forty-four, who were the people who were most helpful to you in getting started?

JONES: Well, I don't know really. I don't know. One of the YWCA secretaries helped me find a location, made me stay with her until I found housing and until I found an office.

INTERVIEWER: Who was that?

JONES: Elizabeth Richardson. She died many years ago. She was never known as being a liberal. She was a true Virginian, you know, traditional, but she was a very good friend of mine and some of my friends from West Hampton College were glad to have me home and came to see me and things like that. But as to helping me get started, I just don't remember anybody helping me get started. I don't think that I wanted anybody to help me get started. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: What was your relationship with Mary Barker*. Did she stay on as Chairman of the Board?

JONES: Yes, for a year, I think, at least. Then we elected Dr. Davis*, who was at William and Mary [College].

---

*Eleanor Copenhaver - from Marion, Virginia; active YWCA leader in the national organization.

*Mary Barker - from Atlanta, Georgia; Chairman of the Board of the Southern Summer School, 1928-1945.

*Dr. Howard H. Davis - Professor at William and Mary College and Chairman of the Board of the Southern School for Workers.

INTERVIEWER: Was she in ill health and planned to resign?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have contact with her over the years that you were running the school?

JONES: I always wrote to her and heard from her, but I don't think that I ever saw her but maybe once. I spent one evening in her home with the three sisters and....I guess maybe twice, but that was all.

INTERVIEWER: Did you consciously try to move the school in new directions from what it had been doing before? For example, in interracial work, they had never accepted black students at the Summer School and you did so much with interracial work in Richmond.

JONES: Well, you see by this time, the unions had kind of broken the pattern, too. Now, the AF of L unions, they were still in separate unions but in the CIO, they were in the same union, although often they were segregated within the same union, as you well know. I wasn't consciously trying to break any patterns. I was trying to see if we could train leadership for the unions so that they knew what they were getting. That's the thing that was uppermost in my mind, to try and see that they could push themselves ahead through their unions.

INTERVIEWER: Were the unions still expanding at a rapid rate? The people that you were working with were new union members?

JONES: Absolutely new and even some of the unions that had been established for a longer period of time didn't really have very educational union meetings. The president and the officers would kind of run the union. You know that there are some unions that still do that. So, I was very much interested in our trying to build democratic unions and teaching people how to run union meetings and how to settle grievances, how to speak from the floor. You know, we would get all kinds of little mimeographed pamphlets on what the functions of a union committee were and so forth and so on. Then, all the unions began using them, you know, so we began to lessen our using them and use theirs for their own purposes. But the only new thing that we did really in the school was to start the "Schools of Government" and try to get them [union members] more literate so that they could really understand how you got the kind of legislation that you needed to get.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel that the work of the school in the past had been spread over too large a geographic area and you wanted to concentrate on a smaller area?

JONES: I didn't really know enough about the school in the past. I visited that one day and that was all that I knew....but we sent people to the school from Richmond and they would come back but they weren't involved in unions. I don't remember them being very involved in the Industrial Department. Have you seen Jesse Smith in Richmond?

INTERVIEWER: No.

JONES: I don't know whether she went to the school or not, whether she went to the school or went to Bryn Mawr. I don't know which. Her name is Jesse Moseley, incidentally. She is the one of the old club girls that I still hear from. Mrs. Douglas Moseley in Richmond, Virginia. She wasn't terribly excited about the moving of the office to Richmond. I kept up the relationship, but by that time, she was married and had a child and was not as involved in things, but we were always very good friends. She worked in the Ligget and Myers tobacco factory for many, many years.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of the workers associated with the School after 1944 learn the history of the School? Did any of them know, for example, that it had been founded for women workers originally?

JONES: Well, I'm sure they must have known it because all of our publicity carried "formerly Southern School for Women Workers" and so forth. I don't think that most of them really connected it with a school. This was more union activity in their minds, because we went into the union halls to have most of the things that we did. When we went to Washington we took the problems that they had found in their unions to our Congressmen or to the [Congressional] Committee that worked on that problem. I learned more from those schools of government than I ever knew from any trade union office in my life. I took a group of lumber workers up [to Washington, D.C.] during the first school of government. There were two or three of them [Schools of Government] and so we decided that one of the things we wanted to do was to find out about unemployment compensation and about workmen's compensation. So, we set up these meetings and one of the men came to me and said, "Do you know, I've learned something that is going to save my union millions of dollars." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "We didn't know that if a man was killed on the job that his family could have compensation. We are taking care of the the wives of three men who were killed last year on the job." I tell you, it is just that kind of thing that just knocks you....how little....now, it's true that their international unionman came in perhaps once every two or three months and looked at them and gave them a speech, collected their dues, and went out. But they had never been told about their rights as workers. They didn't know and of course, they were Negroes and nobody in the town was going to look them up and tell them.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work with both AF of L and CIO unions?

JONES: Not many AF of L unions.

INTERVIEWER: In the papers, it comes out that a goal of yours was to bridge those two groups.

JONES: Well, we tried to get them together, but they didn't really.... There were some CIO unions that wouldn't work with me. They weren't going to have anything to do with "Brownie Lee Jones, she was a Communist". I heard about that and I wrote to Phil Murray* and I said, "Now, this is one of your field workers that is doing this and I am going to blast him all over the newspapers if you don't stop this." I tell you, it was cleaned up right away. But you know some of their [CIO] union men were no better than the hidebound old guys in the AF of L. They just had the power in their hands and they had an ignorant group of workers and they wanted to keep them that way. I'll never forget a union....I won't name this one because it is one of the real progressive unions, but one of the unions that I worked with, the union members had never seen a copy of their contract and I was called in to give them a shop steward's course and I said, "Where is the contract?" Well, they didn't have a contract. "Well, how do you know when you have a grievance?" "Well, we just go to complain about it. If somebody is hurt, we go and complain about it." I said, "You don't know?" I tell you, their international representative just blasted me for calling for the contract. He said that it wasn't anybody's business outside of the union to see that contract and he wasn't going to give it to me.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever come between workers and the hierarchy in the union?

JONES: No, the only thing I ever had to do in any relationship like that was when a worker would come into my office bleeding and he wanted me to take him to Workmen's Compensation, the office, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Why did he come to your office?

JONES: Because he didn't know any place else to go. So, I would call Mr. Pugh and say, "Mr. Pugh, So-and-So is here from Norfolk and he has been injured. Shall I take him over to Workmen's Compensation?" So, I'd take him over there and they would say, "You can't represent this man; you're not in his union." I'd say, "You call Mr. Pugh." They would call Mr. Pugh. That was the only good thing Mr. Pugh ever stood for, he would see that I got that kind of a chance to help workers out.

---

*Phil Murray - President, CIO

INTERVIEWER: What was his position?

JONES: He was the head of the CIO in Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a good relationship with him?

JONES: Yes. He was cordial and good but he never did anything particularly for us. He didn't interview any of the new people or anything of that kind. When the PAC [CIO Political Action Committee] people were coming through, you know, he would ask me if they could use one of our small offices and he would come in and see them and be very genial and nice, you know. He was an older man and his fire was kind of burned out. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Who were the best supporters you had among the CIO in Richmond?

JONES: Boyd Payton, Dan Powell, Paul Christopher and....oh....

INTERVIEWER: Dan Powell, what was his position?

JONES: CIO-PAC. Let's see, Paul Christopher, what was he doing.... I don't know. Boyd Payton, of course, was textiles and then the woodworkers man, I've forgotten his name. He's left that area, now. The International Woodworkers of America and the paperworkers' Education Director, Nat Goldfinger*, who was recently on the national staff of the CIO....those were all very good friends of mine.

INTERVIEWER: Were they really looking to you to sort of fill in as an educational department for a lot of the CIO unions?

JONES: Well you see, the unions sent money to us until they began to hire their own educational directors and then of course, they didn't do it and that's when we really realized that we were doing their job for them and unless we could get enough support from the labor movement, it was useless to try and drag it all out of liberals. You see, the Rosenwald Fund gave us a good break.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that the CIO unions started setting up their own educational departments?

JONES: Well, some of the AF of L had too, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Why did both of them do that rather than going with independent labor schools?

JONES: Because there is a good deal of difference in the way unions are run and I think they wanted to be sure that their people get what they want them to have, to tell the truth. It is just like Catholics want to send their children to a Catholic school.

---

*Recently deceased

INTERVIEWER: When you were involved with the Tidewater OPA [Tidewater, Virginia, Office of Price Administration] project, was it much like the work that you had done in California earlier, were the same sort of people in price administration in Virginia?

JONES: What do you mean in Tidewater? Do you mean . . .

INTERVIEWER: There was a consumer education program or price control program that you were trying to get set up . . .

JONES: I don't remember doing that. You must have me mixed up with somebody else.

INTERVIEWER: No, I just remember reading a little bit about a Tidewater OPA project that was going on that the School worked with in some way or supported.

JONES: Well, we went to all kinds of government hearings up and down Virginia and we brought workers in to testify, but I don't remember anything on price support, but we could easily have done it. Or it could have happened with some of the other staff and I wasn't even thoroughly aware of it.

INTERVIEWER: Were you involved in cost-of-living programs?

JONES: Oh, yes, we did a lot of that, but that was related to minimum wages, federal and state.

INTERVIEWER: Trying to get more minimum wages rather than trying to control prices?

JONES: Yes. I remember that we had one wonderful hearing in Richmond, just marvelous, and then we went down with the textile workers and put on two more, one in Durham, N.C. and one in Winston-Salem, N.C.....I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: What was the response to those programs?

JONES: Well, the workers were excited about it, but the thing that was interesting was that in Richmond, we had such a wide range of people who spoke for it, among the ordinary citizens, I mean: one was a Catholic priest. So, when that got out.... first of all, the CIO sent us a hundred and fifty dollars for us to hire someone to take verbatim the whole thing, you know, and then they typed it up and it was all sent around to various unions. So, the unions saw that we had this Catholic priest and a couple of protestant ministers and people like that and that's why textiles wanted to start theirs. But I had an awful time getting a Catholic priest someplace, I've forgotten where it was, one of those places. I couldn't find anybody who really knew a Catholic priest, but we finally found one.

INTERVIEWER: Were people in the community opposed to having minimum wage hearings? Did you have any trouble from industry?

JONES: No, no. Not at all. Even our own representative from Virginia came down to the hearing, a Congressional representative. There may have been....well, I know that Reynolds, the Reynolds [tobacco] company, one of the sons told me that he would testify. Well, when the time came near, he called and said that he couldn't do it. I knew that something had happened.

INTERVIEWER: But they didn't try to stop the hearings?

JONES: No, they didn't try to stop it at all, no.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered what kind of support you received from churches in Richmond for the school?

JONES: I never much went about churches....I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Did you receive some support from individual ministers? I remember reading about a Reverend John McKinnon from the Unitarian Church.

JONES: Well, if there were any, it would have been the Unitarian Church because that is where two or three of my friends went, Mrs. Hill and her sister and Ann Gellman....and then the rabbi, one of the Jewish rabbis, was very interested in the school, but I don't know whether you could call it support. They didn't do anything for you. They were always pleasant, you know.

INTERVIEWER: What about working class churches, did they ever support the group?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: What about black churches?

JONES: Well, black churches did because they were all interested in politics and we were working with the NAACP on getting people to vote.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't you hold some of the voter registration schools in black churches?

JONES: Yes. The Longshoreman's school down in Norfolk was in a church and I think one or two of the others. One was in a protestant white church, but there were Negroes in that class, I don't remember where that was, but it was one of the working class districts in South Richmond.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any feelings for the differences in the ways that black churches reacted to a union and the way that white churches acted toward a union?

JONES: I think the black churches reacted very differently to the CIO unions, from the white churches. Because they realized that in the CIO, they were not segregated, that they were trying very hard not to be.

INTERVIEWER: So, they would have encouraged and even tried to help their members get into a CIO union?

JONES: Yes. I think that's very true. And of course, we had quite, oh, I would say twelve or fourteen people from the NAACP and the Urban League and the unions who worked quite closely together on the political aspect, on the poll tax thing. We worked like dogs on that from one year to the next. It wasn't a consciously done thing. I think that the CIO unions were just more receptive to the Negro and, therefore, the people talked about them more. I mean, among the Negro clergy and the Negro church people. I know one AF of L union in Richmond told me once that "there would never be a nigger" in their union and that after all, "they were a very selective union and only their own sons could ever become a member of the union", or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: A really old craft union?

JONES: Yes, a really old craft union. I was just shocked about that. It was the first time that had ever been said outright, where somebody was boasting about it. I'm sure that union is long gone because they only had twenty-five members.

INTERVIEWER: A little too exclusive. (laughter) Did you work with some of the black AFL unions?

JONES: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: How were blacks treated within the structure of the AF of L? Were any of them trying to change over to join the CIO?

JONES: Many of the white members of the AF of L Tobacco Workers Union saw no reason for them being segregated. They would have liked to have been together, but there weren't enough of them that would have liked for them to be together. That was all. But some of the nicest friendships that I saw in the labor movement were between white women and black and white....black and white men and women in the Tobacco Workers Union. They knew each other; they respected each other; they talked their grievances over together; they really were good friends. It was really a lot of fun to watch them working on something.

INTERVIEWER: And these were in the AF of L Tobacco Workers Union?

JONES: Yes. Of course, they had a very liberal president, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Who was that?

JONES: John O'Hare. I think that's his name. Wasn't he on our board? I think that he was.

INTERVIEWER: Well, were they a real exception to the rule, sort of a moderate between the two groups?

JONES: ....(looking at document) I know that he was on the board, but I don't know when this was done....John O'Hare. Maybe he was on the advisory committee. Oh, here. Yes. He was the son of a coal miner and was really a very fine man, a wonderful guy.

INTERVIEWER: How did the AFL international, the people who were employed by the international, react to the CIO unions coming out for integration and the possibliity of integration within AF of L unions in an area like Richmond?

JONES: I don't know. Some of them would make cracks about my working with both blacks and whites in the same place and so forth and so on. Those were local union people, the heads of the locals, you know. There were three or four that really went out of their way to be a little nasty about it. But in general, they ignored us, you know. You see, we never worked with a union that didn't ask us to work with them. So, if they didn't want us, they didn't have to have us.

INTERVIEWER: When you were working on the poll tax campaign, did you ever work with Virginia Durr* on that?

JONES: Well, in the Southern Conference*, I did. And that was when I was working in Richmond in the YWCA, 'way back then, you know. When we were working here on the poll tax, it was much later and I saw Virginia once or twice, but I don't think that we were working on the same project.

INTERVIEWER: Were you around when she was running for governor of Virginia?

JONES: No. That was in . . .

INTERVIEWER: That was in '48.

JONES: '48? I didn't even remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, on the Progressive ticket.

---

*Virginia Durr - originally from Birmingham, Alabama; political activist in 1940's on the anti-poll tax campaign; ran for governor of Virginia on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948.

*Southern Conference for Human Welfare

JONES: I didn't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work at all in the Wallace campaign?

JONES: I went to the Wallace meetings at Norfolk where we..., almost all of us, about three or four thousand people, almost all of us, if they had had enough police, would have been arrested. We were determined to make it a black and white meeting and not separate seating or anything. The police tried to keep us out but we came on in and they ringed around the back of the building and so the chairman of the meeting called on Charlie Webber* to pray....(laughter)....Charlie prayed and prayed. I'll never forget that. He prayed and prayed and the police didn't have the heart. They just folded up and went away. (laughter) Then Wallace came on. That was so funny.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a real fan of his?

JONES: No, I wasn't and I advised him not to run. I was one of the people who protested his running.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know him?

JONES: Well, he gathered a group of us together, about twenty people, after that meeting and he asked....no, it was before that meeting....I said, "I don't think that you have a chance. We haven't got enough people; you will never get votes in the South." He said, "You don't favor my running?" I said, "No, I don't."

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't because you weren't on his side politically?

JONES: No, I knew that he didn't have a chance and I thought that he would only create enough disturbance that we would probably lose to the Republicans and I was just determined that I didn't want to see that happen . . .

---

*The Rev. Charles Webber, who worked in the state CIO office on political actions.

(End of Side A of Tape 2)

INTERVIEWER: Well, you said while we were having coffee that you had been the head of a Socialist Party group in Richmond . . .

JONES: No, I said that I was the secretary.

INTERVIEWER: Secretary, I'm sorry. I beg your pardon. That was when you were there with the YWCA in the late twenties and early thirties. When you were back [in the South], what was the political situation in Richmond?

JONES: Well, the political situation in Richmond in the period from '44 to '50 was a very muddled picture, you know. We were having all these....I really don't know how to explain it. We were having several cases brought before the courts on poll tax and that was when Battle and all that group were carrying around Virginia. It was really a muddled political picture. As far as voting was concerned, we weren't getting people on the rolls to vote for people, we were getting them on there to show that they could vote. That was our intention.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have the hope of any kind of political organization at all in Virginia?

JONES: Well, we had a Voters League among the Negroes, you know, a very good one. They did a lot of that. Now, I checked out of the partisan politics part of that. All I did was work on the poll tax business. I suppose....well, I know that the PAC always had their slate of people, but even then, I didn't work CIO-PAC from the standpoint of the people. I worked to see that workers knew what they were voting for or what the issues were.

INTERVIEWER: Were you supporting particular pieces of legislation as opposed to individuals?

JONES: Yes, much more, and using letter writing campaigns and that kind of thing, teaching them to use their abilities to get what they wanted, if they could just get enough of them working on it.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little bit about the CIO-PAC group and who was active in it, who you worked with in particular, and how it was set up nationally and how it was run locally.

JONES: Well, I know nationally, there is the CIO-PAC department and on that group, Dan Powell was one of the people in the South who was a paid person there, Henry Moon....did you ever hear his name? NAACP....Henry Moon was a paid person there and Ann Mason. Now, they came down to the South and set up PAC conventions you know, once a year. Then, the national staff would come in and there would be a discussion of issues and candidates. And, even then, there wasn't any wide system

JONES: where you paid so much each year for each member for PAC. But at that time, I don't remember anything like that.... there could have been . . .

INTERVIEWER: That was fed in through the unions....there weren't people who belonged just to CIO-PAC?

JONES: Well, there were some individuals who....but unless you were a union member, you didn't have any voice.

INTERVIEWER: For example, were you a member?

JONES: No....I'm a member of the teacher's union.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were a member of a union?

JONES: I could have been a member of PAC, yes, and of course.... well, when the poll tax books were ready, they came into the Southern School office and sometimes the national [CIO-PAC] would send two people down to work on it and maybe two people would come from the [CIO-PAC] state office and they would come and go through all the poll tax books and see where their memberships stood in paid up polls.

INTERVIEWER: The poll tax books? Who kept them?

JONES: They were kept by the state.

INTERVIEWER: How did you arrange to have them come through your office?

JONES: The CIO arranged that. I don't know how they got them. I suppose they just paid for them. I think that you can pay for a poll tax book.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you could just get a copy?

JONES: Yes. Not their official book , you know, but a copy and then everybody would check their [union] membership lists against the books and when they had checked the ones that were voters and the others were not, then you knew what you had to work with. There were two years that a professor from one of the Eastern colleges....Antioch, came down, he and his wife, and we just had two little tiny offices and he shared one of these tiny offices with us and they checked the poll tax books for most of the unions.

INTERVIEWER: When you say that you checked the books and found out who had paid and who had not and who you had to work with, therefore, what did working with those people mean?

JONES: It meant really getting them to pay their poll taxes. And, of course, you know that if you paid your poll tax every year,

JONES: it was a dollar and a half. If you didn't pay them every year, it was five dollars. If you let three years go by that you didn't pay them, you put up five dollars. There were many people who had to put up as much as five dollars to get on the books.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any way to help those people get that money? Wasn't that a lot of money for people to have to pay?

JONES: Well, I know lots of people who helped other people do it. I did myself for many cases.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the thing that I think I'm trying to understand is that, at the same time that you were fighting to have the poll tax rescinded, you were still trying to get people to pay it.

JONES: Well, you could only get it rescinded if you got enough people to vote to rescind it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

JONES: And it wasn't an "either/or", it was a "both/and".

INTERVIEWER: I've wondered if in your work with the unions you were ever interested in planning or helping them to plan programs just particularly for women workers within the union?

JONES: We didn't think about women. I don't remember ever thinking about men and women being different. Never in my life.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the only reason that I ask that is because of all the work that you've done in the YWCA.

JONES: I know, but even so.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you were working with women then. Didn't you think about it then?

JONES: No. They were just people. (laughter) We always had lots of boyfriends and the husbands would come to supper with them and their boyfriends would come.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any programs....or was there even a problem at that time in Richmond with getting women into the unions? Or once they joined, getting them to participate in the unions?

JONES: Well, I think that there has always been that problem and there still is today. Women do not participate as much in unions as men do.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that is?

JONES: Well, I think that they just have so much else to do. You work hard all day and you go home and you have to feed the family, wash the dishes, and get ready for the next day. I don't think that it is any reason of not wanting to, I think that it is pretty much a question of....where they are in a high paid job, the women, I'm sure, are practically as active as the men. But, most of the unions, for women, are not high paid jobs. You know that. They are the lesser paid places.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered if during that period from '44 to '50, you were at all aware of women losing their jobs after the war, even though you were working primarily with people in unions at that time? Being pushed out as men came home.

JONES: Well, you know that in the South that wasn't so true, because womens work has always been textiles and tobacco and that kind of thing, and they weren't pushed out because they hadn't taken any man's place. But now in San Francisco, had I been here, I 'm sure that I would have seen a lot of that, because women were pushed out here. In fact, there are only twelve shipyard workers left of the three or four hundred that worked in the Todd Shipyard down here.

INTERVIEWER: There are twelve left?

JONES: Yes. That was written up in one of our papers the other day.

INTERVIEWER: Were any of the unions in Richmond that you were working with especially responsive to the needs of women workers? For example, were any of them working on getting nurseries set up or trying to get women to participate in the unions?

JONES: I think that Boyd Patton, probably more than any one person in the South that I know, was concerned about what was happening to women workers and about their children. I don't think that he had any project in mind, but he was just concerned about them.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any clue as to why he was?

JONES: Well, probably because he had children of his own, you know. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Was the CIO....of course, it's pretty well known that the CIO was concerned about getting black members in unions and nonsegregated unions. Did they have the same kind of feeling at all about women? Was it a policy, or was it more that they were interested in integration and getting blacks into it?

JONES: Well, I think that the CIO tried to get everybody in a union: black, white, male, female, young and old. I think the effort was to try to get as close to a hundred percent membership as

JONES: you could get. Weren't they the first unions to start the idea that if you didn't belong to the union, you had to pay the equivalent of union dues? To the union, because they protected your rights. I think that was on the basis that that way you would really begin to get a hundred percent of the people in. Now, I'm sure that they were the first union to do it, but I know that when it was done, it was thought that would bring everybody in.

INTERVIEWER: I remember reading about some discussion groups that the Southern School held in 1944, with representatives from the unions, women workers from these unions, and also representatives from community women's clubs. I think that the League of Women Voters, the YWCA, the National Association of University Women, the American Association of Social Workers, and the National Council of Jewish Women all came. Do you remember that at all? I think that the decision was that they were going to oppose the ERA, which was coming up as an issue, the Equal Rights Amendment, and I just wondered if you remembered that.

JONES: I don't remember that. I think that it must have been a meeting at the YWCA with all these people there, but I just don't know....'44.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the ERA even being discussed?

JONES: Oh, I remember having discussions about it, yes.

INTERVIEWER: How did industrial women look at the ERA, the women in the unions?

JONES: Well, it wasn't very much discussed among the women in the unions. They were too busy with other things, but you know, it's the state clubwomen who have been more involved in that, don't you think, all the way through.

I can remember when I was working at ALES, we just began to see the beginning of militancy among women workers in unions. I remember two women's conferences we had where, really, I was just excited about how militant the women had begun to be on certain problems.

INTERVIEWER: What were they angry about?

JONES: Well, they weren't angry, they were just determined that they were really going to carry their load and they were going to carry it and carry it well. What was good for men was good for them too, you know.

INTERVIEWER: I just wondered if at this point, in 1944, if there was any feeling that ever got to be very strong or noticeable on the part of women in trade unions or industrial women, that if the ERA was passed, protective legislation that they had would be taken away?

JONES: I don't think they thought about that. Really, I think that has been introduced by the opposition since the movement has gotten strong. I don't think that at that time anybody felt that that would mean a loss of jobs for women. See, we were still a country expanding at that time, we weren't closing down like we are now.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Did you think that women working within the labor movement like the women who worked with the schools, the labor schools, but also the women who worked as organizers or who worked for the CIO, were more or less effective because they were women? Or was it completely irrelevant?

JONES: I just never have thought about being a woman, and I don't know if I thought about my friends being women. I just really.... I am the least conscious of any person I know about the women's liberation. I've always been liberated. Everyone says, "But you know that you were discriminated against." Well, I didn't feel it. Maybe I was, I don't know. I suppose that men made bigger salaries. I know that educators in the unions made far more money than any of the rest of us ever did. But that wasn't because we were women and they were men; it was because we didn't have the money and they had it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know any women well, ever, who worked as organizers for unions?

JONES: Yes, I knew several.

INTERVIEWER: Were any of them working in the South? Or where were they working?

JONES: Well, no, there weren't many women working in the South. Not very many and I don't remember any distinctly. There was one, Clara somebody. She worked for Amalgamated [Clothing Workers].

INTERVIEWER: Hutchinson?

JONES: No. You are thinking about a prominent woman, this was a young girl. Clara....she spent Christmas with me once. I asked her what she wanted us to do for Christmas and she said, "Let's have a Christmas tree. I'm Jewish and we've never had one." (laughter) So, we had a Christmas tree. Oh, she was a wonderful kid. Now, she had a hard time in the labor movement because she felt discriminated against. I know she did, but I can't remember her name to save my life.

INTERVIEWER: Why would she articulate feeling discriminated against?

JONES: Well, because they were always sending her into very difficult kinds of situations, you know, where she thought men....their excuse was that she had patience, you know. But she used to feel that they really exploited her by sending her to very difficult situations.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember Polly's [Polly Rabkin] reaction when she worked with Amalgamated, or her feeling about Amalgamated?

JONES: Oh, I remember when she got fired, you know.

INTERVIEWER: But that was for her politics.

JONES: Yes. I don't remember her feeling about Amalgamated. Do you know? Did she tell you about it?

INTERVIEWER: Well, she talked a little bit about being sent into areas like Louisville, Georgia, where there was a little tiny plant and she went into the town and they thought that she was a prostitute and the guy kept sending men up to her room in her hotel. That was her story. (laughter)

JONES: I don't know, I never heard that.

INTERVIEWER: How about Lucy Mason, when she worked with the CIO, do you think that she had an advantage not only being a Mason and a Randolph, but a woman, maybe?

JONES: Yes, I do.

INTERVIEWER: Did she exploit that in the same way that she did the other?

JONES: Well, you know, unconsciously. It's done.

INTERVIEWER: What about the other women that you said you knew who were organizers?

JONES: Well, I knew Esther Peterson, God knows she's never been discriminated against. She has gotten as high as any woman I know in the labor movement has ever reached.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that she would have gone higher if she had been a man?

JONES: No, she was head of the U.S. Women's Division [Women's Bureau] of the U.S. Labor Department and I don't think that the average man would get to be head of that part of the Labor Department. Do you think he would? Let me see....Jennie Matyas I don't think that Jennie ever felt exploited. Rose Pesota never did. Did you ever know Rose? She was a dressmaker. She might have been exploited, I don't know. It's been so long since I read the book about her life. Jennie Matyas I know has never been exploited. She lives here. She was with the ILG and is still on their board.

INTERVIEWER: What is her last name?

JONES: Matyas....well, that's her unmarried name. Her name is Jennie Charters. She's in the Sequoias here now.

INTERVIEWER: What about . . .

JONES: I'm trying to think....I can't remember any others than those. Oh, I remember the office workers group down here. The San Francisco group; we used to know them very well, but I don't think they....I think that those women in the union.... you know that it is a woman's union predominantly and so they can get as high as any man could get at any time....and I don't think that they have ever felt that they were down-graded. Although, the AFL-CIO labor journal here has stories all the time about the women's movement, you know, about women's rights.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the women you knew who worked as organizers perhaps had to....well, let me rephrase that. A lot of the people in the South [who were] organizers, say [with] the TWOC [Textile Workers Organizing Committee] group for a very short time--they didn't stay with it very long. It seems to me that the life of an organizer in many ways is sort of.... it involves a lot of travel; it involves maybe not even being able to have a permanent home; certainly [it is] something that would be difficult to do with a child.

JONES: Well, I think that's true even without children. You know, most women really do want to have a home of their own.

INTERVIEWER: Was that ever discussed or talked about in labor groups that you were with?

JONES: Never to my knowledge. You know, somebody may have said, "Well, I'm quitting because I'm tired of traveling," or something like that, but that would be about it. You know, most of the things that I've done, most of the groups that I've worked with in the labor movement, have been predominantly men, except for textile workers and there they are predominantly women. But, even then, there are as many men at meetings as women. Because the women don't turn out as much as the men do.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find it easy to work with those groups? Did they accept you and work well?

JONES: Well, I have never felt not accepted. They would tell me to my face, "Well, you don't know what you are talking about," and then I'd say, "Well, you tell me what I ought to know," and that was that.

INTERVIEWER: But you never thought about it being difficult because you were a woman?

JONES: No, I haven't. I know once I worked all the way through planning a conference....this had nothing to do with the Southern School for Workers, this was with ALES, I worked

JONES: all the way through a conference with trade unionists from Canada. I got the whole thing set up and the man, one of the men on the staff took over, and I was so glad, I remember that I was so damned glad because I had worked so hard on that group and I wanted him to have to work as hard as I had worked. (laughter) So, he took over and I was just grateful to him for it. I suppose that if I had been conscious of the fact that I wasn't carrying it all the way through.... but I didn't want to carry it through.

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering if the Southern School's affiliation with the Virginia PAC group, or the national group, either one, was seen as sort of a threat by some of the more conservative unions in Richmond. Was the PAC group considered....

JONES: Well, I don't know that they were, because I knew a lot of liberals who went to PAC meetings; they weren't members but they went. I don't think that anybody thought we were a threat. I think that they thought it was kind of good that people were getting interested in government.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember a group called the Redcaps?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Or the MNU? They were mentioned as student groups that were preparing people for service in labor, in the labor movement.

JONES: MNU....

INTERVIEWER: MNU or the Redcaps.

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: I was just curious as to what they were.

JONES: I never heard of them.

INTERVIEWER: How closely did you ever work with the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen?

JONES: Not closely at all. I have had very little contact with the church since I was a child, as you can well see. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: I wondered if the Southern Conference for Human Welfare's committee for Virginia* ever worked with you or with the school?

JONES: Well, they never worked with us exactly, we had things that we did, you know, and we would get crowds out for them or they would do something for us, but it wasn't a close working relationship. We were good friends.

---

*The State of Virginia

INTERVIEWER: Who were the individuals involved with that that you knew?

JONES: Oh....I don't know. I just don't know. I couldn't remember the name of a single soul, but I do know that we did work with them and I know that some of my best friends in the liberal group in Richmond were the ones who got me into working with them. I think there, too, we worked on the poll tax with that group. I'm sure that's what it was.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Virginia Southern Conference group the main contact that you had with the Southern Conference? Or did you go to some of their larger meetings?

JONES: No, just the Virginia one. That's the only one I had. I would say that the Durrs* were the only two people that I really remember from that group.

INTERVIEWER: When you were with the Southern School for Workers, did you ever work with the office and professional workers in Richmond?

JONES: No, there were a few of them; they were in union offices and they never invited me to their meetings a single time. So, I never bothered with them. I wasn't going to bother them if they didn't want anything from me. I had good friends among them.

INTERVIEWER: But as an organization, you never met them?

JONES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the Richmond Child Labor Committee?

JONES: No, I don't. That must have been earlier, wasn't it?

INTERVIEWER: I think that it was still active in some way in the forties, but I don't remember, In your report for 1946, you wrote, "We frankly admit that we have had our enthusiasm damped by the KKK [Ku Klux Klan] and the American Shore Patrol." Did you receive threats from these groups?

JONES: Well, I think that some of our workers did, you know.

INTERVIEWER: The workers rather than the office staff of the School?

JONES: Well, it is considered the School, you know, and I'm not....

INTERVIEWER: The workers were threatened for participating in the School?

---

*Clifford and Virginia Durr - Clifford Durr was appointed head of the Federal Communications Commission in 1941.

JONES: No, no. Nobody was threatened, to my knowledge, for participating in the School, but I mean that our workers were criticized by those groups.

INTERVIEWER: For what?

JONES: Well, "Why would you? You don't want to see integration coming to Virginia, do you?" (laughter) You know. We had black and white workers on the staff.

INTERVIEWER: Was the KKK active in Richmond?

JONES: I don't think in Richmond but it was active in some of the smaller towns.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were in more danger in outlying areas?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was the American Shore Patrol?

JONES: I haven't any idea at this moment what that was. It was probably down around the Norfolk group, you know, and there's where we were working with the longshoremen, this literacy business. There it would have been actively against Dr. Jackson, because he carried on most of that work.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that Helen Baker's son was so acutely aware of blacks and whites and threats from whites because of his mothers's activity?

JONES: I don't know that that's true....no. I just think that he was an exceedingly sensitive child and he grew up in an isolated Virginia State College campus and then when you came into Richmond, you had to ride on another part of the bus and I don't think that it was his mother's work, I think that he was just simply too sensitive.

INTERVIEWER: Could I ask you just a little bit more about her? Before she came to the School? Did you hire her for the School?

JONES: Yes, but I don't know how I met her....she came in to see me. She was working on some project and she came in to see me and said that she wanted to know more about the School and we got talking and she knew the Negro organizer of the tobacco workers in....let's see, what town was that? She took me out to meet the woman and we had an address and the address was in a mortuary. And we went in and they ushered us into a room and here was a beautiful casket with a woman sitting straight up in the casket, you know, all ready to receive the people who came to console her family. (laughter) We knew that we were in the wrong place then and so we hastily backed out and we found that this organizer was in the next office. (laughter) Not in the room with the casket. Helen thought that was so funny, she howled. She was the best sport.

INTERVIEWER: This woman was an organizer for the tobacco workers?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was she the wife of a mortician?

JONES: No, no. She just had her office there in the mortuary and they just put us in the wrong room. Oh, Helen was lots of fun.

INTERVIEWER: Her husband taught at Virginia State?

JONES: She did, too. I've forgotten what she taught there, but she did teach. He was a very fine biologist and she always said that she never knew when she went home what he had taken out of the icebox and put out in the sun to rot and how many fruitflies she had to put in the icebox. (laughter) Oh, they were such crazy kids, so dear. He's married again now. She died and he married again. He brought his new wife out last summer and she was a delightful person. It was great to see them.

INTERVIEWER: What was the Housewive's League?

JONES: In Richmond? I have no idea.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember a group called the University Christian Mission?

JONES: No, but there could have been a dozen such.

INTERVIEWER: It was sponsored by the Central Council of Churches.

JONES: Well, I don't . . .

INTERVIEWER: Again, these are really there. (laughter)

JONES: I'm sure they are there. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: You have mentioned Dr. Luther Jackson several times as being president of the Virginia Voters League. I wondered if you could tell a little bit more about how you worked with him and what exactly he was doing.

JONES: Well, he worked all through the state trying to get the poll taxes paid and doing exactly what we were trying to do. Then when we began to work on it, we hired him to come in and do some work with us in his off time. I don't know....what else he did. Well, he wrote several books, you know. Not books, but booklets. I guess that I don't even have any, do I. Well, he was certainly one of the dearest men that ever lived. Did you see the little pamphlet that he wrote about the Southern School? Which was the cutest thing that I ever saw and we printed it. Did you see that?

INTERVIEWER: No.

JONES: I wonder if I have one here. His language was so completely individual. I thought that I had one here.

INTERVIEWER: Was he involved in the literacy school?

JONES: Oh, yes. He helped us get teachers; he didn't teach at any of those. He had done a lot of that, I'm sure when he was younger, but he wasn't doing it then. You see, he was quite.... see, here it is, this is the cutest thing. (Shows interviewer the pamphlet under duscussion earlier) He says, "Backing these instructors and full time employees is an executive board of twenty-four members and an advisory committee of the same number. Together, they perform a most important service for the betterment of the laboring masses and the redemption of the South. I write about them with the hope that all citizens may become better acquainted with them. They are mighty fine." (laughter) I thought that was the cutest thing that I ever saw. It was lots of fun to send it to some of my friends. They thought it was great, too.

INTERVIEWER: You probably said this and I think that I missed it. What was his job, other than working as president of the Virginia Voters League?

JONES: Oh, he was a professor at the university.

INTERVIEWER: Virginia Union?

JONES: No, Virginia State College. That's where Percy and Helen Baker both taught. No, Virginia Union....well, we had some contact with them but sometimes we had very unfortunate contact with them, when they brought....who did they bring down to give a concert and they let the city impose segregation on the concert and so we picketed them. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Who is "we"?

JONES: Oh, CIO, PAC, the Southern School and some of our good friends. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me a little bit more about the literacy schools that you ran?

JONES: Well, how we first got started in literacy had to do with the fact that I got called from one of the factories about some of their workers that they wanted to upgrade but they couldn't read and write. So, they sent me one or two lads and I worked with them personally for a while. Then I discovered that there was this literacy class in the public schools. I sent one of these boys to one of these classes and he came back utterly disgusted because they were using, "See the ball.", "The kitten loves the ball.", and all that stuff. So then we got busy and did a primer and the primer related to the life of a worker and legislation that concerned the worker, right to

JONES: workman's compensation, unemployment, all that kind of stuff. All in primer style. We used that in the classes for the people who could really read and write after they got through with the first classes. Then we sent it to Washington, D.C., and they didn't accept our version, but . . .

INTERVIEWER: Where did you send it in Washington?

JONES: To the Department of Education, but they didn't accept ours but they did almost the same thing, "Mr. and Mrs. Brown....", but none of the things about legislation. None of those things were in it, you know. At least it got started and literacy depended entirely on the teacher. That was one thing that was sad because we really had no way of knowing what the students wanted or what would be effective in teaching them. So, you had to count on getting someone who was familiar with that community and the people in it so that she could make some headway.

(End of Side B of Tape 2)

INTERVIEWER: Did you have programs in Richmond and Norfolk and Smithfield?

JONES: I think that it was Smithfield and I'm not sure whether it was Smithfield or....Suffolk. That's where it was, Suffolk, not Smithfield.

INTERVIEWER: So, did you actually go out and get teachers to teach the people who were maybe teachers in the area . . .

JONES: Helen [Baker] did. Because she was a teacher, you see, and she knew teachers and so she would go out and get them. Once in awhile, when we had white boys, we would send them to a white school because otherwise they wouldn't go, you know.

INTERVIEWER: A white school....what kind of school?

JONES: A grade school. We would see if anybody there could deal with that person. We had very little luck with the white group because most of the schools just didn't really know how to teach an adult so that they wanted to learn and keep coming. You know, they would use this little primer business on them and they just wouldn't keep coming.

INTERVIEWER: But the blacks . . .

JONES: The black schools were much more....you know, the black people, it wasn't question of the fact that they liked the material so much. It was the fact that they wanted to read no matter

JONES: what they read. They wanted to learn to read and they wanted to learn to write. One old man, I'll never forget. One day, an old Negro man came in my office and he was just busting with pride. He said, "I've just registered to vote. I'm seventy-seven years old. I have been taking your classes and I went in and I wrote my poll tax." He was so proud. I said, "Now, don't forget to vote." He said, "I wouldn't ever forget that." He said it in the proudest voice. But still, when anybody who is seventy-seven learns to read and write so that they can vote, that's really an achievement. That one man, he ought to have the highest spot that any government has ever made for people. He really worked on that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any idea about how many people went through those classes?

JONES: Haven't the faintest.

INTERVIEWER: Even a guess?

JONES: I couldn't guess. I don't even know that I ever knew any enrollments. You know, I just knew that classes were going on. I know that in the Longshoreman's Hall in Norfolk they went on for quite awhile.

INTERVIEWER: Were most of them set up through your school?

JONES: They were set up through Helen [Baker], with the various unions doing it. You see, when a union wants to get active in politics, they will do anything to get their members interested. You have to have some motivation, but some of these people who came, now this seventy-seven year old man was a tobacco worker who had worked in a factory for years. There was one man in....it seems to me that it was in the American Tobacco Factory, that called me up one day and he said that he had to go and explain the contract to a group of their workers. I was kind of interested because I knew that he couldn't read and write, you know. So, I said, "How do you do that?" He said, "Well, you know, I've memorized the contract because I work on the contract committee and I memorize the contract so that I know every word in that contract." Now, he couldn't read a word but he knew every word in that doggone contract.

INTERVIEWER: That's pretty amazing. Well, did a lot of people know about you, a lot of the workers in the different factories around? Did they somehow hear about the School?

JONES: I don't know. I just don't know how they heard about us. This man who called me up was in this class, you see, he knew that we had started the class.

INTERVIEWER: What was the relationship of George Mitchell* to the Southern School for Workers? Did you ever work closely with him?

JONES: Yes, I used to work with George. Well, George was on PAC for a while, too.

INTERVIEWER: Was he in Virginia or was he Southwide?

JONES: Well, I think that he worked all around in the South, to tell the truth, and we had him many times to speak at various groups. I had gone to Atlanta to see Lucy [Mason] and I stopped by to see George and he told me that she was gone. He was the one.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know at all about the work that he was doing with the Southern Regional Council*?

JONES: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you interested in that organization? Did you think that it was effective or that it had possibilities?

JONES: Well, I thought they had real possibilities and I think that it was effective, too. I really think that it changed many, many attitudes. I supported it most of the time. In fact, I supported it always until after George left and then for maybe two or three years later. Then, finally, by that time, I had gotten involved in so many other things that I couldn't.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of George Mitchell as an organizer person or as an influence in the South?

JONES: Well, it's hard to know what to think of the Mitchells; they are all so different. The father was the grandest old guy that I ever knew in my life.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know most of them?

JONES: I knew Broadus and George and the father. Now wait there is another one, Morris, the one who works on the youth groups, the youth exchange. It is a terribly interesting family. I was always very interested in the family.

INTERVIEWER: In what ways were they different?

JONES: They were all liberals and, goodness knows, Dr. Mitchell was just the leading liberal in Richmond when I first went there to work for the YWCA.

---

*George Mitchell - worked with CIO-PAC in 1940's (director of the Southern Area PAC); then director of the Southern Regional Council.

*Southern Regional Council - An Atlanta-based organization founded in 1943. Concerned with the improvement of race relations in the South; grew out of the earlier Commission on Interracial Cooperation.

INTERVIEWER: This was Dr. Mitchell, the father?

JONES: Yes. Of course, I knew Broadus through the union, when he was the economic man for the union, the ILGWU I guess it was. And George I knew.

INTERVIEWER: Did Broadus and George see eye to eye politically, as far as you know?

JONES: I don't know. I didn't know about Broadus' politics. I knew him as an economist. I guess that I knew George better than any of the others. I thought that he was very effective and that his manner of speaking....now, I will say this, his manner of speaking, when he was raising money among people in the North, was absolutely the most effective of anybody I've ever heard, because he really knew how to get them stirred up about the needs of the South.

INTERVIEWER: How did he do it?

JONES: Well, this old kind of soft, gentle voice, you know. Oh, I just thought he was terrific. I shall never forget him. I guess that his wife is still alive, isn't she? She's a librarian, I think, in Atlanta. A very nice person.

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering....we've talked about this a little bit, but I was wondering specifically what kinds of pressures you thought the School was receiving from outside of the labor movement in the South?

JONES: It wasn't the pressure from outside that bothered me; it was the pressure from inside. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: The pressures from outside as far as your integration policy didn't really disturb you?

JONES: No, they didn't disturb us, no.

INTERVIEWER: What about those from within?

JONES: Well, you know as I told you about the steelworkers man that was spreading all these....I don't know, he was just a.... I don't know. He just probably wanted to keep his own union in his own hands and out of any educational experience.

INTERVIEWER: You said that he accused you of being a Communist?

JONES: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was that a pretty common way to get at someone, to go through red-baiting?

JONES: Yes. Of course, several of the AF of L unions did, but that was on the integration thing, you know. Anybody who was trying to integrate people was bound to be Communist. And Rodney Fischer, who was on our staff, took most of that gaff because he came out of an AF of L union and he was the one that we sent to work with most of the AF of L people.

INTERVIEWER: How did he deal with it?

JONES: I don't know. He would come home kind of torn to pieces. I don't know whatever happened to him, really.

INTERVIEWER: How did they attack him? Personally?

JONES: No, oh no. It was the School. He would be trying to get them to engage in some kind of activity with us and oh no, they would just read him the riot act about the School. But outside pressures, I didn't....well, the only pressure that I remember having....no, this wasn't then, but from the big paper....what was the big paper there? In Richmond News Leader, the editor, the famous man who wrote the book, now what is his name? But this was before the Southern School, so that doesn't matter. This was when I was in the YWCA, something I did and he called me into his office. He got Lucy to bring me in and just gave me the devil. I said, "Well, if I believed in hell, I would hope that you would go there." (laughter) That broke him up, he had to laugh at that. Douglas Freeman was his hame, that was the big boy. You remember Douglas Freeman's name? Well, he has written books on the South and that kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of the pressure, such as that from people like him living in the community, which you said didn't really bother you, or the red-baiting that went on from within the labor movement, did it ever get you down?

JONES: No, the only thing that ever got me down was financial matters and when I didn't have enough money and didn't know how I was going to get the staff paid the next month. That would get me down.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever feel that you were perhaps going to have trouble either defending yourself or that you were in a vulnerable position and didn't have enough support, or did you always feel that you had enough friends and had support to . . .

JONES: Well, I never felt threatened, if that's what you mean. Never. I was worried, as I told you, when Mr. Pugh of the CIO told me that the FBI was coming over....no it was somebody who was working for the House Un-American Activities Committee, and wanted to talk to me. I told Mr. Pugh, "All right, send him over," because I knew perfectly well that they were coming because I had heard it from a friend in Washington. So, I had taken out of the files anything that we might have that was connected with Anne Remington and her husband.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you put things down the incinerator?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And the Remingtons had just visited the school one time?

JONES: He had come once, and she was not a Communist. I don't think that either one of them were, I think that it was pure red-baiting. They probably said things about the southern system that people didn't like and that was the problem.

INTERVIEWER: Was the reason that the School came up because they were going to visit you, was it because of the organizations that they had had any contact with?

JONES: Well, I am sure that they contacted all of the other organizations. I am also sure . . .

INTERVIEWER: What I am saying is that it wasn't because of anything that the School had done, it was just because of the contact with these people?

JONES: Yes. They wanted to know about them, I'm sure of that. I didn't know anything about them and I didn't think that anything that showed in the files of her class structure would have anything to do with it, so I destroyed it.

INTERVIEWER: She had taught a class?

JONES: Yes, she taught in the Southern School.

INTERVIEWER: But that was before you were there? Or after?

JONES: No, that was before. It was her course outline and I've forgotten what she taught, whether it was economics or.... I don't remember what it was.

INTERVIEWER: I don't think that anything is even there about her teaching because I didn't....I never knew that she taught a class.

JONES: Well, just don't put that in anything. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: You really did away with it. What happened when the man came from HUAC?

JONES: It was a couple of men and they said that they wanted to know about the Southern School and I said, "Well, that bottom drawer in the file is full of the old Southern School and there are the files by the years." So, they looked in there and didn't find anything and said, "Thank you very much," and went home. I thought that the thing to do was to just let them look themselves, you see.

INTERVIEWER: They weren't at all interested in what you were doing at the time?

JONES: No. They didn't ask me a thing. They may have asked Mr. Pugh something, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Why were they visiting him?

JONES: Well, they probably didn't know where to find me and they knew that I was working with him in the South and so they decided to ask him. After all, his name was everywhere as the director of the CIO in Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: What was the relationship of the Southern School to Highlander*?

JONES: I would say that it wasn't too cordial, but it wasn't unfriendly. I mean, we didn't have very much contact. I always taught at the CIO schools when they were held at Highlander.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you did go there and teach?

JONES: Yes. I don't know how many years I did that, either, but I know that George Mitchell took me once. I don't know how many times I went.

INTERVIEWER: When you said "CIO schools," do you mean a program that they would run for a period of a couple of weeks at a place like this place in Maryland or at Highlander? Where else did they have them?

JONES: Oh, everywhere, all over. Almost every state.

INTERVIEWER: And they would just bring workers from a certain union or from certain areas?

JONES: Oh, from a certain area. They tried to get them from all their unions, not to have it [the school participants from only] one union. I know that at Highlander it seems to me that we had [students from] about maybe eighteen or twenty CIO unions. Then I also really did the first CIO school in Virginia under the name of the Southern School for Workers, at Hampton Institute, where we took white people down to a Negro university.

INTERVIEWER: Black people, too?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What did you teach at the school?

---

*Highlander Folk School - a workers' school founded by Myles Horton in 1923 in Monteagle, Tennessee.

JONES: I always taught either public speaking or parliamentary law, or I taught how you set up grievance committees, how to study your contract, anything that had to do with the basic principles for a new union.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get most of your knowledge and experience with grievance procedure?

JONES: Well, when you read the union contracts, you learn how to do it.

INTERVIEWER: You learned it that way rather than ever going through the union procedures, sort of from the inside?

JONES: Well, I had sat in on many grievance procedures, you know, that other people had done. Not in the South, but other places, I had sat in on them and I knew. Certainly the UAW had the best policy books on the handling of grievances and how you do it.

INTERVIEWER: That would have been when you were in Flint?

JONES: Well, even after I left, I got out of it, they had all this wonderful material they put out. I collected it.

INTERVIEWER: And you would collect that?

JONES: Well, I would collect from all kinds of unions. And of course, I also knew from having been a member of the teachers' union since 1930, I also knew about how our contracts handled grievances. I never had a grievance and I really never should have been in that union. It was the regular teacher's union of San Francisco, but the Mickeljohn School was here at that time and that was like a very intellectual Southern School for Workers, a very intellectual one.

INTERVIEWER: Mickeljohn School?

JONES: Yes and the faculty down there, Dr. Alex Mickeljohn, you know, the famous educator and Helen was on the Industrial Committee when I was working here in the YWCA, Helen Mickeljohn, his wife. So, we all helped to organize the Mickeljohn School and the faculty all wanted to be a part of a union because they had had unions in the North, you know. So, I said, "Well, let's join the teachers' union." They made a way for us to join it. We really had no business being in there because all the grievances related to city schools, they didn't relate to us.

INTERVIEWER: This is the AFT?

JONES: Yes. So, from that time on, I was a member, either here or I carried a teacher's card as an at-large member, because even in Richmond, they wanted me to carry it because I tried to get some of the teachers in Richmond interested in a union.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any luck with that?

JONES: No, none at all. I had one person who would gladly have joined. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: When you were with ALES [American Labor Education Service], weren't most of those women members of AFT 189*?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever join with them?

JONES: Oh yes, I'm a member of that [local union] now, but we are being read out of the [teacher's] union. They are trying to get rid of us.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

JONES: Well, we crossed state lines. We are a national union and that's not supposed to be kosher in that American Federation of Teachers.

INTERVIEWER: To cross state lines?

JONES: Yes. And they [AFT Executive Board] have also brought charges that when we [local 189] had worker education sections in universities and when those people are in the union, they try to discourage the other professors from joining a union, which is not true at all. They [local 189 members] have even fought to organize and some of them belong to both unions. But, nevertheless, they brought all those charges at the last convention.

INTERVIEWER: Against Local 189?

JONES: Yes. So, they almost kissed up good-by, but finally we put up some squawk and now nothing is going to be done until the next convention. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Safe for another year. (laughter) Back to the relationship between Highlander and the Southern School for Workers, did the two groups often look to the same organizations and the same individuals for funds?

JONES: I don't know. I have no idea. I never saw any of their lists and I don't know whether they ever saw any of ours.

INTERVIEWER: You said that the relationship was not too close, but cordial?

---

*AFT 189 - a New York local of the American Federation of Teachers.

JONES: No, I said that it was friendly but not cordial. We were good friends and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

JONES: Well, I loved Zilphia [Horton], I just loved her. But Myles [Horton] really irritated me to no end.

INTERVIEWER: How so?

JONES: Well I suppose that I....well, I wouldn't have this appear anywhere, now. You will just have to turn that off if I tell you this.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. (tape turned off) You said that you had a good relationship with Zilphia Horton. How did you know her, from visiting Highlander?

JONES: Yes. I thought that she was a delightful person, just a charming person.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever run into either Myles or Zilphia in New York when they would go up there for fundraising?

JONES: No, I never was in New York, evidently, at the time that they were there. I don't think that we had the same supporters in New York, unless....I don't know, maybe Alfred and Mary Lasker gave to both groups, but I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: The Laskers?

JONES: Yes. You know, he's dead and she wouldn't even remember it, because it was always from their foundation. But they were very liberal.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered how much credence and faith you had in the Labor Education Bill that was passed when you were working for the Southern School? Do you remember that piece of legislation?

JONES: National?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

JONES: I don't remember it at all. I thought that I read everything that had to do with workers that was a legislative issue but....

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think that you were working for its passage, but I just wondered if it was ever much of a hope . . .

JONES: Oh, I doubt it. In the first place, I can't quite see labor education under the government, you know. I know that we tried desperately to get the Department of Education to do a literacy program throughout the South and to send in funds and train teachers to do it, but we didn't get anywhere.

INTERVIEWER: Why couldn't you see labor education through the government?

JONES: Well, I guess that for the same reason that I would hate to see....I just plain hate to see labor get to the place where it is dependent on the government for education. I think that it should do its own.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that it should do its own in the sense of labor education being done through the union?

JONES: Well, it should be done through the unions and through state universities or it should be done through private facilities, like old Brookwood [Labor College]*. That was the best labor education thing that I think could have happened.

INTERVIEWER: So you think some combination maybe of unions and schools . . .

JONES: Private organizations and state schools, something that is close enough that you can really know whether they are reaching the kinds of goals that you want to set for your membership.

INTERVIEWER: As you say, you hate to see labor become dependent on the federal government. Do you think that labor education done within the union alone is completely effective?

JONES: Well, I don't think that any education anywhere is completely effective, but with the unions by themselves, I would say that if you had today's labor movement and you looked at that, I would certainly distrust any labor education done by certain unions.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the goal you were striving for for democracy within unions has been reached by any union?

JONES: I think that a few unions have done very well, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Which ones do you think are the most effective?

JONES: Well, I would say that....well, even within the teacher's union, despite the fact that they are running us [Local 189] out, I think that they are a pretty democratic union, although why they support that man [Albert Shanker, AFT President] I'll never know, but I don't know anybody who supported him. But some of the unions I think could do a very good education program and one of the best programs that I have ever seen done by a union was one that used to be done in San Francisco here by a local union of state, county and municipal workers. It

---

*Brookwood Labor College - founded in 1921 in Katonah, New York.

JONES: was a good program, basically good union principles through and through. That was a long time ago, that was when I was working with the unions out here after I left ALES. That was a doggone good program. I would certainly hate to see the Teamsters have an education program, wouldn't you? (laughter) I mean, if that was all that their members got. We may end up with all of us being members of the Teamsters Unions if we are not careful. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the kind of labor education that you were involved in, not only the fact that you were an independent organization but the fact that you were very much trying to get people involved in political action, in understanding legislation, and being able to vote and being able to support certain pieces of legislation and even, ultimately, to get to a point of creating legislative programs. Do you see anyone doing that sort of thing?

JONES: Oh, I'm sure some of them are. I'm sure they are; they are bound to be. But I just haven't kept up that kind of relationship, so I wouldn't know. I do think, I really and truly think, that the idealism that was in the CIO had rapidly dissipated, and that makes me quite sick. I don't know how you feel about it, because you didn't know these people in the CIO, but there it was really....everybody was his brother's keeper, it seems to me, you know, and it really seemed to me to have some form of idealism.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that, in a way, that that idealism and idealism in the program that you were running, was a spin off from the New Deal?

JONES: I think so, yes, and not only a spin off from the New Deal, but a spin off from the feeling that had been coming in this country for a long time, that we had to do more for each other. There was a period, you know, when we really went through hell in the Thirties. You know that, that awful Depression and I think that it was a spin off from that, too. Of course, I don't think that ours was a good program. It was the best that we could do, but it wasn't a good program.

INTERVIEWER: How was it not good?

JONES: Well, we didn't have enough staff; we didn't have enough money; we didn't have enough equipment, we didn't know enough ourselves to do the best with what we have. You know, it takes super persons to really educate today.

INTERVIEWER: Looking back on it now, can you think of any avenues that you could have gone down that you didn't, or any way that you could have received some sort of support that you couldn't get at the time?

JONES: Well, if we had had a larger staff, we could have received more support because we could have spent more time trying to raise money, but never having enough staff . . .

INTERVIEWER: But that was a Catch 22.

JONES: Yes, you see, when you sat up all night on a bus going from one town to the next to do a class for three days, and then nap all night on the bus and then you got home and had to.... oh, it was really a grueling experience. I tell you. I take off my hat to anyone who ever worked for the Southern School, they certainly worked like sons of a gun.

INTERVIEWER: In 1948, the School worked, as I understand it, with the Voters for Better Government organization, in Durham....do you remember that group?

JONES: Well, slightly, but not too well.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered if you recall at all . . .

JONES: You know, that's when Frank Graham was running for the Senate and I went down to spend a month and took time off, got a leave of absence from the Southern School, went down and spent a month working with the Labor Council in Durham [North Carolina] during that campaign. You see, I couldn't work on a political campaign if I was being paid by the Southern School. That was one of the most crucial campaigns that I have ever worked with, because we thought to the last vote was counted that we were going to get it and it was the most disappointing thing that ever happened. I can still see Wilbur Hobby* collapsing. Do you know Wilbur?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. I was just going to tell you that the Southern Oral History Program did an interview with him fairly recently and he said in that interview that you had more to do with teaching him about unions than anyone else he ever knew.

JONES: Oh, he's the sweetest lad . . .

INTERVIEWER: He also said that you worked harder that anyone else he ever knew.

JONES: Well, I know that we worked all day and all night on that campaign. I know that for sure. Oh, brother, how we worked.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered specifically what that work in Durham involved? Were you working mainly through the Labor Council in Durham or were you reaching out into other areas in North Carolina?

---

*Wilbur Hobby - State president of the AFL-CIO in North Carolina.

JONES: Well, we were working in Durham, really. It was the Durham committee that I worked with.

INTERVIEWER: Was that organization, the Voters for Better Government, sort of unique in the South?

JONES: I think it was one of the beginnings, at any rate. If it wasn't unique, it was pretty doggone near unique.

INTERVIEWER: Was Durham a real labor town?

JONES: Oh, yes. Tobacco.

INTERVIEWER: I mean organized labor.

JONES: Yes, tobacco. That's AF of L, you know, all those unions.

INTERVIEWER: Was labor in Durham maybe more active than in a lot of other places, politically active?

JONES: Well, I'll say this, that they probably had been more politically active for years because Durham didn't offer many opportunities for jobs. An awfully lot of those tobacco workers were pretty well educated.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean? They had gone to school?

JONES: Yes, they had gone to school, you know, and then when the work time came, you went into a factory because there wasn't very much else you could do. But the other thing about it was that they had had some awful bad conditions to fight in the factories, I think, and I think that in itself with people who had some imagination about how you go to work for things, that they really knew how to tackle things. It was a very good group. That group in Durham was excellent.

INTERVIEWER: What was Wilbur Hobby's position at the time? He was a young man, wasn't he?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was he enthusiastic, optimistic?

JONES: Oh, he was very optimistic. He just knew that we had the state by the tail. I'll never forget the night that the returns came in; it was really something. Those boys were just weeping. That group, all those Durham unions, seemed much less opinionated on the racial thing.

INTERVIEWER: Less opinionated?

JONES: Yes, less than the tobacco workers in Virginia were. Much less, it seemed. They were good friends, you know, and they came out to council meetings and they were very good friends. . .

INTERVIEWER: Very good friends, the blacks and whites in the unions?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You described the tobacco workers, black and white workers in the tobacco unions in Richmond, as....as some of the white workers not being opposed to integration. In Durham, were more of the white workers not opposed to integration?

JONES: Well, we didn't talk about integration, but you saw them, [blacks and whites], in the meetings and you knew that they.... you know that they enjoyed each other.

INTERVIEWER: Was it an integrated local?

JONES: I don't remember, but at least you saw them in council meetings and, of course, you saw them politically in the meetings that we were holding. I don't know that they were segregated. I would guess that they were, because I would guess that the AFL had set them [the unions] up that way.

INTERVIEWER: During the period between 1949 and 1950, union support for the Southern School's program sort of began to wane. Why?

JONES: Well, they were starting their own education programs, starting their own staffs.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that they . . .

JONES: You see, we had gotten from the Amalgamated [Clothing Workers] and United [Garment Workers] and from the Textile Workers Union of America and from the paperworkers, from woodworkers, we had gotten good-sized funds and then they began putting on their own staff, you know, either putting more people on their own staff or starting a staff. So, it was natural, you see, that they . . .

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that they went that route of starting their own staff? Was it a natural process?

JONES: I think it was a natural process. It wasn't any antagonism to us, I'm sure of that. I feel perfectly sure of that because I remember....well, you know, some of the international unions just never had any money to spend on anybody but when they finally got into some money, they would put on a staff person because they thought that was something that should be done and so they did.

INTERVIEWER: As the AF of L unions set up educational departments, were they really changing the process of workers education and labor education from what you had been doing?

JONES: I don't know. I thought that they had old line education departments, didn't they? Really, the education work in the AF of L seems to me to have been mostly through their newspapers. Now, maybe not....

INTERVIEWER: And in the CIO groups, they would have an education person on the staff?

JONES: And they had lots of education conferences and week schools and things like that. And even the CIO seems to me to have had six or eight people on their education staff at the national office, to say nothing of what local unions had. And UAW had an enormous staff, I think about three times as big a national staff as the CIO.

INTERVIEWER: December of 1950, when you closed the School, was that a hard decision for you to finally make, to close?

JONES: Well, it was hard in the way that I really knew that the people who were still on the staff....we had cut down, you know. We lost staff members because we couldn't keep them and I think that we were just about three when we ended, Bernice* and Polly* and I. We couldn't do the work on the money that we had. So, it wasn't a hard decision; it was a decision that was inevitable and the only person that we worried about getting a job was Bernice and she got a marvelous job with the American Bible Association or something, which gave her a salary about twice what we were able to pay her.

INTERVIEWER: What was her name?

JONES: Bernice Cousins.

INTERVIEWER: What was her background?

JONES: Just Richmond schools and she was the secretary in the office, secretary and bookkeeper and everything, ran the office when we were all out padding around the state.

INTERVIEWER: And Polly was....

JONES: A fieldworker.

INTERVIEWER: But she left and said that she had a possibility of a job at Highlander. Do you remember anything about that?

JONES: When she left?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

---

*Bernice Cousins - Secretary in Richmond office of the Southern School for Workers.

*Polly Rabkin - Fieldworker for the Southern School for Workers.

JONES: I don't remember anything about that.

INTERVIEWER: Then after 1950, when you closed, didn't you go and work for the NAACP fo awhile?

JONES: I didn't work for them, I volunteered.

INTERVIEWER: So you volunteered for the state NAACP in Virginia and worked on the suffrage committee?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What were you doing for them?

JONES: Poll tax, the same thing that I was doing for the Southern School, setting up poll tax committees.

INTERVIEWER: How long did that last?

JONES: It lasted until my money ran out. I think about seven months or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Who were you closest to in the state NAACP?

JONES: A man by the name of Banks, William Banks.

INTERVIEWER: What did he do? Was he a full time employee of the NAACP?

JONES: Yes, the state NAACP. The last that I heard about him, he had had a stroke and is very frail now. Dr. Tinsley, I guess, was the president of that organization and he was a Richmond dentist. We had a labor and Negro group that worked together on legislative and voting things.

INTERVIEWER: A committee out of the School?

JONES: Well, no, it was a committee out of the School and in the CIO and other people in the community, both black and white, who worked with the NAACP on the voting status.

INTERVIEWER: And most of it was around the poll tax and around registration.

JONES: Yes. And later became, also, candidates. By the time that I left, we were in the battle with candidates.

INTERVIEWER: State offices, primarily?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You must have had quite a perspective on the civil rights movement in the Sixties and the voter registration drive in the South after having done that twenty-five years later. (laughter)

JONES: Well, it looked like where I came in. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: After your money ran out, after working seven months with the NAACP . . .

JONES: I'm not sure of the seven months. It could have been five, it could have been eight. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do then? Did you leave Virginia?

JONES: Yes, I left Virginia and I came to California.

INTERVIEWER: How did you decide to move back to California?

JONES: Well, the weather decided me. I hated the southern heat, always, and I loved it here because it stayed cool much longer. I came out here and I didn't do a thing. I looked around for some jobs and I didn't see anything that interested me that they were interested in me. I think that I made two or three appointments, it was not many. Then I had this friend whose mother was very ill, and she was tied down and so I helped her out a lot and then I got the letter from Louise....no, no. From Eleanor Coit, and she came out to see me and wanted me to come to work with them and I said, "O.K."

INTERVIEWER: What did she want you to do?

JONES: Work on the Ford Grant on international education because she knew that I was interested in international things.

INTERVIEWER: So this is when you started working with the UN [United Nations] school?

JONES: Yes, with the ALES.

INTERVIEWER: And you would do sort of the same things as the schools of government?

JONES: Well....

INTERVIEWER: Taking people to the UN?

JONES: Well, yes, getting them acquainted with the UN and its problems and meeting the different people in various levels of the UN. Then we would go to various sessions of the UN. We always had it while the UN was in session so that we could actually see the delegates at work.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a part of....were you always working with unions, was it a part of the program that ALES had, working with unions groups?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was the theory about international education within the unions?

JONES: Well, I don't know what the union theory was, but our theory at ALES was that it was time that the unions began to wake up that they belonged to a world organization and that they should become more interested in it. You see, while I was working in various parts of the country, we had been having delegations of workers from other countries coming here to be entertained by the labor unions and we had been responsible for taking them around, you know, and doing programs for the State Department and for....

(End of Side A of Tape 3)

JONES: ....the United Nations. And Larry Rogin....you know Larry? Larry said, "Gee, that would be like you were starting us on the Schools of Government, wouldn't it? Let's try it." So the board said, "How many people do you think you could get?" I said, "I don't know, maybe ten or fifteen." Larry said, "If you can get fifteen, let's go."

INTERVIEWER: Larry was then educational director for the CIO?

JONES: I think he was still textile then. [education director of the Textile Workers Union]

INTERVIEWER: But he was very aware of the ideas of the schools of government and of their having adopted a program?

JONES: Yes. Well, several other unions did, too. Textiles were first, I think. And now, you know, Cornell [University] is taking working groups to the ILO [International Labor Organization]. Now, that is really a big step ahead; boy, that is a jump, because that must cost a fortune for those unions to do that.

INTERVIEWER: Well, how was the UN work that you did? Did it work out as well as the schools of government had? Were you able to put workers in contact with workers in other countries? Was there some idea of building an international workers group?

JONES: Well, what we did with taking them to the UN was to familiarize them with the work of the UN and then to say, "Now, we are going to use this when we know that we will have groups of workers from abroad coming to us from the State Department; we want to know whether you will entertain them and so forth," and that way, we managed to keep those two things. The first school had sixty-six people in it. It nearly floored me because I couldn't believe it. It was an expensive thing to do, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Were the people primarily from the New York area?

JONES: They were from all over the country. I think that it must have cost each union three or four hundred dollars to send people, give them their lost wages, you know, and pay their expenses at the school and transportation, so it really was an expense. I didn't think that we would have more than twenty or twenty-five people. I was astounded that first year.

INTERVIEWER: How long did it last?

JONES: Well, I think that I conducted six or seven and then there were two others that I did not do. Once I was in Japan and Marie did it and once Eleanor Coit....one other time.... well, I guess, another time when I was in Japan.

INTERVIEWER: How long did the session last?

JONES: Just one week, a solid week.

INTERVIEWER: And did you ever get any feedback about what the experience meant to people, how they . . .

JONES: Yes, tremendous. To most people, you know, really going to the UN is an exciting thing.

INTERVIEWER: Did they go back and try . . .

JONES: Well, you know that at the UN school, we didn't take anybody who hadn't been a participant in one of our international conferences. See, that was one of the things that we worked on, to connect that with an experience that they would have had working in our international work in their local community.

INTERVIEWER: I see, and with the thought that they would feed back into that setup.

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Then you said that you stayed in New York until one day you couldn't stand it anymore? (laughter)

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you there before you came back to California again?

JONES: Well, I went in 1952 and I came back here in '56, but I worked for ALES until December, '61.

INTERVIEWER: Out here.

JONES: Yes, but I also went back and did the UN schools.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see, you would just go there to do the Schools and then come back?

JONES: Yes, and some years I didn't work a full year. I never worked a full year when I had enough salary to live on. (laughter) I would say, "Well, this year, I'm going to take two months off and this year I'll take three." You know.

INTERVIEWER: And that's when you did all of your traveling to Japan and everywhere?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you came back out here, what did you do?

JONES: Oh, for ALES, I did several seminars and trade unions conferences up and down the coast, Seattle, and California and Oregon, various groups. That's what I did.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you took this trip to China in 1974 and now you are working with the....

JONES: Yes, with the U.S.-China People's Friendship Association.

INTERVIEWER: Here in San Francisco?

JONES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered in looking back in all the years you spent in workers education, how you feel about it?

JONES: Well, I think that workers education....it'll go on, but I am afraid that it is going on under unions more....it is more for the economics of the various union leaders. That's what I'm afraid of.

INTERVIEWER: For the economics rather that for social problems?

JONES: Well, now they are interested in social problems, state legislation, terrifically. Have you ever seen the state [labor paper] from this state? Well, it comes to me every week and it is always full of laws and things that they are working on. But it still seems to me that the rank and file is not as involved as it ought to be. Except for the women, now the women are beginning. You see great hordes of them at conferences and conventions.

INTERVIEWER: Does that include rank and file members?

JONES: Yes. But I don't know....I don't know enough about what is going on in union education today. Frankly, I'm not as interested in the unions today. I think this strike in San Francisco is just devastating. It is a strike against the poor of the city, is what it is.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thank you very much.

JONES: I hope that you will let me see what you write, because I may have to cross a whole lot of it out, because I've talked very frankly about people. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: I'll let you see it.

(End of Interview)

# BROWNIE LEE JONES INDEX