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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

with

PAULINE NEWMAN

International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

by

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Program on Women and Work

Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations

University of Michigan - Wayne State University

Ann Arbor, Michigan

VITAE

PAULINE NEWMAN

Pauline Newman was born in the late 1880's in Lithuania, emigrating to New York City at the turn of the century. Upon arriving, Newman immediately began to work at the Triangle Waist Company where she stayed for eight years until the strike of 1909.

After the strike, Newman was involved with numerous organizing drives around the country. While engaging in this work, Newman was also active with the Women's Trade Union League.

In 1924, Newman joined the staff of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. She worked at the union's health center and became the Education Director for the ILGWU.

During World War II, Newman served on an advisory committee to establish guidelines for working conditions for the tremendous number of women entering the work force at that time. After the war, Newman worked with the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor in an attempt to retain the jobs women had gained during the war.

Newman was also very active with the suffrage movement, travelling over Upstate New York giving speeches for the Women's Suffrage Party. She ran for Congress in New York in 1918, and was very involved with the Eugene V. Debs Presidential campaign.

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November, 1976
New York City, New York

by Barbara Wertheimer

INTERVIEWER: Let's start when you were little.

NEWMAN: When I was little--in Europe?

INTERVIEWER: Tell me, do you remember your grandparents at all?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: You don't? How about your mother and father?

NEWMAN: I remember them. My mother came here . . .

INTERVIEWER: Where did you grow up? When you were little, before you came here?

NEWMAN: In a little village in Lithuania. A very pretty little village.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the name of it?

NEWMAN: Yes, Popelan. And the province was Kuvna.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of work did your father do?

NEWMAN: We had a little fruit store. And in addition to that, he was teaching Hebrew to some of the better off children in this village.

INTERVIEWER: That means he was pretty well educated?

NEWMAN: For his time, he was quite a scholar.

INTERVIEWER: And how about your mother?

NEWMAN: Like most women, kept house, baked, cooked, grew potatoes in the garden, etc.

INTERVIEWER: Why did they decide to come over here?

NEWMAN: Because my father had died.

INTERVIEWER: Your mother decided to come over?

NEWMAN: We had a brother and a sister living here already. And when they heard that father died, they thought it would be nice for all of us to be together. And we had relatives here too. My father's brother and family were here. So after considering for many months, we finally decided, and we came.

INTERVIEWER: What was the trip over like?

NEWMAN: It was horrible. In the first place, it took between six and seven weeks. Unbelievable. Needless to tell you that we were down in steerage, and the food was mudpuddles, that unless you had tea of your own, you wouldn't get any tea, you'd get boiling water. The weather wasn't very good. A lot of people--you know, down in steerage were sick, we had bunks, and the people upstairs were worse off than the people below. It was a horrible experience, only I didn't know enough to know that it was horrible. Except one day an English sailor, whose language I didn't know, and who didn't know mine, brought me an orange. It was very sweet of him. I couldn't say thank you in his language. And another day, he picked me up and took me out on deck for a bit of fresh air, but it was so stormy and so cold that he took me down again, and that really shows you that I couldn't have been more than a kid, or I wouldn't have gone back. But he was very kind, indeed. Another time he brought two sardines on a roll. He must have known that the food was rotten, and he was very nice. Aside from that, as I said, we never knew why we got off in London and stayed two weeks in some kind of boarding house.

INTERVIEWER: Everybody, or just your family?

NEWMAN: No, the whole boat. We stayed there for two weeks. Then we were taken to where the trade unions always have their conventions. I forgot the name of the city. There we waited one week, then we went to a place called St. John, I think it's in Canada, and there we were kept two weeks. And by and by, we were put in a little boat and finally landed at Ellis Island. It must have taken about six or seven weeks, perhaps even longer. We couldn't ask; we didn't know how to ask; and we didn't know why we were kept in one place or the other. Never knew. When we got here, our brother was here waiting for us. And when we asked for our luggage, we were told to come the next day, and we never got our luggage.

INTERVIEWER: All the things you brought?

NEWMAN: Everything we brought. And nice things--copper utensils, handmade things, you know, we never got it. We were told to come again and again, and we did and it was useless. And in the luggage was our Bible. On the flyleafs of our Bible was the birthdates of the children. There was no registration in that village. And so I can be a hundred and five or sixty-five, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: You don't know how old you were when you landed on Ellis Island?

NEWMAN: No! We knew our age because it was written in the Bible, by the parents. That's what everybody else did. And the Bible that belonged with all the other luggage was gone, so we don't know. The only thing we can assume is that I was the youngest and we try to figure out . . .

INTERVIEWER: You must have been very little, or the sailor wouldn't have taken you out on deck.

NEWMAN: That's right. My brother who came here from Africa after we landed here, if he was three years older than I was, then I figure, probably I'm around seventy-nine or eighty.

INTERVIEWER: You're seventy-nine or eighty now?

NEWMAN: I am not sure.

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

NEWMAN: Because I do not know the date.

INTERVIEWER: What year did you arrive here?

NEWMAN: 1901.

INTERVIEWER: Was your name always Newman, or did it get changed on Ellis Island?

NEWMAN: No, it was always Newman.

INTERVIEWER: You and your mother arrived here?

NEWMAN: And two sisters.

INTERVIEWER: Four of you then. Did you go to live with your brother, or did you find . . .

NEWMAN: I went to live with my brother. The others went to live with relatives until we found a flat of our own.

INTERVIEWER: And where was that first flat?

NEWMAN: 311 Madison Street.

INTERVIEWER: That's right near where I live now.

NEWMAN: The house couldn't possible be there now.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stay there for very long?

NEWMAN: A few years, until the rent strike, 1907, when the landlord asked for an increase. I got the tenants from the house and the tenants who lived in the same building, and we said we'll give him an increase if he'll put a toilet in the hall, at least. And the landlord wouldn't do it, so we didn't give any increase.

INTERVIEWER: So sticking together paid off?

NEWMAN: Yes, it really did. And the Evening Journal was very sympathetic; I had my picture on the front page as the "leader of the strike."

INTERVIEWER: But you say you moved soon after that?

NEWMAN: Soon after we moved to 307 Madison Street, which had a toilet in the hall.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that was moving up in the world?

NEWMAN: Exactly. And several years after that, we moved to Madison Avenue and 112th Street. By that time, three of us were working and we managed to get rooms with windows, you see. They used to call it a railroad flat. It had the dining room, which served as kitchen, and then you had the bedroom, and you had what you call a front room, or a living room. And that was quite an improvement.

INTERVIEWER: And you went to work in 1901 for the Triangle Waist Company and then worked for eight years until the 1909 strike. We have a lot of material on tape about the strike, and your going upstate, so maybe what we could do is pick up right after the strike, but let me first ask you a bit more about your mother. How did you mother feel about you getting involved in the strike?

NEWMAN: I don't think she had any particular feeling, either for or against.

INTERVIEWER: Did she ever talk about it?

NEWMAN: Not that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: She was in favor of the strike though, right?

NEWMAN: I don't know, Barbara, how much she was concerned with things outside the house. And sometimes I have a feeling that she was really quite lonely. I think she missed the village.

INTERVIEWER: What about your sisters? Were they also in the shop?

NEWMAN: Yes, one was working at skirts, and the other at shirtwaists.

INTERVIEWER: But not at the Triangle shop?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: Were they out on strike, too, at the time of the strike?

NEWMAN: When the strike was called, they went out.

INTERVIEWER: Were they your main friends when you were a child, or did you have other children who worked with you as friends?

NEWMAN: Oh yes, we had quite a few of the youngsters. We saw each other every day, including Sunday. Except for the slow season, we had our friends, those we worked with. And it didn't take me very long before I had many friends where we lived. It wasn't long after that that our relatives, who belonged to the Socialist Literary Society, got me to join.

INTERVIEWER: Is that how you got into that? Through your relatives?

NEWMAN: Yes. I suppose I ought to give you the things I wrote down, which would cover quite a lot of those days.

INTERVIEWER: I'd love to have copies of that for the project. What you have would be very useful.

NEWMAN: I am just about to after the strike is over, around 1910.

INTERVIEWER: But that would be very useful. Did you have chores that you did at home, too, or did your mother take care of that?

NEWMAN: We weren't really given very much to do. My mother took care; she did the shopping, prepared the meal, and well, when Fanny and Sarah used to come home at eight, nine o'clock, she had dinner ready. She didn't have anything else to do.

INTERVIEWER: Was she very religious?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: Observe the Sabbath, or have a Friday night Sabbath meal?

NEWMAN: Not here. At home, in the old county, she did.

INTERVIEWER: But she didn't bring that with her?

NEWMAN: I don't recall.

INTERVIEWER: And what kinds of things did you used to dream about, before you became involved with the Socialist Literary Society?

NEWMAN: My strongest desire was to learn the language.

INTERVIEWER: How did you do that? Who taught you first?

NEWMAN: It wasn't easy, because even going to night school was a question of working overtime or going to school. And the overtime won out. I always say when there is determination and will, you can manage. My bit of luck was that I knew the ABC's. And then I decided when my job was considered steady to get an English teacher on Sunday night and teach me the language. Well, he might have been a good teacher at school, but he didn't know how to teach foreigners. And so I got rid of him. And when you know the ABC's it takes time, but you can put words together, you see. It's a slow process, but you learn. And I happened to want this thing enough to stick to it.

I remember one night I went home, and you know, the pushcarts on the east side that sold everything under the sun, including books. And I stopped at the books pushcart and why, I'll never know the answer, you ask me, why I picked that particular book. That book was Great Expectations. Why I picked it I don't know, and I didn't know what Great Expectations meant, but I picked it, and I bought it, for a nickel I think. When I began to put the words together, something became familiar as I read on. And every night I read a page, and everytime I read another page, the subject became more familiar and I don't know why. And when, long after--and it took quite awhile, believe me, when I was in the middle of the book, I remembered that I had read it in Russian. It was not called Great Expectations. It was called The Daughter of a Prisoner. And it came a little easier, because I knew the story. And, well, by reading, that's how you learn English. And one other thing, associating with non-Jews, the people who did not speak Yiddish. They were not all non-Jews, but they didn't speak Yiddish.

INTERVIEWER: Were they in the shop?

NEWMAN: Some of them were in the shop, and some of them were in the Literary Society, and some neighbors. They were Jewish but they spoke English only and that helped a great deal. But later on, not much later; my closest friends were non-Jews. They were in the Socialist Literary Society, and they were in the Socialist Party, and one's name was Homan, who was born here, and one's name was Lane, Cossell, Skelley. They were non-Jews. And I think my association with them, plus determination to read and learn that way, I think that put me on the road, propped by the English literature classes at the Socialist Literary Society, taught by Henry Newman. No relation--he was an English teacher at the city college.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you when you started to those, do you remember? You said that your relatives first got you interested in it. Do you remember about what year it was? You were still working in the shirt factory?

NEWMAN: Yes, I was working in the shop. About 1905 or 1906.

INTERVIEWER: You were really pretty young then still, you must have been twelve, thirteen . . .

NEWMAN: As you said, sixteen years isn't too young to learn. You see, he was a kind of a teacher--the best teacher in the world, I think. He took an interest in each and every one who listened to him, and he'd come twice a week, and teach us English literature.

INTERVIEWER: You paid a little money?

NEWMAN: It was free. It was part of the Literary Society's educational program. And they got him to come, he was very much interested. And, later on, we became very good friends, you know. But one evening he was reading George Eliot--I can't recall the name of the book--about a brother and sister.

INTERVIEWER: The Mill on the Floss?

NEWMAN: That is right. He would ask each one questions to really find out, I discovered later, whether you understood, and what your reaction was. Well, once he looked at me and asked me a question, I didn't answer. And he was sufficiently interested after the class was over to ask me why I didn't answer. I simply told him I didn't know enough English. The man sat down,

NEWMAN: asked me a lot of questions what I was reading, and wrote out a list of books to read. And as I say, later on we became very close friends because he was interested in the industrial condition generally, and he knew I was connected with the ILGWU [International Ladies Garment Workers Union]. By that time he was director of the Brooklyn Ethical Culture, and one Sunday he asked me to come and speak to the group. When Bertrand Russell came to America, he invited me to go with him and listen to Bertrand Russell. He was a darling, he really was. But he helped me a great deal in understanding literature, and helped me to avoid reading trash.

INTERVIEWER: What else that related to being a socialist did the Society do? Did you read socialist literature?

NEWMAN: Yes. I helped in political campaigns, speaking at meetings. There was a Socialist Party, but very low numerically-speaking, not amounting to very much. But the Socialist Literary Society actually took the place of the Socialist Party during the campaigns, arranging for streetcorner meetings. Remember, we had no television or radio and all of us who could speak used the soapbox and spoke from streetcorners, and they used to arrange that and arrange for speakers. They would bring emminent socialists to lecture; at one time we had Jack London, I told you, I think, about that; and other emminent people, and that was their job.

INTERVIEWER: What was your impression of Jack London?

NEWMAN: Well, he didn't have much time. He came and visited briefly. I did have a chance to talk to him and tell him that I liked his books, especially Martin Eden. Martin Eden, by the way, is autobiographical. He said, "Oh, did you like Martin Eden?" I said, "Very much." He said, "Well, I only slept three hours a night while I was writing that book. I had a job in the daytime, and I could only write during the nighttime." Well, that sort of a visit was a pleasant experience. It was short, but sweet. [London] never stayed long in New York.

INTERVIEWER: When did you first start speaking on street corners for the Socialist Party? Was it in a particular election campaign?

NEWMAN: Yes, I remember. In 1908, I began by acting as chairman so I wouldn't have to make a long speech, and I remember I was chairman at a streetcorner meeting for Judge Pankin, I don't

NEWMAN: know whether you knew him. I was chairman for him, and when J.G. Stokes joined the Party, I was acting chairman for him, too, and then I began speaking on my own. God knows how many speeches I made. I chaired for the Party quite a bit.

INTERVIEWER: That was after the [1909] strike, right?

NEWMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And you traveled around New York State?

NEWMAN: Yes, New York State, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, St. Louis, Missouri.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the people that you got to know during the strike from the [Women's Trade Union] League?

NEWMAN: Helen Marot, Ida Rowe, Violet Pike, Alice Bean.

INTERVIEWER: What was Helen Marot like?

NEWMAN: Helen?

INTERVIEWER: I've read her books.

NEWMAN: I wish I knew how to describe her. She was a cold person, if you know what I mean. Her closest friend was Caroline Pratt.

INTERVIEWER: Who was Caroline Pratt?

NEWMAN: Caroline Pratt was the first director of the City and Country School, on West Twelfth Street, and Helen was her closest friend. In my judgment--I may be wrong--she lacked emotion, or sentiment. And maybe some of us are too sentimental, you never know, she may have been right. But she was a very energetic person; she worked hard for the League as secretary. She was sufficiently interested in what she was doing, and she wanted everybody else to do the same.

INTERVIEWER: What did she look like?

NEWMAN: I had a picture of her someplace.

INTERVIEWER: How would you describe her?

NEWMAN: I think her hair was sort of dark brown. She was dressed in tailor-made clothes, if you know what I mean. And the picture I have in mind of her--she was wearing a collar and tie.

INTERVIEWER: Was she pretty?

NEWMAN: No. You know, some people regard other people as very pretty and others don't. I don't think she was.

INTERVIEWER: Was she young when she worked for the League?

NEWMAN: I wouldn't say so. She must have been, unless my memory's mistaken, she must have been forty. Caroline was older.

INTERVIEWER: What about Violet Pike?

NEWMAN: Oh, Violet was a lovely person. I think she was a Vassar grad, and Ida Rowe was Max Eastman's wife, and active in the League.

INTERVIEWER: And Alice Bean? I've heard a lot about her.

NEWMAN: Alice Bean was secretary of the New York League. She was English. And she was an efficient secretary, very devoted to her job. A very good person.

INTERVIEWER: Was she young at the time of the strike too?

NEWMAN: No, she must have been around thirty.

INTERVIEWER: Was she worker or an ally?

NEWMAN: She came from Britain, and became a secretary. She must have been a clerical worker. I would classify her as a worker rather than an ally.

INTERVIEWER: And when did you first meet Mary Drier?

NEWMAN: Oh dear, that goes back a long time. Around 1905. 1906. It was she who introduced me to Charlotte Perkins Gilman. And the first time I met Charlotte Perkins Gilman was at a ball for the benefit of WTUL. And I'll never forget Mary Drier that evening. She wore a sort of rose-colored dress and her eyes were sky blue. So pretty! And, of course, in those days, they don't do it today, but in those days, before midnight, there was a march around the hall. The leaders of the union were in front, of course, and we followed. And then, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, I remember, wore a beautiful shawl--she was a very attractive person. And that was about 1906. People impressed me. There are a lot of people I don't remember, I guess, because I didn't react a lot, intellectually or otherwise, but some people you just don't forget.

INTERVIEWER: I'd love to hear more about Mary Drier, but before we get back to her, tell me about Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

NEWMAN: I can't claim intimate knowledge of her.

INTERVIEWER: Did you read her writings?

NEWMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did everybody read them, or was this just something that all the League people read?

NEWMAN: It is hard to tell. The League people read her books, of course! There was this song she wrote, a poem set to music and we all sang it all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Was it like "The Red Flag"?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: "O Tannenbaum"?

NEWMAN: That's right, and the words are very good. She addresses the song to the workers: "You are the world, who make the world," etc.

INTERVIEWER: Did that appear in a book?

NEWMAN: I have it somewhere in my clippings.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's go back to Mary Drier, Because I remember once you described her to me. I think that students who come and listen to this tape should hear your description of her, because you really liked her and admired her so much.

NEWMAN: Well ,you see, Mary was a person you rarely meet. First, her concern for others, considering that she grew up a very rich person and came from a very rich family. The story goes that when her father died, each daughter--and there were four--got a million dollars. So she was brought up in wealth, but her heart was with the poor. I think she and her sister Margaret Robbins first began, like a good many rich women begin, to give things at certain periods of time; they were very generous. Finally, they got to know about the League, and it was Mary who joined first. Of course, here was an outlet for what she wanted to do for other people, and she did, as I said, she was very generous. She got Margaret in, and Margaret, of course, was as generous as Mary, but they were two different personalities. Mary was loved, deeply loved by everybody. Margaret was respected, and admired, but there was no love, the kind that Mary got from those who knew her. One speaker, I remember--he was a minister of a Brooklyn church and spoke at one of the meetings, I forget what the meeting was about--he spoke of Mary Drier and referred to her as "the blue-eyed goddess." And it came from a man. And the girls agreed a hundred percent. But she was that kind of a person; for individual girls she did what she could; for relief she did more than she did for individuals. She was so generous; she just had an open hand

NEWMAN: for anyone who was in need. And, of course, the League became part of her life. Some of the other sisters had other interests but Mrs.Robbins joined Mary in the League's work later. One sister died; another sister died. Incidentally, one sister who died was an ultra-modern painter, and her paintings are at the Yale Library now. She was a neighbor of mine in Connecticut during the summer months.

INTERVIEWER: What was her name?

NEWMAN: Katherine Drier. And she had a house in West Redding, Connecticut, near Miss Miller's and mine. And then Mary began to feel kind of lonely. She had a beautiful home in Maine, so every summer she would invite Rose Schneiderman and me and Elizabeth Christman to be her guests in Maine and she would invite other neighbors. Walter Lippman lived nearby; a professor at Yale--Davis, I think was his last name--would come; Mary's friend Helen F. Keller--and she had a little house near Mary's which belonged to Mary too—but she used it. She was a very capable person but she was nothing like Mary.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Davis, Jerome Davis?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I knew him.

NEWMAN: I had an argument with him; we never talked afterward. He was a Commie, you know, to begin with and he had just come back from East Germany, and he was trying to defend all the deeds that Russia did and I couldn't take it. "Oh, Mary." I said, "I'm very sorry, it's your house, and your guest, and I shouldn't do that, but I just couldn't take it." And you know I read recently that he is living in a Quaker residence retirement home in Maryland.

INTERVIEWER: We have gotten perhaps just as far as we should go tonight. I just wondered whether you remained close to your sisters as you got more involved with the union and the Socialist Party and you traveled. What happened in terms of your family? Did you stay close to the family?

NEWMAN: You see, the two sisters got married and moved to Chicago. My brother--the older brother who was here--died and then his wife also died. The younger brother, who was in Africa when we came to America. got into the garment industry and he became one of the finest cutters and pattern makers; married, had children, and he too died. One of his boys died, too. And the other moved I think, to Virginia. I'm out of touch with them.

INTERVIEWER: You never stayed in close touch with your family, really?

NEWMAN: No, the older generation, the sisters and brothers are dead. The younger generation, they don't know me; I don't know them.

INTERVIEWER: How long did your mother live?

NEWMAN: She lived until . . .

INTERVIEWER: The 1920's?

NEWMAN: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to talk about people today, Pauline. The last thing you said that we didn't tape, was that you danced at a Socialist [Party] ball with Big Bill Haywood. Could you tell me how did you come to join the Socialist Party. And then tell me about that ball; you said it was to celebrate Bill Haywood's getting out of jail. Why did you join the Socialist Party?

NEWMAN: It was around 1907, I think. I may have been too young to be admitted as a member, but I was already known as a public speaker and so I was admitted. I became quite active. For in the first place, most of the people who were from the slums were more or less socialistically inclined. If they were not members, they supported this party politically. They came to meetings. In those days, the Socialist Party held lectures educating the people on what socialism would mean. So they came to meetings, and it wasn't anything new to see men and women at those meetings. Some were active; some were less active, depending upon the amount of interest you had, the ability to represent your district, the ability to speak on streetcorners. As I look back, I seem to have possessed all those qualities.

You see, there was no way else to reach the public. No radio, TV; meetings in halls cost money, which the Party didn't have. And so the only way to reach numbers of people was to get an American flag and a soapbox, and go from corner to corner. Some corners were more popular than others, and you invited questions, and some didn't hesitate to ask. You did your best to know how to answer some of these questions. And so, that was one activity.

Other activities were to serve as secretary, as a delegate from your district to the Central Committee, which met once a month. And it was a great honor to be a delegate to the Central Committee; and I was one for years. And we had a lot of fun, too.

NEWMAN: Because after meetings, which usually lasted till long after midnight--they were held on Saturday night, so if you didn't have to work the next day you had an evening free, we'd go to Central Park and watch the moon arise, sometimes to watch the sun rise. We had a lot of fun despite everything.

INTERVIEWER: Did you sing?

NEWMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of them?

NEWMAN: They must be someplace. We really didn't have any popular songs. What we sang, sometimes, when there were a group rather than two or three, was the "Internationale." You know that. We liked "The Marseillies"; we sang that. There was the song Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote to the tune of "Tannenbaum." We would arrange balls for the benefit of the Party. We had to have some money. And those were fun. And when Haywood, Pettibone, and Moyer were arrested, of course we were interested; we did what we could to help them out, pay for lawyers and things like that. We were not passive members--I was not anyway. I was active all the time. And when they were released, the Party, with the Socialist Literary Society, decided to welcome him [Haywood] and have a ball at the same time.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what year that was?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: Was Haywood, Pettibone, and Moore . . .

NEWMAN: Only Bill Haywood was invited to come.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the ball like?

NEWMAN: Well, it was held in Grand Central Palace. In those days, it was the place, and how much admission we charged, I don't recall. But it was very well-attended because everybody wanted to see Bill Haywood. You see, the trial went on for a long time, and everyday we read the Times, we weren't sure what would happen to them. We were terribly and keenly interested in what was going to happen to them. And then we were very happy to learn that [Clarence] Darrow was going to defend them. We knew that if anyone was going to free them, it would be Darrow. Well, Bill came, and it was a success. Well, I was introduced to Bill, a big, husky man and (I can say it now) there was something wrong with one eye. But he looked down upon me--he was so tall, close to six feet I'm sure. He looked down at me, and he said, "Would you like to dance." Well, I couldn't refuse.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what you wore that night?

NEWMAN: No. There wasn't very much to choose from. I suppose I wore what you call today your Sunday best--I have a picture somewhere of that.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a long skirt and a blouse, or was it a dress?

NEWMAN: No, I'd say it was a skirt and blouse. Dresses were not as popular in 1908, or whenever it was, as dresses are today. And never did members of the Party have enough to know whether to wear this or that. You wore what you had, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: When you were speaking on the streetcorners, did the police every try to move you on?

NEWMAN: No. You had the flag, and you really didn't stay very long. The only experience I had with a policeman--did I tell you that?

INTERVIEWER: Not for this tape--the one in Niagara?

NEWMAN: Well, that was the campaign for suffrage, and I think it must have been around 1916 or '17, and I was sent upstate by the Women's Suffrage Party, which Mrs. Carrie Catt headed. I stayed in Niagara Falls with Gertrude Tome, who was chairman of the Women's Suffrage Party of the state of New York, and she had a lovely home. She said, "Why should you go to the YWCA; you come and stay with me." And I did. We got along very well. And she would escort me to the corner I was to speak on. Usually on Saturday night you got more people to stop and listen and especially, after all, there weren't that many women who spoke on streetcorners in those days. They'd stop, and they would listen, and a few of the men would heckle you, and find it amusing.

INTERVIEWER: What would they ask you when they heckled you?

NEWMAN: Their heckles were not questions, but rather: "Why don't you go home and wash the dishes?" and things like that. You know, they weren't intelligent questions. It was just amusing, because what could you say to that?

INTERVIEWER: What did you say?

NEWMAN: I said, "The dishes were done before I left the house." I said, "Are you satisfied now?" Well, they stayed on. And one evening, it was close to midnight, there was a policeman who came over, very nicely, and he said, "It's close to midnight;

NEWMAN: don't you think it's time to go home?" He was right, too. No, but here, in New York, and elsewhere too, I traveled quite a bit for the Socialist Party from time to time, and always as long as you didn't say anything, or there wasn't any disturbers, they didn't bother you.

INTERVIEWER: When did you first hear about the Women's Trade Union League?

NEWMAN: Oh....well, when I met Rose Schneiderman. The League was organized in 1903 in Boston. I met Rose in 1905.

INTERVIEWER: Rose Schneiderman?

NEWMAN: Yes. And from then on, we have been friends until her death.

INTERVIEWER: And that's when you joined?

NEWMAN: That's when I joined. Because both of us would speak at street-corners, not for the Socialist Party, but in front of factories to get the girls into the union. So both of us--there were two women speakers. There was one other woman, but she spoke chiefly for the Socialist Party rather than for the unions. And she was a very good speaker; she was really a poet. Her name was Joanna Dohney. She wrote a few poems, very good ones, too. And she was a very excellent speaker. It was the three of us that spoke for the Party. Oh, Theresa Malkiel came later on. There were quite a number of women lecturers for the Socialist Party. But in the early years, we were very few.

INTERVIEWER: In 1905, you joined the League, and then in 1909, when the Shirtwaist Strike began and the League was involved, were you involved at all in bringing some of those women to helping with the strike before you got sent upstate?

NEWMAN: Naturally, I was sent upstate . . .

INTERVIEWER: So you weren't actually here?

NEWMAN: That was my assignment and my job until the end of the strike.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's pick up the story again, after the strike was over. Where did you go? Did you go to Philadelphia then?

NEWMAN: Yes, there the strike was yet over. First, I went to Boston for the purpose of trying to get merchants to use our label. We wanted them to use the union label. It wasn't the same as today. But it was a label, and I was supposed to get stores like Filene's, and other big stores, to get an appointment with them. They bought their shirtwaists from New York, and would they please ask for the label. Well, that took me quite awhile

NEWMAN: to get them to promise and the second task of this job was to speak to the public, especially to the women, to ask for the union label as we ask the people to do today. And I was invited to address meetings in churches, needless to say, at the unions, and if the women were not there, ask them to tell the women, and so on. But that was propagandizing for the label. And as I look back, it was really most encouraging to get the response from nonunion people. I expected response from union people, but to get that kind of response from churches, women's groups, college girls. The first time I met some girls from Radcliffe . . .

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about it. How did you happen to meet them?

NEWMAN: The secretary of the Women's Trade Union League, Mabel Gillespie, knew some of them. And she asked them to come over to the League headquarters. And so we met. And, somehow, we got interested in each other. We used to spend Sundays together, and one time I attended a class. What they taught, I wouldn't remember now, but they were most interesting. They wanted to help me as much as they possibly could, and so they told the other girls at Radcliffe, and society women, and at one time a minister of a church came to see me and asked if I would take his place to speak Sunday morning.

INTERVIEWER: Did you?

NEWMAN: I did.

INTERVIEWER: What did you talk about?

NEWMAN: The union label, and why. Well, after the service was over, he said: "My sister and I would like you very much to come and have dinner with us." What they did, I'll never forget because when we sat down to eat, they asked me to offer the prayer.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what you said?

NEWMAN: Well, there was really nothing that I could say, except to thank the Lord for the food--what else could you say? I was not brought up in prayers.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe, going off the subject a little bit, do you think that there's a difference today in the way people care about the union label than there was then? Do you think they really listen to the message that they should buy union-made products today?

NEWMAN: I think our appeal is probably more impressive, and people who buy women's clothes are likely to pay a little bit more attention than they did in 1910. In the first place, we didn't do anything like what they're doing today. I think both the

NEWMAN: manufacturers and the union together are spending several million dollars a year advertising. In 1910, I was the only one. So I think the people would listen to me not only because of the label, but what the label stood for. I think they were interested, and the newness of the things, I was quite satisfied with the attention they paid. Today, you have it on the radio, and you have it on television, in the buses, you have it everywhere. Because, as I say, they spend a couple of million dollars on this. Now, how much attention most women pay to that is not easy to tell. But a lot of people disagree with me, so they may be right and I may be wrong.

INTERVIEWER: I think you may be right. I question it, too.

NEWMAN: I may be wrong, you see. But all the ads--I go onto the bus, and there's the union label. So I look at it. Some of the ads I like; some I don't. I don't notice anybody looking at it! They may not even know what it is. It's not the same as an appeal, person-to-person, and telling the story, "Why." When they advertise in the New York Times Magazine section, it's sensible. And the man they had doing it a long time did it well; he died. The ones they have now, I personally don't care for. You try to tell the story in a song. Well, to me, it doesn't go over.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you in Boston on this union label campaign?

NEWMAN: Till I was sent to Philadelphia.

INTERVIEWER: Which was what, a year?

NEWMAN: Less than a year, because I was....I finished, I think, 1910 in Philadelphia and went to Cleveland in 1911. I was there nineteen weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Was that when you went to jail? Do you want to talk about it?

NEWMAN: There is really not very much to say. We had an amusing time in jail.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what was the strike?

NEWMAN: Cloakmakers.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a city-wide strike or just a few firms?

NEWMAN: Oh, no. It was most of the firms, and one was quite a big one, Prince-Breverman, I think it was. They employed quite a number of people. And they got together, the employers, and decided that they didn't want the union. There were many who tried to intercede; everybody tried to get them to deal with the organization. It took nineteen weeks before the strike was ended.

INTERVIEWER: Was that during the winter? Was it cold?

NEWMAN: No. It was summer. Because I remember when the secretary came to stay for awhile with us, we were on the picket line at 4 o'clock in the morning. And we went for breakfast around 10 o'clock, and I remember instead of wanting hot tea or hot coffee, I wanted something cold because it was hot.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you happen to land in jail?

NEWMAN: We passed the picket line; scared the police. They usually have about six or seven in a row not to let you interfere with the scabs going in. And we just broke the police line.

INTERVIEWER: How many of you went to jail?

NEWMAN: One girl's name was McGinty, I remember her. Two were Jews. One is still here in New York, she moved to New York after the strike was over. One left the trade and studied to be a nurse, and is now living in Israel. And maybe one or two more of them, I don't remember. Around four or five. And the woman in charge of women prisoners looked fairly decently after us. We sent for coffee, sang songs, talked, etc.

INTERVIEWER: You were there all night?

NEWMAN: One night.

INTERVIEWER: Union lawyer came to get you out?

NEWMAN: No, the secretary was in town, John Byche, and he probably arranged for a lawyer. You then get out, and that's it.

INTERVIEWER: What happened? Was that strike lost or won?

NEWMAN: No, it was a nasty strike. One of the men who was a member of the union apparently sold out and he was found out and dismissed. The man President Woodrow Wilson appointed was, I think, then mayor of Cleveland, who tried to help settle the strike. If I remember correctly his name was Baker.

INTERVIEWER: In 1911?

NEWMAN: No, that was 1912, wasn't it? Well, anyway, Baker was a very decent chap. He was mayor of Cleveland and he finally got the employers to sign up, not giving us very much, but we got an agreement.

INTERVIEWER: So it wasn't lost?

NEWMAN: It wasn't, not entirely. From one point of view we lost.

INTERVIEWER: Well, after Cleveland, where did you go? Back to Philadelphia?

NEWMAN: No. After Cleveland, and that was 1912, I went to Kalamazoo. That's famous because of Josephine Casey and the picketline prayers.

INTERVIEWER: You want to talk about the strike?

NEWMAN: She went to jail and I was sent to take her place because when she left jail, she went back to Chicago, doing what I don't remember. I took her place and I was there until we decided to boycott the firm. One employer ignored the mayor from Kalamazoo; he ignored the mayor from Grand Rapids, who was nice enough to come and help. He ignored the priest in Kalamazoo who was very eager to help; he just would not have anything to do with the union. So the ILGWU general office here in New York decided if that's the case, we'll boycott. And we did. And I was chosen to do the boycotting. So I traveled from Michigan to Chicago to St. Louis, to Indianapolis, and we finally succeeded. He went out of business.

INTERVIEWER: What was the product?

NEWMAN: Corsets. You see in 1912, most women wore corsets.

INTERVIEWER: Were the women able to get jobs in other factories?

NEWMAN: Some of them went to Grand Rapids, and they got jobs. They were very happy about the fact that we were able to make him lose the strike.

INTERVIEWER: How long did that take? Till the boycott really had an effect?

NEWMAN: It didn't last that long because I really was quite successful in getting the women. Did I ever tell you how I managed to get those women?

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to know.

NEWMAN: It was interesting, because you see, we had to concentrate on women, no use speaking to men about corsets. At union meetings I would ask them to tell their wives, but that was second hand. What I wanted to do was to get to talk directly to women who buy corsets. And so you have to get in touch with clubs, women's clubs. There was a socialist woman not far from Indianapolis, the little town was called Kokomo. She was a Socialist. I got in touch with her, and she produced a list of women's clubs. And that was a godsend.

NEWMAN: The first club I attempted to speak to was an Indianapolis Women's Poetry Club. And that pleased me very much; I was no stranger to poetry. But how to get to them? Well, anyway, I had the time of their meeting, the place of their meeting, and this woman told me how to get to that hall. I did. And I went up one flight of stairs, another flight of stairs. A woman was sitting in front of the door, and she asked me, "Are you looking for somebody," and I said, "I'd like to speak to your women at this meeting." "Oh!" she said, "I don't know." I said, "Will you please find out?" So she went in, and took quite awhile, I was sitting, waiting. They must have discussed the pros and cons to let me in. Finally, a woman came out, a fair-headed woman, good-looking. She looked at me, pointing to what we would call the sergeant-at-arms, "She said that you would like to speak to us?" I said, "Yes, I'd very much like to." "Well, what about?" So I told her, I said, "I can tell you the whole story in front of everyone, but this is the subject that I'd like women to know about." She kept quiet, and suddenly she turned to me: "Do you like poetry?" "Oh," I said, "I do, very much." She said, "Well, who's your favorite poet?" I said, "Well, Keats. I like Byron, like Tennyson." She looked me up and down, thinking, is it possible that this creature would know all this? And she said, "Well, I guess you can come in." Well, I came in and told them the story of the girls and the corset shop and they were very nice. They passed a resolution asking each member not to buy corsets made in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

INTERVIEWER: That was fantastic!

NEWMAN: In the first place, I was ready to talk to them about the poets, too, if they wanted me to. But they did not ask me!

INTERVIEWER: When you were traveling to all those different cities to talk about the boycott, what was it like? What were the trains like then, and what was it like when you got to a strange city, where would you stay?

NEWMAN: Usually at the YWCA, at times with friends and, on rare occasions, at a hotel. Well, I did tell you my experience in Buffalo.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

NEWMAN: Well, it wasn't all like that, because the union had no money for me to use cabs when necessary, or a sleeper when necessary. We were poor, you know. So you used the trains. They were not as comfortable as they are today; the seats certainly were not, not in the class I rode. Maybe in first class it

NEWMAN: was alright, but that was not for me. Well, when I'd get to a town, my first contact was the Central Trade and Labor Council, and they would direct me either to a hotel or most of the time to the YWCA. They had me meet women, or wives of men, who knew something about women's clubs, and I got along with them all right. They did as much as they could for me, and the rest was up to me.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ever lonely?

NEWMAN: Yes. But there was always some reading to do, and I enjoyed that. Occasionally, you thought it would be nice if you could have someone else to travel with you, but that was just a passing mood.

INTERVIEWER: You were once telling me, long before we started taping it, about some of the things you used to do with your League [Women's Trade Union League] friends. On Sundays, you would go to the Palisades and have picnics and things like that.

NEWMAN: Yes, we had picnics.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the people that you went with? Rose [Schneiderman] was one of them?

NEWMAN: Well, let's see. If the picnic was arranged by one of the locals of the ILGWU, we used to invite Rose, but it was up to her to come. We came, you see, and we used to go to Bear Mountain. The Palisades was a different story. The Palisades was really part of the economic days of those years. It was 1907, a year of depression. It wasn't entirely a panic, you know, but it was a depression, and a lot of factories were closed in New York City. And the question was a job, and paying rent. And there were a number of socialist women who thought that they could, they were able to get a tent from some municipal agency and put it up at any place in the Palisades and live there without paying rent. I think you paid two dollars for the renting of the tent. And those few women from the Socialist Party, and I was one of them, spent the summer at the Palisades. And those who had jobs would bring us food. They would come on Sundays and bring bread and cake and beans--oh, beans, beans, beans. One woman had a little boy of five or six years old. She was divorced from her husband. And every morning he would say, "Momma, do I have to eat beans again?" But we ignored him and our friends were good enough to see that we didn't lack anything all summer.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like a cooperative community, sort of.

NEWMAN: Yes, just a few of us.

INTERVIEWER: Who was with you?

NEWMAN: Martha Holman was a bookkeeper, and she was really instrumentel in starting the bookkeepers' union in those days. There was this woman with a little boy, whose name was Alma Nitzchka, and was divorced from her husband; Clare Rukus.

INTERVIEWER: Were there about eight or ten of you, or more?

NEWMAN: No, not more. There were only about five or six. We had a lot of visitors on Sunday, and well, there was the Hudson and the surroundings were pleasant. The tent kept you out of the rain. It really wasn't bad; it was very nice. As I look back, I feel we were very lucky to get a tent for two dollars and not have to pay rent all summer.

INTERVIEWER: Did you once tell me that the Triangle Shirtwaist Company where you worked was the one that was the biggest, and even though the conditions were pretty bad, it usually provided fairly steady work?

NEWMAN: That's right. As I think I told you, some people would envy you because you knew that you had almost a year's work, except for some week or two weeks to take an inventory. You were laid off, without pay, of course. People knew what the conditions were, but the other factories were no better, and they had less work. This was the biggest one. There were five hundred people employed, mostly women.

INTERVIEWER: When you were laid off for the summer, that was a long layoff.

NEWMAN: That was 1907, I believe. We might have been able to go back sooner, but we really enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: Another time that you enjoyed the country was that wonderful time when you and Rose took a vacation? That's such a great story....would you tell it again?

NEWMAN: That was after the 1909 strike.

INTERVIEWER: Who was it that loaned you her house? Was it Mary Drier?

NEWMAN: No, it was Violet Pike, Helen Marot....I think three of them owned it.

INTERVIEWER: You were saying it was Violet Pike, Helen Marot, and Ida Rowe's house.

NEWMAN: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: And what happened? How did you happen to be there?

NEWMAN: Well, you see, after the strike was over, those people knew that both Rose and I were really tired. And they asked us to go out to West Beckett, Massachusetts. They asked us to go and stay there a couple of weeks, and they would come out on weekends, but the first weeks, Rose and I were there alone. The next neighbor was, I think, five miles away. One night, we had our supper and went upstairs to sleep. We were tired, but I heard Rose in the next bed move, and she called me. She says, "I hear somebody walking down there," because the doors weren't locked in those days. I said, "Oh, did you dream?" she said, "No, I didn't dream it. I heard somebody walking." So we sat up and listened, and sure enough somebody was walking downstairs; we were certain. So we lit the candles and there was nothing else to do but to go down and to see who was walking. We were afraid but we walked down slowly, each one carrying a candle. And just as we got into the dining room, we saw a deer. The doors were open so he got in--a beautiful creature he was too. But we really thought it was somebody. Today, if you hear somebody break in, you wouldn't be surprised. but in those days....anyway, we stayed there, I think, about two weeks. And the thing I also remember is that when we got back, we brought field flowers with us, and on the way to my house on Madison Street, all the kids came over. "Oh, give me a flower, give me a flower." They didn't see flowers very often.

INTERVIEWER: So what kind of work did you do in Philadelphia?

NEWMAN: You see, when 15,000 joined the 20,000 here in New York, they weren't as lucky, I might say, in getting most of them to sign up. They had very few, and one of the biggest factories was the Haber factory. They had about 300 people employed and we tried to organize that shop; we thought if we got them we'd get the rest. Eventually, we did, but it took a long time. So I was doing organizing and directing the organizing of the rest of the shops and, of course, I had to deal with employers who signed up. We had some members who naturally went to Russia after the revolution, they thought that because this particular employer for whom they worked, because he signed up, they can get anything they want. Well, you can't. I mean, it doesn't work that way. And they wanted me to go to him, and get increase, increase, increase. I used to tell them, "You go", I said, "I won't go." He was decent enough to sign up, and he gave what we asked him; I think it was a ten percent increase. I said, "Leave him alone." So I had to deal with the employers because of this sort of thing. And, again, Philadelphia had a Socialist Party, too. So, my activities there were renewed right after New York.

INTERVIEWER: And you did a lot of suffrage work in Pennsylvania?

NEWMAN: Yes, we had one poster....I'll tell you frankly when I look back, I think it took courage to travel through Pennsylvania or some places in Illinois, because the socialists didn't have any money to put you in a hotel; the union didn't have any money. When I was loaned to the suffrage movement and to the Socialist Party, they didn't have any money. So you'd stay with people who were poor and, in some cases, believe me, I didn't sleep nights because I wouldn't sleep in those beds.

INTERVIEWER: So you sat up all night?

NEWMAN: They had an easy chair in their "parlour", and that was the best you could do without insulting them, or without saying anything. I remember one winter, I think it was Belleville, Illinois, a miner's village, who wanted a "lady speaker " so they could interest their wives. The national [Socialist] Party of Illinois asked me whether I would go to Belleville to speak. I said, "Would I have a few days leave from the union, I'll go." The only other cold day I remember was when I arrived in Buffalo. It was just as bad here; it was terrible.

I got off the train in the little Belleville village; no one was there. I think the train was early, and the miners didn't quit like they do now; they worked longer hours. So I thought I would take a walk; the station was cold. I walked by a building, a small building, and I heard noises, such noises! I thought people were fighting and crying. Oh, it was terrible. I thought I'd have a look. I walked up the steps and I saw people on the floor, gesturing, getting up, going down, somebody on a box, talking to them. And I thought I was in a madhouse. I really did. And when I told it to the miners, after they came, they said, "Oh, you just heard the Holy Rollers." It was a poor, poor place. They had looked so poorly. And the picture of Christ was the one you used to get in the ten cent store, you know, and there they were rolling, Holy Rollers. But they weren't only rolling. They were shouting and crying. Oh, it was an awful night.

INTERVIEWER: When you talk to the miner's wives, what was your subject?

NEWMAN: Well, they came with their husbands. Socialism. They wanted their wives to know what socialism would do and in those days, they believed that socialism would do quite a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Then you went back to Pennsylvania after that?

NEWMAN: Let me finish Illinois. When the meeting was over, I said to the chairman, "Where do I stay?" Well, there wasn't anything in this village. So Mrs. So-and-so said, "Well, I guess you'll have to stay with us." So I went with them. It was a miner's home, and the only warm room in that, shall I call it apartment, was the kitchen. We ate in the kitchen. And the guest got the parlour. And the parlour was like an icicle. It was a miner's house but no heat except the kitchen--what irony! I really slept in my coat. I could never forget. He was a miner, and yet had no coal to heat his house. Of course, the wages at that time were three dollars a day, not enough even to buy coal. Three dollars for a very long and dangerous day. So you had this kind of experience that you don't forget. Even outside of your own union, it's all part of the movement. Or the time I went to Musketine in Iowa for the American Federation of Labor. There the girls made buttons, and when I got there they were out on strike for as long as a year and some months. They had to have somebody to keep up their spirit. Mary Anderson came once from the Chicago League (W.T.U.L.); I think Elizabeth Christman came at one time, and I was there all the time with the girls. We got along beautifully. Then the AFL sent later Mr. Floyd, an organizer. He thought that we were doing all we could and they would send in money to help get food for the girls. The League did the same. The strike lasted one year and three months. But in the end, the strike was lost. I was there a long time with them. I was so sorry for them.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what year that was?

NEWMAN: Maybe 1913, maybe 1914. You see, when you don't stay in one place, you just don't remember. Are the dates so important?

INTERVIEWER: I'm just trying to get a sequence, a picture of what you did in the years between the shirtwaist strike and the first world war.

NEWMAN: Well, I was traveling, trying to organize, for the ILG mostly. Occasionally they would loan me to the Socialist Party. In 1918, they loaned me to the Philadelphia Women's Trade Union League. It was slack time and there was a man who wanted my job very much. Since I was interested in the Women's Trade Union League, I did not mind going to the W.T.U.L. I asked for permission of the ILG and they agreed, so I went to the Women's Trade Union League in 1918. That was the year I ran for Congress in New York. I'd come into New York and do my bit as a candidate, and go back to Philadelphia and build up

NEWMAN: the Women's Trade Union League there. And I really, if I say so myself, I think I did it. When I got there, you see, there were a few well-to-do ladies who meant very well indeed, and did what they thought they could, to keep the League going. They even bought a house to house the League. But there was no contact with the labor movement, and finally, they decided that they'd have to bring in a trade unionist to get the trade union movement to recognize and help support the League and see what it was trying to do for the labor movement. And that was my job....believe me, I worked. But I got the Central Trade Union Council to accept our delegates. That was never thought of before; a lot of people didn't think that the Central Trade would do it. But I got the floor and I told them what I intended to do, but we didn't have the money to do it with. "I'm going to stay here; I want to work with you and I want you to work with me." And, of course, I knew the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, Jim Maurer. And Jim gave his blessings. The time came when Jim told the Central Trade Union Labor Congress and the State Federation convention at Harrisburg that the Women's Trade Union League is the heart of the labor movement. So, I was there until '23, for five years. And as Jim said, we're everywhere and we did organizing. I had one experience there which I won't forgive and won't forget. There were a group of candymakers in Philadelphia who wanted a union. Well, that was wonderful; people coming to us to be organized! So we got together, and we had, I think, about forty girls, enough to warrant a charter from the national union; the national was known as the National Bakery and Confectionary Workers Union. So, they paid their initiation fee, deposited the money in a Philadelphia bank. The next day, we wrote to the International and told them that forty girls joined, and we want a charter. And they answered that they were not really pleased to have any women members. If we take them in, they will get one-half of whatever benefits the men got. And they wouldn't be able to pay the whole dues; you would pay only half the dues. You'd be half a member, oh, it was terrible. So I wrote him a letter that I don't think he'll ever forget. So when we left Philadelphia, Miss Miller, Gladys Boone and I took over. I don't think she stayed there very long; she stayed long enough to write a book. The League didn't last very long after we left. You see, I got there in 1918. In 1919, the W.T.U.L. had its national convention in Philadelphia. That was some job for me, too. To get the unions to give us money to pay for the hotels where the delegates stayed.

INTERVIEWER: This was a League Convention?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That must have been really something.

NEWMAN: It was; because, you see, it was right after the war, and after the epidemic during which twenty million people died. When I got there, Miss Miller, secretary of the W.T.U.L., was ill. I got to know her physician, who lived in Bryn Mawr, called her and she came. She was an elderly lady but a very well known and eminent physician. She came, I lived at the College Club at that time, and she said to me: "I'm not going to send her to a hospital because she'll die if I do." And she said, "You may not know it, but people are being laid in the halls, kept in the halls at the hospitals. There's no available room. I would advise you to stay with Mrs. Miller at the College Club. There's nothing to be done anyway. Give her an eggnog once a day or something, and keep in touch with me." And that's how Miss Miller survived.

INTERVIEWER: And you didn't get it?

NEWMAN: No, I was lucky. She was able to sit up on Armistice Day. That was the eleventh of November and she could see the people in the street, celebrating peace.

INTERVIEWER: Can we go back a little? You're one of the people who knew Leonora O'Reilly. When you started talking about suffrage, it occured to me that I really don't want to forget to get back to Leonora. Before we do that, at the time that you were an organizer with ILG, how many organizers did the ILG have?

NEWMAN: Women? Just one, me. I was the only one and the first. There were also one or two men. Josephine Casey went to Kalamazoo, but after she got out of jail, she went back to Illinois. On one occasion, I think, Gertrude Barnum was asked, but she was a judge's daughter and very well known lady in Chicago. She made a speech or two and she left. So for many years, I was the only woman organizer.

INTERVIEWER: When you say there was a man who wanted your job in 1918....in . . .

NEWMAN: 1911.

INTERVIEWER: Wanted your job in the ILG.

NEWMAN: He wanted a Philadelphia organizing job.

INTERVIEWER: Who was he?

NEWMAN: His name was Frummer, that's all I can remember, and that he was a nasty person.

INTERVIEWER: What I wanted to find out, was whether this man got your job.

NEWMAN: When I went to Cleveland, he got it.

INTERVIEWER: When you went back to Philadelphia and were loaned to the League, was he still there in Philadelphia?

NEWMAN: No, he was gone. He wasn't kept long.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the next woman organizer that the ILG put on its staff?

NEWMAN: I don't remember, because it was years later when a woman was organizer.

INTERVIEWER: Did Rose [Schneiderman] ever work for the ILG?

NEWMAN: Yes. She worked during the strike. She was sent to Massachusetts. In later years....she also solicited funds during the strike.

INTERVIEWER: When did Rose go to work for the League?

NEWMAN: Her own union's strike was in 1905, I mean, the Capmaker's. After the strike, she was employed part-time by the League, and later on she was a full-time organizer, and still later on she was elected president of the local League. But she wasn't permanent on the ILGWU staff. There was a girl, I think, named Molly Friedman, who was supposed to do organizing, under President Schlesinger. At one time, we also had an Italian girl organizer, Margorie DeMargio. She was able and spoke well.

INTERVIEWER: Now, back to Leonora, because you knew her so well. We read about her occasionally in labor history books like Century of Struggle. She talks about sort of a luminous quality that she had. You want to talk about Leonora because you knew her and her mother.

NEWMAN: Well, what Flexner [author of Century of Struggle] said I'll accept anytime. Except that as I remember her, as I said before, she was an excellent speaker, but very emotional. She was not one-hundred percent Irish, but a million percent Irish, and for Ireland. She hated England. But that was her own private affair. As far as the labor movement is concerned, she naturally was devoted to it. She was the first one to join the Knights of Labor. You get an idea of this? Not too practical when it came to organizational work or union work. The ideal came first, and the practical necessity for doing things, she recognized it, but wasn't happy about it. She read a great deal; she was the one who sent me Galsworthy's Dark Flower, which is a beautiful book, if you've ever have had the time to read it. We fell in love with Galsworthy. We read every single book he wrote and she sent me Dark Flower because she liked that book. In Dark Flower, his prose was really poetic, and it's a story she apparently liked, or she wouldn't have bought it and sent it to me. She had her responsibility for her mother, who in later years wasn't well at all, and she wouldn't let her go out alone because her mind was already confused. She

NEWMAN: was in touch with people she admired in Ireland, other people, historical people, she somehow got to know. If someone came from Italy or from Ireland, she would invite them to her house and invite some of us to come and meet them. She would have been more sociable if her mother was well, but she was really imprisoned in her own home. She couldn't leave her mother. When she did, on occasion, she had to get somebody to stay with her. She was outspoken; needless to say, she was against capitalism. She hated capitalists; she had a great deal of pity for the poor. I think it was in those years that a book was written about the Irish people who were starving and were trying to find potatoes that were left over by the growers in the fields. And she really suffered with them. She was a good friend, a loyal friend. People adored her. There was a Mr. Cohen, he was a philosopher at the City College, and his wife, she was crazy about Leonora. And finally one day Leonora announced that she cannot leave her mother to go out. And we'd come every Saturday afternoon to be with her, and enjoy her. We had a wonderful time, because she....We did have tea, and Mrs. Cohen would come, Mary Drier would come, Rose would come, Agnes O'Brien would come. And we would spend the afternoon with her, because we all loved her, and we felt terrible when she died. Miss Miller and I had at that time--1927, I think she died--a summer house in Connecticut. And we planted a beautiful maple for Leonora. She's one of those human beings we need today, badly. What more can I say?

INTERVIEWER: Was she active in the [1909] shirtwaist strike?

NEWMAN: Yes, she was speaking before the strike. She went from hall to hall. As I said, she was limited from going about because of her mother. But she spoke at the halls. The day before I left Buffalo, she addressed a meeting at East Fourth Street, the Labor Lyceum, I think it was called. Another time she spoke at Webster Hall; we didn't have any uptown halls in those days. And her voice alone would get you, really.

INTERVIEWER: What was there about it?

NEWMAN: It's not easy to describe. It's like someone who was on the verge of tears; their voice sounds that way. Well, that was Leonora. As I said before, I think it was the emotion that produced that kind of a voice. And needless to say, caught the attention of the strikers. When you have five, six, a thousand in one place, those who were never organized before, who never met before except in the factories, to get them to listen, and not to talk to each other or walk around, is due to the talent of the speaker.

INTERVIEWER: You told me once that she was quite dogmatic.

NEWMAN: I won't take it back because she, when she thought that something was right, you couldn't persuade her that she was wrong. It's true. During the strike, sometimes she came to the League headquarters and there was always something to do, to call people--we were very fortunate; we got a lot of lawyers who represented the strikers for nothing, without payment--and she would take the telephone....calls, etc. That was her job one day; the next day it was doing something else. She was active in addition to speaking; she would do what needed to be done.

INTERVIEWER: She was one of the speakers at that Metropolitan Opera House meeting after the Triangle Strike?

NEWMAN: No. I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Did you come up from Philadelphia after the Triangle fire?

NEWMAN: Oh, I came the very day, that evening. They telephoned me, and, oh my God, I couldn't get the train to go fast enough. There were no planes. Oh yes, I came that very evening.

INTERVIEWER: There were a lot of women that you knew in that shop?

NEWMAN: Yes. I worked there eight years. Most of them were young girls like myself.

INTERVIEWER: Were you at that meeting where Rose Schneiderman spoke? Sponsored by the League? That must have been something you'll never forget.

NEWMAN: It was, because I think a lot of people came to the meeting had in mind only to do some charitable work for the survivors and let it go at that. But Rose put them right. She said that would be treason to the dead if we stopped at this point. And out of this meeting came the legislation for fire protection in buildings, and Frances Perkins had a hand in that, and so did Al Smith. Anyway, they appointed a commission, maybe it was Al Smith who proposed it. Mary Drier was the only woman on the commission to see that the buildings where people work get fire protection. They did a very decent job. And Dr. Price, who was the director of the Joint Board of Sanitary Control, he was tremendous because he knew....As a matter of fact, only the other day I was reading something about the Joint Board of Sanitary Control, and before 1911, he made a report to the General Executive Board of the ILG, and pointed out the insecurity of some of the buildings where our people worked. It wasn't long after that the fire occured.

INTERVIEWER: Were you marching in that funeral march?

NEWMAN: Everybody was marching. It seemed that the entire city was on the march. It was raining, but nobody cared, everybody went anyhow. There's something that stays in one's mind--something

NEWMAN: that you'll never forget and that was one of the things that lived with--still does. I don't think we will ever forget it. Thousands of people stood in the rain, watching. It looked like the entire city of New York was at the parade, if you'll call it a parade. And it was pouring. Nature was weeping. It rained all day and all night. I was reminded of it when I heard on the radio the other day about that terrible explosion at the Chiclet Factory. And that's sixty-five years after, and we still have this sort of thing going on.

November 30, 1976

INTERVIEWER: Let's start today with the Red Special, which was Debs' campaign train, right?

NEWMAN: Yes, and the Socialist Party decided it would be a good idea if they could afford to get a train just for Debs and his colleagues, they could stop from place to place as Truman did. Whistlestops. And I think this was the first whistlestop in the history of political campaigning. It was a great temptation for some of us to be on the Red Special. Because, after all, space was limited and not many people could get a day off, but the desire to be there was so great that some of us succeeded. There was Martha Homan, a bookkeeper; there was Henry Harris, a printer, I don't recall the others, and myself.

INTERVIEWER: You must have been very excited to be on the train.

NEWMAN: We were pleased that we were able to get on the Red Special.

INTERVIEWER: Was that for the New York State part of the campaign?

NEWMAN: Pennsylvania, too. We didn't go all the way, because, after all, Martha and Henry and I were working, and we couldn't take more time than the employer would allow us. So we got as far as upstate New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. And at the end of Pennsylvania, though they went further, we had to return. But it was an experience. And with the experience goes a little story--Debs got a cold. He was confined to bed, and among those present was his brother, who looked like Eugene Debs. Anyone who didn't know E. Debs couldn't tell the difference. So when we had to stop and have Debs make a speech, his brother made the speech and the people never knew the difference. Well, he got better, and would chat a little bit with those of us on the Special. He was very enthusiastic, as I recall, about the undertaking. He hoped very much he would get a big vote. He never expected to get elected, you know. But he did expect to get a big vote. We talked, sometimes more, sometimes less, and by the time the two or three days were over, we had to go back.

INTERVIEWER: What was he like? I've heard he was a very kind man.

NEWMAN: He was. In his appearance, a very tall person. Very gentle. Even when he talked from the platform, you could feel his heart going out to you. He was an excellent speaker. He could be qualified as a great orator. He made a great impression even upon those who didn't agree with him, because everyone felt his sincerity and his hopes for the future through socialism. He was a humble person. He really didn't think of himself more than he would have of anyone else. I remember one day, that was before the Special, when he came to New York, and he and Gaylord Wilshire, the California socialist, were both walking on East Broadway eating apples; they were on their way to the Socialist Literary Society; the rest of us were waiting for them. And we had a very interesting afternoon and evening. He was kind; he was really lovable. People really loved him. We need somebody like that today.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know of anyone?

NEWMAN: No. There were quite a few in those days. There was Ben Hansferd, a printer, a member of Big Six here in New York. He was just as wonderful as a speaker as Eugene Debs was. Devoted, loyal, kind. He had a way of finishing his speeches that you would always remember. He would go from corner to corner on a soapbox. His speeches were different. On one corner, he would compare the worker to a tomato--because he was squeezed. On the next corner, he would compare the worker to something else; he always had something different to say on each corner. That's what kept the people coming. They'd follow him around the corners and listen to a different kind of speech. But his climax of the speech was the same. His climax was this: "The working class, may it ever be right. But right or wrong, the working class!" The climax was the same. He wrote pamphlets, too, I've got them still.

INTERVIEWER: And he was a socialist?

NEWMAN: Oh yes, a member of the New York Socialist Party, and the Printers' Union, Big Six. So was Henry Harris.

INTERVIEWER: Another event in New York, before we move on, that you told me about once, was the first strike you ever led. The rent strike. Could you talk about that?

NEWMAN: Well, that was around 1907 and I lived on Madison Street in one of the tenements, tenements without facilities. The only facilities was the stove which came with the apartment. But no bathing facilities, no bathroom, no toilet; the toilet was in the yard. And that was the same in the next tenement, and the next, on Madison Street. There weren't any conveniences at all, as far as the tenants were concerned. And one day, the landlord came and asked for an increase in rent. We didn't pay very much as I recall. We had two rooms; we paid ten dollars

NEWMAN: a month. But there was nothing meaningful for the tenant. And so I spoke to some of the neighbors in my own building, and they suggested that we speak to the neighbors in the next building, so we wouldn't be alone. And we did that. Finally, we got together on the sidewalk. Thankfully, it was summertime. And we decided that we won't give any increase unless he installs a toilet, at least in the hall, if not in the flat, and a window in the bedroom, which at that time was windowless. And we selected a committee. They made me chairman to see the landlord. I said, "Let him come. Why should I go to him?" And he wanted the rent, so he came. And I told him, we won't pay any increase unless he does what we ask of him. Well, to make a long story short, we as tenants met and discussed the situation, and we definitely decided not to give a penny more than what we were paying. So he didn't get any increase and we didn't get any facilities, and that was the end of the strike. But my picture appeared on the front page of the New York Evening Journal: "GIRL LEADS STRIKE!"

INTERVIEWER: That's quite a story. That's symbolic of what you were going to do for the rest of your life. You were very young then.

NEWMAN: I worked in the factory at that time. We did it all in the evenings. But it meant something to all of us. But the fact that we didn't get it that time helped get us something next time. Some of us moved from 311 to 307, which had a toilet in the hall. And that was a great improvement, and the bedroom also had a window which was another improvement. We didn't pay very much more, but we had something for it.

INTERVIEWER: When you were living down there, what did your family used to do if you did have anytime off? Did you celebrate holidays? What did you do together as a family?

NEWMAN: On the holiday? Well, we had relatives here. My father's brother and family were here long before we came and they would invite us for a holiday meal. And I got to know some of my friends in the Literary Society. They were very kind, really. They would take me along. I'd go to the theater with them--it was Jewish Theater. There were great actors, you know. And they had very good plays. I recall there was an actor by the name of Berta Kalish and she took the part of great characters--anyway, she was a great actress, and is still remembered by many of us.

INTERVIEWER: That must have been very exciting.

NEWMAN: Oh, it was, for a young person who didn't know anything about historical events. The great Adler played the part of Galileo. That's what we did on the holidays when you didn't have to work. You visited your relatives; the rest of the members did that more frequently than I did. I joined my friends at the Literary Society who were kind enough to take me along to places. They

NEWMAN: were the ones who took me for the first time to an English play. And what do you think it was?

INTERVIEWER: Shakespeare?

NEWMAN: No, Peer Gynt. I even remember the name of the actor; his name was Manfield, he was a very emminent actor at that time. Oh, I'll never forget that play. Of course, you know the music. So I, in a way, went with friends rather than with relatives.

INTERVIEWER: You had more in common with your friends?

NEWMAN: More in common with my friends than I had with my family.

INTERVIEWER: What I'd like to talk about next, and it was very important in your life, is the Joint Board of Sanitary Control. We have a tape of your telling about the strike, and the Triangle Fire, so I think if we pick up with when the Joint Board of Sanitary Control first began.

NEWMAN: I wrote an article on the J.B.S.C. which you can have and use.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to make a copy of it, but I'd also like it if you could talk a little bit about your role in that; and kind of say how it happened that the ILG tried to set up this Joint Board of Sanitary Control. What was it, why was it important, how did they set it up, what was your role in it?

NEWMAN: Well, as I recall it, the Joint Board of Sanitary Control was the first such addition to any union agreement in the entire labor movement. There wasn't anything like it, and I don't know of anything like it in any other union, even today.

INTERVIEWER: Was that 1912?

NEWMAN: 1911. One of the reasons was that the factories that people worked in were filthy. Very little ventilation, very bad light; it was really a menace to the health of the workers. And the man who really convinced the union leadership, as well as the Employers' Association, that they'd be better workers if their health were known and if the place were kept sanitary, and he convinced them of that. And they finally agreed to include it in the next agreement that was signed, that both the employers and the union would finance, if Dr. Price would establish what he called the Joint Board of Sanitary Control. Joint, because both parties financed it and the Board was to control the sanitation and other healthful conditions.

INTERVIEWER: Was it Dr. Price who convinced them?

NEWMAN: Yes. He was authorized to go ahead and carry out his ideas and one of the first things he did was to employ a number of people, retired inspectors, to investigate the factories. And when they brought the results, he classified them, A,B,C: A,

NEWMAN: fairly good conditions; B, needs a lot of correction; C, very bad. Now, naturally enough, we concentrated on C to get the employers to sweep the factories daily, to remove the rubbish, to see that the toilets functioned properly and to change gas jets to electric lights with shades. Some of them had electric light, but without shade, which is bad for your eyes. I was an inspector. After I stopped traveling, organizing, they wanted me to inspect the shops because I knew the employers as well as the workers; I could tell the workers that they have a share in keeping the place clean, too. And I got the employers to allow me five minutes every day in a different shop to get up on a table and tell the workers what the Joint Board of Sanitary Control was trying to do, and that we needed their cooperation.

INTERVIEWER: When did you become an inspector?

NEWMAN: About 1912, 13. In addition to my speaking to the workers, we arranged lectures Friday nights because there would be no overtime Friday night, you see, and we used the auditoriums of the public schools. While we didn't have any radio or TV at that time, we'd have slides, and Dr. Price was also able to get the best lecturers on health to speak to the people. We used to have the auditoruims filled. We had doctors and dentists come and talk on health, sanitation, tell them their responsibilities as well as the employers' responsibilities to see that they worked in a clean, healthy atmosphere. I recall one, I think he deserves to be quoted. He was one of the dental professors at Columbia [University] and Dr. Price got him to come and talk to the girls. And he was a kind of a teacher whom I admired immensely because he knew who he was talking to. He knew that they didn't know much about dentistry. But he did want to get across the importance of brushing your teeth, what it meant to you. He started off by saying, "I'm going to ask you a question now: How would you like to eat tonight's supper on last night's unwashed dishes?" And he used to repeat that; and they admired that. They agreed; they understood what he meant. The great need for brushing your teeth. Another speaker might have started out asking, "Do you brush your teeth?" No, he got it right. Who would like to eat tonight's supper on last night's unwashed dishes? Well, we had printed matter and inspection, and rating the factories, getting the employer's cooperation. Before we started that, they used to pile up the rubbish near the freight elevators two or three weeks, you know. And there is a lot of cutting rubbish, you know. It was really a danger, too.

INTERVIEWER: A fire hazard.

NEWMAN: So we got that fixed with them. They agreed they would sweep every day. Most of them did, I think; some of them didn't. So when you came in, you found the floor unswept and the rubbish unremoved; you had the badge of the New York State Department of

NEWMAN: Labor. Most of them didn't know the difference, whether I had got it by courtesy of the Department or made it up. And when they saw the badge, they complied. And in addition, however, after the Triangle fire, we hired retired firemen to conduct fire drills. That continued until 1924 when most of the lower East side factories moved uptown. They were more modern, you know. So the fire drills were given up. And later, a couple years later, the Joint Board of Sanitary Control was also dissolved. Too early, in my opinion, but there it was.

INTERVIEWER: In 1926 it was dissolved?

NEWMAN: I don't know the exact date. I know it was after 1924. It probably was in '26 because we had internal difficulties then, some local unions.

INTERVIEWER: You said that was too soon, in your opinion?

NEWMAN: Yes, not that soon. As a matter of fact, a Joint Board probably could be used today, in spite of all the modernization. As far as the workers are concerned, they still think, "Well, it's only a shop," you know. That went down very nicely, too. Anyway, I think the Joint Board of Sanitary Control has done a magnificent job. It was, I think, the baby of Dr. George Price, and he was a physician and an authority on industrial medicine. He really did an excellent job. And it went on from 1911 to 1924, '26. I enjoyed working with him immensely. I would come in with my badge; no one would tell me not to come in. I would talk to the employers. Some of them were very nice. I made quite a number of friends with some, because they were quite decent, and realized that what we were trying to do was not only good for the workers, but was good for them, too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember at all what proportion of the shops were C shops, compared to B; compared to A? Were most of them B or C?

NEWMAN: I should think that most of them were B, and quite a number of them were C. Not many were A. A's were the larger factories, and the people who made better garments. The C's were in the hands of contractors. They didn't know; they didn't care. They probably didn't have the wherewithall to do what we wanted them to do. So quite a lot of them were C's. Mostly B's and some A's.

INTERVIEWER: One of the things, and maybe I didn't read it right, but I thought I read that the 1910 Cloakmaker's strike was that the union was able to get rid of the contracting system. Is that right? That the hated contract system . . .?

NEWMAN: Yes, I think it may be right.

INTERVIEWER: There are going to be a lot of people listening to this tape who have no idea what that system was, and I wonder if you could explain it.

NEWMAN: I don't think it's necessary and I don't think it's essential.

INTERVIEWER: To talk about it?

NEWMAN: You see, you cannot go into it. Why bother about it? It's entirely....it's gone. No, really, it is too complicated to start from the beginning and I may not be able to remember the very beginning. I do remember the existence of contrators. And I remember that workers would work for workers. Now it's really difficult for the average person to understand just what went on then.

INTERVIEWER: But people hated it as a system?

NEWMAN: Yes, workers didn't like it, and when the union grew stronger, it was abolished.

INTERVIEWER: Why did they hate it? It was evil, right?

NEWMAN: They were UNDERPAID!

INTERVIEWER: All right, so I want you to imagine that there's somebody listening to this tape who has no idea of how people were taken advantage of. No?

NEWMAN: I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Can you explain how workers took advantage of other workers? Why they hated the system?

NEWMAN: I don't think it was as much hatred as the unwillingness to work for someone who was your co-worker and still takes advantage of you, pays you less. They felt that this was wrong, and I think they convinced the union in later years, when they got a bit stronger, to do away with it. Nobody liked it.

INTERVIEWER: It was the way the boss had of getting more production, wasn't it?

NEWMAN: I don't know. Why would he get more production through a contractor than employing them himself?

INTERVIEWER: He must have made more . . .

NEWMAN: They couldn't work faster than they did, whether it's for a contractor or an employer, you have so much strength and no more.

INTERVIEWER: It was really then a way of taking advantage . . .

NEWMAN: It was a way of the employer, in my opinion, to get somebody to do the job with the workers and leave me alone.

INTERVIEWER: To do the dirty work?

NEWMAN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: And hire a crew of workers to produce a certain number of garments for a certain price. If he got the workers to work for less, this worker could keep the extra money?

NEWMAN: Well, until later years it was a piecework business. And you worked as fast as you knew how, and if your worked for the contractor, the contractor would push you more. It was a terrible way, I think, of earning a living, but there you are. Nothing to do, until later years.

INTERVIEWER: And was that one of the big issues in the 1910 strike?

NEWMAN: It was one of the issues. The Joint Board of Sanitary Control was another in 1910. Also, the preferential shop was also the issue in the 1910 strike. And finally, we got a board including the late Justice Brandeis and Governor Lehman--he was governor at that time. People of that type would sit down and work on a plan to end the strike. And I think it was Judge Brandeis who thought of one way of settling it was to ask the employers if they agreed to employ people preferred by the union, and not exclude anyone, because after all, they were all members of the union. So if you prefer me, I'm a member of the union, so there was nothing against doing that. So, anyway, the preferential shop, Giving union people the preference was the issue, and that really brought the strike to a settlement, to an end. That was Judge Brandeis who was behind that.

INTERVIEWER: That was probably a compromise then. The union probably wanted a union shop, and the company agreed to a preferential shop.

NEWMAN: As a matter of fact--I wonder if that would come in handy to you, too . . .

INTERVIEWER: OK, that I am looking forward to reading, really very much. So now we're moving up toward the period of World War I, and what effect did the war have upon the union, and upon organizing, and on the members? Everybody was working for one thing?

NEWMAN: You mean making uniforms. Well, all you made, most of it, were men's. I don't know how much the ILG had of this work. We had some, but the Amalgamated had most of it. Men's garments. As far as the effect was concerned, what could you expect anyone to say what effect it had on other people except yourself?

INTERVIEWER: OK, let's start with you.

NEWMAN: And what you think, and hope that the other people thought the way you did. I was in Philadelphia during the first world war. Loaned, partly to the Women's Trade Union League, partly to the ILG. And I remember the attitude of certain people toward the war, there were a good many women whose sons died. One was a Quaker. And instead of being a conscientious objector, somehow or other he found himself fighting. And he died. I'll never forget his mother. But there were others. You knew people whose husbands and sons died and how they felt. And hoping that there never would be anything like it again. They did what most women did in the first world war: supply garments for soldiers, and made scarves, sweaters, etc. Everybody was busy. Some working with the Red Cross, or doing what had to be done. Nobody refused to do anything. Even if they were opposed to the war, they did what they could to help those who were still alive. It wasn't long after that, you know, that the terrible flu epidemic occurred in 1918. Remember the day when the Armistice was announced, Miss Miller who had the flu was able to sit up and we moved the chair over to the window, we could see the people dancing in the street for joy. The war was over.

INTERVIEWER: When did you first meet Frieda Miller? In Philadelphia?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the year?

NEWMAN: 1917.

INTERVIEWER: And she was with the YWCA then?

NEWMAN: No. She was originally a fellow at Bryn Mawr College, because when she graduated from the University of Chicago, she got the position as a fellow at Bryn Mawr. Then, the woman who had charge of the WTUL asked her if she would accept the secretary-ship of the Women's Trade Union League, because they had none and wanted her to accept their offer, despite the fact that these ladies--they were all wealthy women--bought a house for the League. But if you had a house, a two-story house, I remember, and nothing was being done; they had two trade union girls, one was a textile worker and came from Scotland, and

NEWMAN: the other one was an ILGW. They said, "You won't be able to do anything unless you contact labor. Labor has to become part of your League." Well, they had none in Philadelphia, unfortunately. They asked the ILG if they would loan me at least half time to the League. I was working for the Joint Board of Sanitary Control at that time. Dr. Price said, "Well, it's up to you. Do what you want to do. You can always come back if you don't like it." But he was the kind of a man who realized....was a great believer in the trade union movement.

So, they wrote to me and I said I would accept on certain conditions. They didn't have any connections at all with the Central Trade Union Labor Council. They had no money except what those women wanted to contribute, and they really urged me to come at least for a time and build up the organization. So, I finally did. When I got there, I made contact with an American Federation of Labor representative who was stationed in Philadelphia. His name was Joe Ritchie. He was a very average person, decent enough and realized that what I was asking him to do was perfectly all right with the AF of L. I asked him to help me get the trade union movement in Philadelphia to utilize the League. He did, and I worked there I think until--well, all I know, it came to until '23. I got the labor people to not only contribute money, which they never had before, and I got people, trade unions to contribute who had no women members. I got the molders; I got the machinists; I got engineers, and they all gave a monthly contribution. Moreover, for the first time, the Central Trade Union Labor Council agreed to accept us and send delegates. That was a great achievement. Let's see, from '19 to '23, you had the women who worked during the war who had to give back the jobs to the men who came back and it was quite a job for the unions to see justice done to the women.

INTERVIEWER: What did the League do?

NEWMAN: We went to the offices of the officers of the union, to whom we would go. Because, after all, they were in charge. What we tried to do was....well, they had a legitimate answer. The boys who came back are entitled to the jobs. All we can do is to try to find jobs for the girls, too. And that was what happened. They were cooperative, and that's about all you could do. You couldn't say to the employer: "Don't take the boys back." You couldn't do that. That happened not only in Philadelphia; that happened all over. At that time, the National Women's Trade Union League had a committee in Washington to work with the federal government and see what could be done so that women would not be entirely neglected. They did what they could, and I think the League did a decent job in the years thereafter. Of course, a lot of them--what was it, ten million, how many died?

INTERVIEWER: I don't remember. What kind of jobs did the women have to leave, and what kinds of jobs did they then go into?

NEWMAN: Whatever they could find.

INTERVIEWER: Did they work in the garment plants, or in restaurants?

NEWMAN: Whatever. The restaurants, the textile mills. We had quite a textile group in Philadelphia. It's still there, I think. Whatever they could get. You couldn't choose just what you wanted. You needed a job, and you'd take what you could get. And the League was helpful. We didn't stop organizing--and I think I told you the story about the candy workers.

INTERVIEWER: That was very sad.

NEWMAN: But when the--before the war was over, the girls came into the machine shop, and one time the machinists' union called me up, and he said, "I'd like you to address a meeting of the Machinists' Union." That didn't happen very often, that they'd invite a woman. And I said, "That's fine, I'll come." I'll never forget that meeting. I was sick and still dared not disappoint the machinists....and I went. The meeting cured me. It did! There were so many girls present, and that's why he wanted me to come, to talk to the girls, and talk to the trade union leaders. Anyway, when I saw the hall so full of girls I'd never seen before, my illness left me.

INTERVIEWER: You were inspired. Were these women who worked in the machinists' shop?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Now, Frieda Miller became secretary of the League in 1917?

NEWMAN: I met her in '17, when they asked me to come to the WTUL. She probably....well, it guess it was '17 that she left Bryn Mawr.

INTERVIEWER: What was your job, Pauline? You were part-time with the League, paid by the ILG?

NEWMAN: No, the League paid some, it didn't have much, but it paid some.

INTERVIEWER: What were you getting as organizer for the League?

NEWMAN: Enough to live on.

INTERVIEWER: So when Frieda Miller came in and took over the secretaryship, did you stay as organizer?

NEWMAN: And president. She was the legislative person; she used to go to Harrisburg and lobby for the eight-hour day at that time. Also legislation against dangerous occupations, that was the time that we got Dr. Alice Hamilton . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were going to tell me about her.

NEWMAN: . . . to come and testify before the Pennsylvania Legislature. Well, from what I remember of her, she was a lovely person. She really was. In the first place, she was outstanding in her profession, for the dangerous trades. Towards the end, I think, she became professor at Harvard. She was the one who really exposed the dangers of certain metals that came as a result of handling. It was through her efforts that it was done away with.

INTERVIEWER: How did she do that?

NEWMAN: Through legislation. When Miss [Frieda] Miller went to Harrisburg to speak for legialation. We had in Pennsylvania a dangerous trade, and I can't recall what it was; it had to do with metal. A dangerous ingredient for those who handled it. I couldn't think of anyone better than to have Dr. Alice Hamilton testify. So we brought her to Harrisburg , and she testified and she did everything in favor of labor. You'll be interested to know that she had a magnificent article against the Equal Rights Amendment. I still have the article. When the Roosevelts called the Health Conference, I think that was during his first administration, Alice Hamilton came and spoke. She was so interested and so decent.

INTERVIEWER: She really sort of started the whole field of industrial medicine, didn't she?

NEWMAN: That's right. She and Dr. Price; they worked together.

INTERVIEWER: How did she prove that the phosphorus in matches caused the jaws to be eaten away? Did she study, or how did she prove it?

NEWMAN: She, in the first place--I don't know the details--but I can't imagine her not having done a thorough study and expose it. After the exposition, labor people took it up.

INTERVIEWER: And it became a legislative issues?

NEWMAN: That is right.

INTERVIEWER: That's marvelous that you knew her so well.

NEWMAN: Yes, I liked her immensely. I didn't know her sister, who was, as you know, a classicist and was made a citizen of Greece. Toward the end, she came home, and they lived in Connecticut; Lime, Connecticut. And, of course, you know that Alice lived to be a hundred; and alert, according to the paper. I didn't see her toward the end, but I saw quite a good deal of her in her younger years.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to know Miss Miller?

NEWMAN: Well, she was secretary [WTUL] and I was organizer. We got to know each other because we worked together.

INTERVIEWER: But you got very friendly.

NEWMAN: Oh, yes. She had a very interesting family who had a place in Wisconsin and her aunt invited me to come for my vacation. Her home was at LaCrosse, but the summer home which they had, was called Devil's Lake. You know. So, I spent one vacation there, and on the way I stopped in Chicago, I had a sister who lived in Chicago at that time, and I saw some of the members of the ILG, on the way to Wisconsin and back. It was natural to be friendly. We had the same work to do. We had a lot in common. She was immensely interested in social questions; she was deeply interested in literature and poetry and music. Remember her background is German.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes. She was from Germany?

NEWMAN: No, her grandparents came in 1848. Her grandparents settled in LaCrosse and her mother married one of the men who came with them. He came in 1848; he was a lawyer and established a law office, and her grandfather who came went into the lumber business. Unfortunately, her mother died when she was probably three or four years old. In the end, her grandmother and aunt--she had a sister, too--brought them up. Her first college, after high school, was Milwaukee Downer, which is now changed to another name. After she graduated from Milwaukee Downer, she went to the University of Chicago. There she took economics, law, and what today is called fine arts. I think I told you, she really loved literature and music and nature, of course, more than anything or anyone I knew. She would spend hours in the woods trying to find a little bit of a flower that was so lovely. Anyway, she loved it. And I suppose in her day, 1917, or before that, when she was at the University of Chicago, I suppose she would be called a rebel.

INTERVIEWER: Right, women just didn't study economics and law.

NEWMAN: Besides which, she almost led a strike.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really?

NEWMAN: Against the food! She thought the food at the university was bad. I met a number of her classmates who were friends later on, and they all participated, protesting against the food they were getting at the university. Anyway, she got her Phi Beta Kappa, but she never got a key. She didn't believe in signs.

INTERVIEWER: Well, then she was probably also interested when the Bryn Mawr Summer School first opened?

NEWMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: You were right there too, weren't you?

NEWMAN: Yes, she was on the board.

INTERVIEWER: That was 1921, so you must . . .

NEWMAN: 1919 we had a WTUL convention, must have been 1920, '21.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to the summer school? You were on the board, too, weren't you?

NEWMAN: I was on the board, but I wasn't a student.

INTERVIEWER: You weren't a student, but you were on the board. Then you know Hilda Smith?

NEWMAN: Yes. No, somebody was there before Hilda.

INTERVIEWER: Carrie Thomas helped to get....I guess Hilda Smith was the first director.

NEWMAN: Was she the first? I thought it was somebody else. Anyway, I knew Hilda. Well, then you see, Miss Miller became interested. Well, she always was interested in labor, but she also became interested in the administration of labor law. She was--I think she was known as the best labor law administrator. First of all, she had the first administrative job with the New York State Department of Labor. First, she was the head of what we then called the Women's Bureau. Then when Frances Perkins went to Washington, she became Industrial Commissioner. Because Frances was Industrial Commissioner when Roosevelt asked her to come to Washington. So she recommended to Governor Lehman that Miss Miller be appointed Industrial Commissioner; and Governor Lehman did. She was Industrial Commissioner until

NEWMAN: the Republican Governor Dewey was elected. Then she resigned. No good working under a Republican. Well, at that time, we were in the war, '41, and our ambassador to England was John Wynant, also a lovely man. I knew him, and I liked him immensely. He asked President Roosevelt if he could send someone to assist him concerning working women and their conditions of labor in Britain. President Roosevelt appointed Miss Miller. So Miss Miller was there during the war years working with John Wynant and going into the factories and going everywhere that was necessary.

INTERVIEWER: She was in Britain during all the war years? During the Blitz and everything?

NEWMAN: She lived with a friend and one night they thought they were hit.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the 1919 [WTUL] convention. Was that the international one?

NEWMAN: No, that was the Women's Trade Union League.

INTERVIEWER: Was it something special that happened there?

NEWMAN: Well, it was after the war, you know, 1919. The uppermost question were the women who were out of work now that the war was over. You see, and oh, the resolution re: the League of Nations. I remember Mrs. Robbins spoke about the League of Nations and I made a motion that we call it A League of Nations. Because some of us knew that it wasn't all we thought it would be. A lot of economic questions, political questions, and I was elected delegate to the Canadian Trade and Labor Conference. That was an experience, because I hadn't, at that time, met any English people except Margaret Bondfield, she came here, and we became very close friends.

INTERVIEWER: Delegate to the Canadian Labor Congress? Is that what you said?

NEWMAN: Canadian Labor Congress.

INTERVIEWER: Was that 1919?

NEWMAN: It was after the Convention.

INTERVIEWER: And you went to Canada?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where in Canada?

NEWMAN: The Convention was held in Toronto, I think. Anyway, it was an experience meeting the British delegation. They're all dead now, but they were excellent speakers. We got to

NEWMAN: know each other during the week, and I was immensely interested in listening to them. Our own delegation, the American Federation of Labor delegate, was Matthew Woll. Well, he was nothing compared to the British delegates. They were wonderful.

INTERVIEWER: That must have been quite an interesting experience.

NEWMAN: It was. Because I have spoken in public before, in many conventions, and after all, here was Canada, people I didn't know, never met, and I was never any good in making speeches. Even if I make notes I forget that I have them. But apparently it went over nicely, I told them about the Women's Trade Union League, and the American labor movement, and Matthew Woll spoke after I did. In his speech, of course, he was conservative, and was a Gompers man. But after I got through speaking, the chairman of the Convention paid me a great compliment and said he noticed I was using an Ingersoll watch, and he thought I ought to have a gold one, and he gave me one.

INTERVIEWER: Isn't that something. And you still have it?

NEWMAN: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: That's lovely. That's so nice.

NEWMAN: Ben Tillet, of the General Workers Union, in Britain. He was one of the delegates at the Canadian Labor Conference. We got very friendly....

INTERVIEWER: And who was the person who gave you this beautiful gold watch?

NEWMAN: The president of the Congress.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember his name?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: It doesn't matter. That was a lovely thing to do. It's too bad that the people who listen to this tape can't see this beautiful watch. All inscribed on the back; to Pauline Newman. Just beautiful.

December 7, 1976

INTERVIEWER: This is December 7, and Pauline Newman and I are sitting in her living room chatting. We're going to talk a little bit about Mary Anderson, the head of the Women's Bureau which was established in 1920. Pauline, when did you first get to know Mary?

NEWMAN: About 1912, I should think, when I was in Chicago.

INTERVIEWER: What was she like as a person?

NEWMAN: Well, as a person she was typical Swedish-passive, calm, I never saw Mary get excited; able to do her job in organizing women. She was not a speaker; not a good one. Just a plain speaker. She had her say without any enthusiasm; she wasn't an inspirational speaker, you know. But she did her job. Because that was her first experience, really. To speak to anybody in public. Before then, her days were spent in a shoe factory. Prior to that, as you know, she was in domestic service, before she went into the shoe factory. It was from the shoe factory that she came to the Women's Trade Union League and Mrs. Robbins, as usual, thought that she ought to be given a chance, as she used to say. She gave her a chance to be an organizer, and Mary did as well as she knew how.

INTERVIEWER: That was in Chicago, right?

NEWMAN: That was in Chicago. She was once asked why she left the domestic service to go into the shoe factory. She said it was because as a domestic she was lonely.

INTERVIEWER: That's a good reason.

NEWMAN: It's a good reason. In the factory she had her co-workers, friends, while domestic service she was all alone and she was lonely. She didn't like it. It wasn't the work that she criticized; the long hours, etc. but just because she wanted somebody around her. She didn't want to be alone.

INTERVIEWER: She went on to be on the executive board.

NEWMAN: She was on the executive board of the Women's Trade Union League with the rest of us.

INTERVIEWER: She was for a time on the executive board of the Shoeworker's Union, I think, too.

NEWMAN: Yes, she was.

INTERVIEWER: In her autobiography she states she was the only non-paid board member; she wasn't a staff member. All the other board members were on the union staff. She always used to have to sort of pay her own way to get to board meetings.

NEWMAN: That's nothing new. It was nothing new in those days. Money didn't play a great role with people who were devoted to the trade union movement.

INTERVIEWER: When the Women's Trade Union League campaign for a Women's Bureau was successful, Mary Anderson was appointed head of the Women's Bureau.

NEWMAN: No, Mary VanKleeck was the very first one--who was the President?

INTERVIEWER: [Woodrow] Wilson.

NEWMAN: Wilson....Mary VanKleeck I think was the first director, and then her mother got very ill and Mary had to resign, and Mary Anderson, who was her assistant, became head of the Bureau. She remained director until she retired in 1940.

INTERVIEWER: It may have been towards the end of the war.

NEWMAN: I'm sure it was 1941 because--Frances Perkins became Secretary of Labor in 1936--about '40 or '41 Mary retired. Frieda Miller was appointed in her place, when she returned from England where she was an assistant to our ambassador during the war years.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the things that the Women's Bureau did in its early stages, the first days of the Women's Bureau, that were important to working women?

NEWMAN: Well, what Mary did, of course, was to get a number of people--one was in charge of research--begin to find out how many women are employed, how many are married. And to see how many unmarried are working. Get the statistics, chiefly. In addition, it published leaflets, sometimes monthly, sometimes semi-monthly, telling what they found, what the conditions were. There's not much more that I remember. That went on and on, and she got some good people as research workers. Some were sent to the South to find out what the conditions were in the South, the Midwest, the reports are there today. Some of the reports were published in little leaflets that she used to issue. That's about all I can tell you. The Bureau became effective later under Frieda Miller's leadership. Her accomplishments are on record.

INTERVIEWER: 1920 was a big year because that was the first year women could vote.

NEWMAN: That is right.

INTERVIEWER: You started to tell me when you first got active in the suffrage movement, campaigning for women's suffrage. Could you talk a little about that?

NEWMAN: My own experience?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NEWMAN: Yes, I can. I'm trying to think what year that was, I think it was '17, or before that, Mrs. Catt, who was in charge of the Women's Suffrage Party, which was later changed to the League of Women Voters, Mrs. Catt was in charge, she would

NEWMAN: appoint people to campaign for suffrage. One day, she called me to come and see her. All those who were campaigning prior to that were college women, wealthy women, a good number of them from Vassar, and they were all doing an excellent job, we thought. But then she said that she had a suggestion from some people to have labor women speak to labor men and that I was recommended by Rose Schneiderman. Having known before that Mrs. Catt and her colleagues were on the conservative side, I said, "Mrs. Catt, I want you to know that I'm a socialist." And she said, "Who isn't?" So anyway, she decided to let me go first to Buffalo. I went to Buffalo. In Buffalo I stayed with the chairman of the Women's Suffrage Movement, Gertrude Tone. She was an excellent person. By the way, Franchot Tone was her son.

INTERVIEWER: I wondered about that.

NEWMAN: Yes. He was a little boy at that time, trying to learn to play the piano. I was there about three weeks, campaigning every night at street corners or in halls or at luncheons. Whenever I was asked, I was there. But my chief occupation was, as Mrs. Catt said, it was my or our business to get the labor men. There was a lot of opposition among the labor men, even among the trade union men. I'd go in the evening to the union meetings and argue with them, and tell them to deliver my message to the women folks, too, you know. But, naturally, they had the vote, so you had to concentrate on convincing them. On the whole, I think they were kind and attentive and I hope that at that time, and I still hope, that I convinced them to vote for the amendment.

INTERVIEWER: This was the state Suffrage Amendment, right? For New York State suffrage?

NEWMAN: No, the federal.

INTERVIEWER: You mean to get the state to approve it?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

NEWMAN: From there I went to Rochester, and I had the same job, and the same response in dealing with men, and on the street corners, and luncheons, and the wealthy women.

INTERVIEWER: That was a help, since the men could vote.

NEWMAN: It was a help, of course. They heard me directly; they didn't get it from their wives. From Rochester I went to Syracuse and did the same thing, and so on. I thought then, and I still think, that it was a good move on the part of Mrs. Catt because you had to get to the labor men. I even did the same thing in Pennsylvania. I went and that was my share in helping to get the vote.

INTERVIEWER: What was Mrs. Catt like as a person?

NEWMAN: Well, I didn't know her very well, you know. She didn't mix much. But I understand from the few times that I did talk to her that she was an intelligent, understanding person. Knowledgeable on many issues, more than just the suffrage. It was pleasant to talk to her, because she was a pleasant woman. But I can't say that I knew her very well.

INTERVIEWER: What was the first time, where did you vote for the first time when women got the vote in 1920? Do you remember where you were?

NEWMAN: Where I was?

INTERVIEWER: The first November that you voted, after women got the ballot.

NEWMAN: It was 1920. Philadelphia.

INTERVIEWER: You were in Philadelphia. That must have been really a very important kind of feeling.

NEWMAN: It was a great feeling that here at last you succeeded in doing something. Not you alone, you know, but we as women. And men. Of course, you couldn't have done it without the men. You have to give them credit, too.

INTERVIEWER: Did the League have some kind of a party that election night or something to celebrate?

NEWMAN: Not that I remember, unless I was out ot town. I don't remember anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: Speaking of the League, I wondered whether you--you said you had never missed a Women's Trade Union League convention in all the years that they held conventions. I wondered what were their conventions like, and were there ever any conflicts that came up and were aired on the floor of the convention?

NEWMAN: Now, my first convention I think was 1911. I think it was held in Boston. That was the time I met the Boston League secretary, Mabel Gillespie, and there was a wealthy woman, Mrs. Evens, I don't remember her first name, she invited Agnes and Esther and me to stay at her house and we did and were cared for very well. The League's convention at that

NEWMAN: time and after, was dealing with hours for women, child labor--it was still in existence at that time--resolutions on questions that concerned labor and women, inviting some people to address the convention. The only convention that was a little different was the one in 1919, meeting in Philadelphia, and I was more or less in charge of the convention arrangements because the hostess city has the responsibility. The conflict was not between the League and its members, or delegates. But you see, since I was in charge of the convention, I brought up the question before the convention started, how and where to house the delegates. Delegates came from Chicago, from all parts of the country. I said that I have spoken to hotel owners, not the big hotels or the best hotels, but a hotel which I thought was reasonable. The girls would stay together in one place and get to know each other. Well, there was a Quaker woman, a rich Quaker woman, who said she did not agree with me. She said they ought to be stationed, I'll take one, you'll take one. Well, I took the floor again and I told her that, I think I can speak for all the delegates; they would prefer to be in a hotel and to have privacy, and that the lodging would be unacceptable. She said, "They're not used to being in a hotel." And that got me. I said, "It won't take them long to get used to it, don't worry!" And of course I won, and had the girls in a hotel. Now, I don't know whether that can be called a conflict, a disagreement with a woman who didn't think that working girls ought to stay in a hotel, but all the other members of the board agreed with me; call it a conflict? It wasn't between ourselves, it was between someone who was helpful financially, to get the convention in Philadelphia. The convention before was in 1917 in Kansas City. That was when we entered the first world war and there was a lot of discussion on the war. Some were opposed--the convention was held before we were in it. Some didn't see how we could stay out. I remember one delegate, a Swedish person, Hilda Swenson, she took the floor and began to cry. She had a brother and if her brother goes, she was sure he would be dead. Well, others sat there and they didn't know whether they should be for America to enter or against it. They had very little to say. Mrs. Robbins, however, and some of the others felt that we cannot stay out of it, and once we got into it, we have to devote all our energies, and whatever we have to do to make the world "safe for democracy." It wasn't exactly a conflict, it was, in my judgement, as I see it now, a necessary and interesting discussion. That discussion went on not only in the Women's Trade Union League, but there were other organizations, too, who questioned our going in or staying out. Well, you know what the result was.

INTERVIEWER: What were your own feelings about it?

NEWMAN: Well, you know, it's very difficult to describe the feeling because it wasn't just a feeling that you had against war--

NEWMAN: you had to think of the consequences if you stayed out. To say that we like it, or were terribly enthusiastic about it, I would say no. I think that was the mood. You could see that everywhere, in every organization, every group you talked to. I think we did what we were told to do; we sold bonds and bought bonds and we spoke wherever we were wanted to. We wanted Germany not to win, and if we didn't want Germany to win, we had to do our share. That sort of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a feeling that--I know at one League convention, the League passed a resolution, I don't remember what year it was--in favor of the AF of L starting a Labor Party. Do you remember that convention?

NEWMAN: Asking the AF of L to start a Labor Party? I don't think it was the League, it was the A F of L, I think it was in Rochester, but I was not there. What I remember is the WTUL passed a resolution asking the AF of L to establish a women's department in the AF of L to organize women, but I don't remember asking to start a Labor Party.

INTERVIEWER: It's in the proceedings of one of the League conventions.

NEWMAN: It is? I may be wrong.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. But as a socialist, how did you feel about another party? The Socialist Party kept on running . . .?

NEWMAN: I felt then as I would feel now, because I knew very well that they would never do it. But there was talk of a Labor Party. There was a convention of machinists, I think, they were discussing a third party. There was a convention of another trade union, I don't remember what, in Buffalo, they were discussing having a Labor Party. There was a group around in Chicago where they actually started a Labor Party. It came to nothing, but that's not the same as having the will and desire to build a Labor Party.

INTERVIEWER: No, I kind of think that that didn't make the League too popular, if they did pass such a resolution.

NEWMAN: No. No, but I do remember that they were very eager, and that some of the girls wanted to see Gompers about setting up a women's department to organize the women. The resolution was passed. I think it was Elizabeth Christman and Agnes Nestor who went to see Gompers.

INTERVIEWER: And what was his response?

NEWMAN: His response was he'll think about it. And later on he appointed a bookbinder, I wish I could remember her name, as organizer. She didn't last very long. She wasn't a very good organizer and I don't know why he appointed her. But that didn't last long.

INTERVIEWER: And then what happened? He didn't appoint anybody else?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: There's also some report in one of the League convention proceedings which records Leonora O'Reilly taking issue with some of the Chicago women because the Chicago League had set up a clinic for the working women, a medical clinic, and Leonora said you shouldn't set up a clinic with doctors. You should pay the women more money; they should earn more money so that they could choose their own doctors and go to whatever doctor they wanted to. Do you remember that?

NEWMAN: No, frankly I'd have to look at the proceedings.

INTERVIEWER: I was interested, and I wondered if you remembered anything.

NEWMAN: You don't remember the year?

INTERVIEWER: I had a feeling it might have been 1911. Could it have been 1913? It was before 1914, I know that.

NEWMAN: Maybe I wasn't at the convention.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe it was earlier, it could have been 1911, which was before the first one you were at. Maybe that was it.

NEWMAN: I don't remember that and I doubt it. That was not the time for the WTUL to even talk about a Labor Party or a health clinic.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned two or three times this evening a League woman who was very active in Illinois while you were in New York, and that was Agnes Nestor. Could you talk a little bit about her, because she was quite a person, wasn't she?

NEWMAN: She was quite a person, if you omit intellectuality. She wasn't an intellectual. She was very much interested in getting legislation to reduce the hours for the working women of Illinois. She put into it two or three years. She would live in Springfield more than she would in her home in Chicago. And she did a very good job. She got the ten-hour day through. Again, she wasn't one of these inspiring speakers. But she knew what she wanted to do, and she did a lot of work among the legislators in Springfield. As I said, it took her maybe even more than three years. but she got the hours reduced. Agnes was active in her own union, too, the Gloveworkers Union. She was a delegate to the Chicago Federation of Labor. During the war years, she was on the War Labor Board, along with, I think, Elizabeth Christman. She was active in the League, active in her union, active in the labor movement, and was a tireless worker because that

NEWMAN: interested her more than anything else. She and her family moved from Grand Rapids to Chicago. Well, she has it in her autobiography, which she didn't live long enough to finish it herself; somebody else finished it for her. But she tells there how they lived, and how they got along, until she got a job in the glove factory. She tells it all. She was a Catholic, good Roman Catholic, never missed going to church. During our convention, the first thing she would want to know was how to get to church, how near it was. But she was a devoted trade union woman. I think I give her all the credit for what she did.

INTERVIEWER: Was she one of your better friends in the League? Were you close with her?

NEWMAN: Well, yes. Again, Elizabeth Christman, Mary Anderson were the closest.

INTERVIEWER: To you personally?

NEWMAN: Yes. Somehow the long....there were others, of course. But Elizabeth and Mary, and there was another woman, Amy Field, who was not a trade unionist but was a member of the League who was a very able woman helping with Life and Labor; and she was always a delegate to the convention. She was very active. We got along very well. It would have been pleasant to have them nearer. We weren't together very much, because they were West and I was East, you know.

INTERVIEWER: You've talked a couple of times about Elizabeth Christman, too. And of course she lived a long time and did a lot of different things in her work with the League. Do you want to talk a little about what she was like?

NEWMAN: Elizabeth was quite different from Agnes. Firstly, there were her people who came here, if not in 1848 certainly after, from Germany. And there was a German idea--do things properly, and do it right. Elizabeth was a very kind person, a loveable person. She liked fun, and she enjoyed everything, really. She was good looking, and able. She became secretary of her own union first.

INTERVIEWER: She was a glove worker, wasn't she?

NEWMAN: Yes, the same union that Agnes belonged to. She did a lot for her union, her own union, because when it got to be numerically weak, she got the Amalgamated [Clothing Workers of America] to take over. So the Gloveworkers became part of the Amalgamated--it still is. She was a pretty good speaker. She didn't like to speak in public. She'd be nervous. But she did, and she did a good job; she spoke well. And she eventually became secretary of the League. Her main job really was to get enough support, financial support, from the labor unions,

NEWMAN: as well as from anybody else who was in agreement with the principles of the Women's Trade Union League to keep it going, and she did. She had a hard time. I helped, and others did, too. I remember one day she called me up from Washington, she said, "I've got to get some money to pay rent for the headquarters,"--it was in the Machinists building--had to pay rent just the same. So I went to our secretary of the ILG, who is dead now, Mr. Umby, I said, "Fred, could you send Elizabeth some money now?" He said, "What's the matter?" I told him, I said she called me from Washington; she's got to have it. And he sent her a thousand dollars right away. She called me back, she said, "I nearly collapsed when I got it!" and thanked me. She also was responsible for lobbying for labor legislation in Washington. She would speak at meetings; she got me to come out several times before groups and she was a lovely person--people liked her. Even people with whom she didn't agree; she was friendly. And everybody liked her. So when she died, a friend of mine asked me whether I'd come to a memorial service at Esther Peterson's house. Well, I couldn't come, but I said I had once written about Elizabeth for a women's auxiliary magazine. I said, "I could send you that and you can read as much as you want out of it." I sent it to a friend and she read all of it at the services. Mrs. Goldberg asked Lucille, my friend, whether I would mind if she could keep that. I said, "Well, I've got a copy of that anyway, if she wants to keep it she may. Why she wants it, I don't know." Apparently she thought well of it or she wouldn't want it.

INTERVIEWER: That was just a few years ago, wasn't it?

NEWMAN: I don't think it's more that two or three years. She was ninety when she died. In her last years, she was alert; her mind was good. But she could hardly walk; she couldn't see and she couldn't hear. I'd go to see her everytime I came to Washington, and she said, "Oh, I know your voice but I can't see your face." Well, finally she was determined to live alone, she wasn't going to move out of the apartment. She wasn't going to a nursing home, for which I don't blame her. Anyway, she had a niece in Indianapolis we wrote to her and asked her to come. She came, and she took Elizabeth to her home. She died there.

INTERVIEWER: That's really very lovely, very interesting vignette. When we go back to the World War I period and the period just after the war--because of the Espionage Act that the government passed, the government used that and Palmer* used that to attack the IWW and to raid their offices and really destroy a lot of their....

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*Attorney General

NEWMAN: They attacked people like the President of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, Jim Maurer. They refused him a passport to go to England, and Jim wanted to go. Finally, somebody interceded and told Palmer he was a fool to deny Jim Maurer a passport; to one of the outstanding people. Well, anyway, he finally got a passport, but the IWW were not the only ones whom Palmer was after.

INTERVIEWER: That's what I wanted to ask you about. Because I had also read that the Woman's Trade Union League suffered during that period also. It was harder for them to organize, and some of their offices were investigated. Do you remember that?

NEWMAN: No, because we only had offices in Chicago, New York, Boston. I do not recall such investigation of the League's quarters.

INTERVIEWER: No?

NEWMAN: I remember one thing. Someone was going to be appointed to, I think, the Women's Bureau, or the Children's Bureau, I can't remember which, one of these. And the FBI wanted to know about that person. And the FBI came to see me about it. I told them I would stake my life on her patriotism. I don't recall her name.

INTERVIEWER: But the 1920's really began a very bad period for unions and for the League. Why was that?

NEWMAN: I don't remember, but it was a sort of depression, the 1920's, an awful lot of umemployment. Those who worked, worked for low wages. It was a bad time for everybody, as I recall. I was in Philadelphia at that time and I remember very well the unemployment situation.

INTERVIEWER: How did people handle unemployment then when there was no compensation?

NEWMAN: You know, they did what our people used to do around 1902 or '03, '04, when they were out of work and there was nothing to help them. They were trusted by the butcher; they were trusted by the grocer; they knew they would pay them when they started working. And help from relatives, if possible, help from a friend, that's how you got along. I think that's how people got along in 1920. Relatives always helped, and friends helped when they could because there was nothing else to do. There were people who would stand in the street; they sold apples, but that was in '29. In 1920 they suffered as unemployed suffered before we had the unemployment insurance. I think that now people get something like $95.00 a week from unemployment insurance. When you think of the time that they got nothing! Just nothing, except for the help from friends and relatives.

INTERVIEWER: That was very different.

NEWMAN: It was different.

INTERVIEWER: During the twenties were you in Philadelphia the whole time?

NEWMAN: I was there till '23.

INTERVIEWER: And then you went to Europe, right?

NEWMAN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you gone, and what countries did you visit?

NEWMAN: Well, we began in England, because we had friends there. The very day we landed, we were asked to speak at a women's meeting.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of meeting?

NEWMAN: A women's meeting.

INTERVIEWER: Of women unionists?

NEWMAN: They were something like auxiliaries. Some were trade union members; some were wives of trade unionists. Marian Phillips, who is gone now, was in charge. When Margaret Bondfield told her that Miss Miller and I were there, oh, she said, "We have a meeting today." So they invited us to come. Well, in England, we stayed longer than we meant to because we had a chance to meet the great and the near-great in the labor movement. And in the Fabian Society, too.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the people that you met?

NEWMAN: Well, we met Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Bernard Shaw, Ramsey McDonald, George Lansberry, Margaret Bondfield, Marian Phillips, Madeline Simon. Those were the top of the Labour Party and the labour movement. It was a great satisfaction to meet these people face-to-face. Not once, but we stayed longer than we should have, really, because of them. They were so friendly and kind and invited you here and there, and, well, from there we went to Belgium. I knew one woman in the labor movement who was here once before. We met, and she was awfully nice, too. Took us round to union meetings. We stayed in Belgium just about a week. From there we went to France. In France, we stayed about ten days, I guess. We saw what we wanted to see. From France we went to Prague, Czechoslovakia. We met a friend of . . .

INTERVIEWER: You mean Mazarek, the prime minister, leader?

NEWMAN: We met a friend of his who arranged to have us meet his daughter. The man who was head of Czechoslovakia at the time.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't Jon Mazerek? Was it Mazerek?

NEWMAN: You don't pronounce the name right.

INTERVIEWER: No? Well, I don't know better. I don't know who it was.

NEWMAN: I'll think of it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

NEWMAN: It'll come back to me. Anyway, his son was killed by the communists. From Czechoslovakia we went to Germany. And there we stayed longer than we intended to because that was the time, the beginning of the Hitlerites. At six o'clock in the morning, we would hear voices singing German songs. We'd look out of the window and see kids--you'd think they were the Boy Scouts. That age. And that really was the beginning of the organization. Well, we stayed long enough to see what we wanted to see, and we had friends there, too. We saw quite a number of women who were active in the socialist and trade union movements. From there we went to Italy.

INTERVIEWER: I've always wanted to go to Italy.

NEWMAN: It was lovely.

INTERVIEWER: I've always wanted to go there.

NEWMAN: I've been there three times.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, how nice.

NEWMAN: We stayed in Italy quite awhile because we liked it so, and we traveled to the lake area, Lake Como and the others. The longer we stayed, the better we liked it. And then we returned.

INTERVIEWER: How long altogether were you gone?

NEWMAN: It was a good long visit. Because Miss Miller and I believed in having a good look before going to another town. We'd go to a town we wanted to see and stay as long as we could.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, of course, that's the way really to do it.

NEWMAN: Which reminds me that when we were in Rome, we went to see the ruins. There were a lot of Americans, you know. There was one woman who looked around and said, "Why do they waste these? Why don't they put up a building?" The woman stayed in the same hotel we did, and I discovered, afterwards, she was in real estate business. No wonder her thoughts went that way.

INTERVIEWER: Were you active in the international affairs of the League, the Women's Trade Union League? They had international conferences, didn't they?

NEWMAN: We had three such conferences. The first one was in 1919, after the ILO [Internation Labor Organization] was established, and was held in Washington. Margaret Bondfield and Mary McCarthy from London came, and others came from France and Italy, and of course, I was a delegate. The second one was in Vienna.

INTERVIEWER: That was in '23?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you there?

NEWMAN: Yes. Both Miss Miller and I were delegates. We left before the others to travel and come to the conference in Vienna. In Vienna, I knew the editor of the Socialist Party and he was very kind and interested sufficiently to get together a few prominent socialists to meet with us. Our hotel there was the Palace! And then the third international conference was held in Geneva. To that one I did not go. I wasn't feeling well at the time. Not very much happened in Geneva. The most interesting one was really the first here in Washington. Because that was the first one, and we met women we'd never met before from all other countries, and the second one, Vienna, there was a great deal of discussion whether to have a separate women's party or whether the women should belong to the same Labor Party and of course we didn't have anything like it here. The discussion was interesting but nothing very unusual.

INTERVIEWER: When you came back to the United States, what did you do? You came back early in '24.

NEWMAN: That's right, I left in '23 and came back in '24. Well, I went back to the ILG, naturally enough. And that was the time when the director of the union health center wanted very much to have me on his staff, because I knew the industry, and knew what he wanted to do to get the employers to comply with the code of sanitation. He asked the ILG to release me from going traveling and organizing and let him have me. They did. That was....

INTERVIEWER: In 1924?

NEWMAN: In 1924. When I got back in '24, Dr. Price had convinced the ILG leaders to have a union health center and the union health center of today is the outgrowth of the Joint Board of Sanitary Control. In 1929, the union health center was

NEWMAN: almost ready to close its doors because the ILG didn't have any money. Nobody had any money for that matter, and the question was to close or not to close the union health center. Some of us knew, once we did that, it wouldn't open again. I said to Dr. Price, who was the director, and this was his baby, to see the door closed would have been a terrible thing for him. I said, "I tell you what I'll do. I'll go and talk to the president of the ILG.", who was Mr. Sigman at that time. I went over to him, I said, "Morris, I must talk to you. You've got to do something to keep the health center open." He said, "Well, what do you want me to do? I haven't even got enough to pay the telephone bill." That's the condition we were in at that time. In fact, they had to borrow money to keep their own doors open, let alone the union health center's. I said, "Well, I know you haven't got money, all I came to ask you for was credentials and permission so that I can go to unions outside our industry and ask for support." He said, "God be with you. You will have the credentials you want." I began to call the unions which had money. The printers' union was the first; the electrical workers' was the next, and all the other unions were responsive, really. I spent my days and my nights at their meetings and I did get the money and they sent their members who needed medical care to the health center, which helped, too.

INTERVIEWER: They gave money in exchange for using the center?

NEWMAN: In addition to. They were very responsive. That kept the center functioning. As most of them know, if it weren't for the job I did, I don't know whether we'd even have a union health center. I said, "Get the unions to help."

INTERVIEWER: You think that you really did...?

NEWMAN: Yes, I do. I worked from-let me see-from '26 on. '26 we also had internal trouble with the communists. The leadership of the ILG were busy enough with that. They wouldn't bother with the union health center; they wouldn't think of it. I said they don't have to do anything, I'll do it. So I did that until 1933, from '26 to '33 when Roosevelt came in, in keeping the health center doors open with the help of the labor movement in the city of New York. And when we had our fiftieth celebration of the health center, a dinner, I said to Dubinsky, "You are going to speak. Don't forget the unions that helped us keep the union health center open." He said, "Write it down or I'll forget." I wrote him a letter and told him which unions were helping us and he read the letter.

INTERVIEWER: Very nice. Quite a story. When the health center first began, how did you get people to start using it?

NEWMAN: I went to the shops and talked to the workers, and of course, our publication helped. We had the printed matter in three languages: Jewish, English, and Italian. That of course told them about the union health center.

INTERVIEWER: Were they reluctant to use it at first?

NEWMAN: Not in New York. The reluctance I encountered was Fall River. They were afraid to see a doctor.

INTERVIEWER: You were talking about Fall River, and getting the people to use the health center. You had a health center in Fall River also, I gather.

NEWMAN: Yes, we now have thirteen in all, in many parts of the country. We have one in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Tennessee, and in other parts of the country, but the one we started first was in New York. Well, I went up to Fall River and I found the girls were very reluctant to use the center. I wanted to know why. "Well," said one, "my father died when he was x-rayed..." And I went to the employer, I said, "Look, they won't come to the center; why don't you let me talk to them in the shop. Give me five minutes." Well, they were very nice. I went to the shops and talked to them and told them that x-rays don't kill, and to prove that I am right, I invited them to come and watch me being x-rayed. Some of them came, and I told the x-ray technician to let them in, let them see what he does. He x-rayed my chest, and I said, "See, it didn't hurt me; didn't bother me and all we know now is what's inside of me, that's all." Well, anyway, that's what you felt you had to do. It took probably about three months to overcome their reluctance. Well, of course, they never thought of seeing a doctor until they were ill. I tried to convince them not to wait until they get sick, you see. That took some time. I told you before, that in New York, we had lectures and we had slides and all sorts of inducements for them to come to meetings, and it worked very well. I did the same thing in Fall River. I suppose some people did the same in Chicago. In Philadelphia I went down occasionally to talk to them. Now, I don't think we need to worry anymore about them not coming, because you see they don't pay for it. The union pays for it. Also we've had an awful lot of radio and television about health and all sorts of things. So, if they have a chance to come without paying--some of our shops the union pays for the time if they have to come during working hours--so they don't lose anything.

INTERVIEWER: Does it also cover their families?

NEWMAN: The families have to pay minimum fee.

INTERVIEWER: That's very good.

NEWMAN: And children we have no facilities for.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. Just spouses.

NEWMAN: Yes, and people over sixteen, eighteen. But no children. We tried in the beginning, when we had our headquarters on Seventeenth Street, to have a children's clinic between three and five, but

NEWMAN: it didn't work out. Because at three o'clock, children came from school and the mothers had to be home, you see. We had to have the space for the adults. So we gave that up. We have a clinic with the best equipment running from ten o'clock on until six p.m.

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember, were you directly involved in that 1926 conflict in the ILG with the Communists?

NEWMAN: No, at that time I was with the health center. It was the kind of a conflict that only the top leaders could deal with and our lawyers.

INTERVIEWER: It really hurt the union, didn't it? They had a very difficult period.

NEWMAN: We did. Probably the worst period since 1906-07. But we had also a lot of friends to go to and borrow money. The late Senator Lehman was one, and other people who had confidence in the ILG and, of course, every penny was paid back, soon after '33 when the members just flooded into the union. They were able to pay back what they borrowed.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me some of your recollections of the Depression Period.

NEWMAN: Some have been written down. But I remember the title of my article was "The Quest for Bread." Well, my impressions, I suppose, do not differ from anybody elses. It was a terrible time to live through and see other people suffer as much as they did. But I'd seen that once before in Germany. Because when we got there, it was the inflation period. And I'll never forget that period in all my life. But it was bad enough to see people whom you knew, some of them professionals, selling apples on the corner. That wasn't a sight that was pleasant for you. And even--somebody told me the other day that a friend of hers who had a Ph.D is working in a restaurant washing dishes--today! You can imagine what the Depression was in 1929. And the fear of people who had a few dollars in the bank. The banks were closed under Roosevelt, you know. They lived in fear, and poverty and worst of all, in uncertainty until '33. I think uncertainty is worse that anything else.

INTERVIEWER: Hard to live with.

NEWMAN: Not knowing what will happen the next hour, the next day. And not knowing what to do. There was a letter to the Times about a month ago from a man who was laid-off; a man who earned $15,000 a year. How he tried to write to companies, friends, everybody and anybody he knew--nothing. Nothing, they told him. There was no response. He was a capable man if he was being paid $15,000. That's today.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Do you remember the campaign of Franklin Roosevelt against Hoover?

NEWMAN: There was an article some years ago, I can't remember the name of the journalist in Washington. And he went to see Mr. Roosevelt right after the election. His article concluded that he was a man who must be president because of what he is. When you look back, it bothers you sometimes that people seem to forget, the younger generation especially, don't know the things he did for the people just after his election. Except the Italian woman I told you about. I did, didn't I?

INTERVIEWER: Italian woman? I'm not sure.

NEWMAN: Well, there is an Italian woman, a member of the ILGW, except that she's retired now, but she comes to the health center for a check-up every once in a while. And every time she comes to the health center, she never misses coming to see me. In my office I have a portrait of Roosevelt. She said, "He's the man I pray for every night. Because if it weren't for this man, I wouldn't have any social security. And I wouldn't be able to live as I do now, so I pray for him every night." Well, I don't know how many people pray for Roosevelt every night. The younger generation probably doesn't know what he did, but he did a magnificent job.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get to know him first when he was governor of New York?

NEWMAN: Yes, we used to come up to their house in Hyde Park.

INTERVIEWER: How did that come about?

NEWMAN: That came about because Mrs. Roosevelt was a member of the Women's Trade Union League.

INTERVIEWER: And that's how you got to know her?

NEWMAN: Yes. And she would invite us . . .

INTERVIEWER: You, and Rose . . .

NEWMAN: And Maude Schwartz, who was a member of the Printers's Union, but later president of the Women's Trade Union League. We'd go up there sometimes and had fun. At other times, we'd just sit and talk and he would come out and join us.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me, do you think that Eleanor Roosevelt invited you up to talk to the governor so that he would get another side of things?

NEWMAN: Well, you find in Perkins' book, in her The Roosevelt I Knew, I didn't come everytime because I wasn't in town all the time, but whenever we came we talked about labor conditions and legislation.

INTERVIEWER: Speaking of the White House, there's a wonderful story you told me once when I was in your office. I never got it on tape. Was it a League meeting, and several of you were staying at the White House . . .?

NEWMAN: That was in '36.

INTERVIEWER: Convention of the League? That's a wonderful story.

NEWMAN: And the New York delegation was invited to stay at the White House while the convention lasted. I was chairman of the delegation. In addition to us from New York, there were two Southern women who came from Alabama, Textile Workers, who were just thrilled to be in the White House. I told you, I think, once before, I had occasion to write to Arthur Schlesinger on a different matter and told him about our stay in the White House. [He] wrote back a very lovely letter asking for permission to use it. I gave him permission to use it anytime he wants. The first time that happened, that working women were the guests of the White House, I wonder if it will ever happen again, that millinery workers, and clerical workers, garment workers, and textile workers who never dreamed of being guests of the White House, having breakfast with Mrs. Roosevelt every morning.

INTERVIEWER: That's the story I want you to tell. About how you got, you made sure all the women came to breakfast.

NEWMAN: Well, you see I was chairman of the delegation, and I told Rose and Mary Drier what I was going to tell the girls after Eleanor told us it was breakfast at seven. Now, I know that the girls are not the only ones who like to sleep a little later, you know. When she told me it was breakfast at seven, I said to Rose and Mary Drier, I said, "I know what I'll have to tell the girls." I called them together and I said, "Girls, Mrs. Roosevelt wants us to breakfast with her every morning promptly at seven. And as chairman of your delegation I want to tell you now, anyone who's not there at seven promptly doesn't stay at the White House."

INTERVIEWER: So, I guess you didn't have any problems.

NEWMAN: No. And when we got down, Eleanor was already there with her two beautiful red setters; she had already been out riding.

INTERVIEWER: Right, she used to ride a lot, I guess. That is a lovely, lovely story.

NEWMAN: Well, it was an experience, too. For all of us. The next president I shook hands with and stayed for tea with was Truman. But not since then. Maybe if Kennedy had lived, he may have done something like it, I don't know. But I don't think there would have been the warmth and the interest that the Roosevelts showed.

INTERVIEWER: You said just a few moments ago that after 1933 people had poured into the union.

NEWMAN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: You had a chance to watch it because you were with the health center rather than having to go out and organize. What was it like? What was the pouring into the union?

NEWMAN: Well, in the first place, they had to belong to a union because it was then law of the land. And those who hesitated to join the union before had no longer any fear. They wouldn't be fired if they joined the union, and that made it easy for them. The meetings were attended; dues were paid. People seemed to be really happy. And the membership grew by the thousands after the election. Then very much later, I think, war....

INTERVIEWER: You mean war production? In the late thirties. Right.

NEWMAN: It began earlier. Especially the uniforms began earlier. It didn't affect us very much. But people had jobs--they had some work, they had some money, clothes, and the industry began to go up instead of down. It was a feeling that things are better. Hoover cottages, what do you call it?

INTERVIEWER: Hoovervilles?

NEWMAN: You know, I can't forget this period--the unempolyed built the shacks from cartons, tins and named them Hoovervilles. That is gone. People got jobs, the banks opened, the man in Washington did what he could. The President, of course, began to get legislation; the right to organize, the right to belong to the union. Oh, all the legislation that we have was done during his administration.

INTERVIEWER: During that period of the thirties, Frieda Miller became Industrial Commissioner for New York State?

NEWMAN: Yes, and Frances [Perkins] went to Washington. Frieda Miller was commissioner from '38 until the Republicans won the election. Then she resigned. She couldn't work under a Republican governor.

INTERVIEWER: What did she do then?

NEWMAN: She really didn't know what to do, but then it wasn't long before John Wynent, our ambassador to Britain, asked Roosevelt for someone to come and help him with the women in the munitions factories and the President appointed Miss Miller.

INTERVIEWER: And she went to Britain?

NEWMAN: She went to Britain and was a great help to Mr. Wynent. In fact, he pays her tribute in his book on his experience as ambassador.

INTERVIEWER: And during this period you stayed with the health center?

NEWMAN: Yes. There was plenty to do.

INTERVIEWER: I can imagine. When did you take the job of education director? Did you have that job . . .?

NEWMAN: I had it all the time, because you see, when--well, during the first few years, our people not as much as the people in Fall River, our people here had to be told what it means to preserve their health, what health means to you. So we used the printed word; we had lectures; we would go to the shop and talk to them. Then one day I wasn't feeling well and got Theresa Wolfson to take hold where I left off, and then she had to go back to her--she was teaching economics, I think, at Brooklyn College. I continued; I did even social service work, I was never trained for that. But there were a lot of our people who needed help, who didn't know where to go or what to do and at least I could do that, even if I were not a trained social worker. I was chief cook and bottle washer, if you know what I mean.

INTERVIEWER: I do.

NEWMAN: All in all, since 1909, it's about sixty-eight years.

INTERVIEWER: During the thirties, were you on any of the boards that had anything to do with the NRA [National Recovery Act] or any . . .?

NEWMAN: Those were Rose's work, she was on the boards. No, I had a job. But I did serve on various commissions; manpower, advisory boards, children's boards, Women's Bureau, etc.

INTERVIEWER: And she represented the ILG on the board?

NEWMAN: No, her own union and the Women's Trade Union League. I don't think they knew what union she belonged to. She was known as the president of the Women's Trade Union League, but her friends knew what her union was. A lot of people make the mistake, or made the mistake, thinking that Rose was a member of the ILG and at one time an organizer for the ILG. She was at one time an organizer for a short time in Massachusetts, but her union used to be known as the Capmakers. Now it is known as the Millinery Workers' Union. So in the end, she was vice-president. Honorary vice-president of her union. The thing that I still can't understand is that when she died, I went to the services and I thought I'd find a lot of people who knew her and for whom she worked all of her life. I don't think there were more than a dozen, or less. One was the secretary of the Millinery Workers'

NEWMAN: Union, and I went over and said, "What in hell happened?" He said nothing. Leon Stein was there. And I looked around and I could not believe it, you know? If it were a private service then you can understand; you don't ask everybody to come, but this was not a private service. I talked to Leon and he said he couldn't understand it either. But afterwards we decided that the nursing home where she was before her death must have arranged it and they didn't know anybody. Let's get it over with, you know. Not that it mattered to Rose, but it was very sad.

INTERVIEWER: I can understand that. That's too bad. It probably wasn't in the papers. If it's not in the newspaper, people don't see it and they don't know to come.

NEWMAN: I think it was. It doesn't matter as far as she's concerned, but it was a strange occurrence to find so few people.

INTERVIEWER: Well, as the country moved through the thirties and into the forties, the Women's Trade Union League began to get smaller and smaller.

NEWMAN: Well, it wasn't a matter of smaller, because we didn't lose any members. We didn't have any money to go on; we didn't have much for expenses because we had to pay the Machinists Union for one or two rooms, that's all we had. Elizabeth's salary, she had a secretary from time to time, we paid nothing to a legislative representative, either Elizabeth would do it, or Mrs. Stone, one of our members would do it. Nevertheless, you had to have something to go on, and we didn't. If you wanted a convention, you had to have money. The last meeting we held--I wrote it down someplace--I described the meeting, when we decided that one reason we should dissolve, really, was not only because we didn't have the money, but the work we did for unions, the unions did it themselves. They don't need us anymore. Education, legislation, organization--they had their own people who did the work we did for them. I think we could have been used, even today, on legislation. Perhaps even in organization, when you think that you've got thousands of store clerks unorganized, of course, they have a union, but some of them are very slow in organizing them. But we couldn't go on the way we were.

INTERVIEWER: So the Washington office closed but the New York office stayed open until '50 or '51?

NEWMAN: For a while. We had a few dollars in our treasury which divided between the Bank Street School and Hunter.

INTERVIEWER: You mean when it closed altogether? When the League closed altogether you gave that money . . .?

NEWMAN: Right. And all our papers and books and everything donated to the Labor Department. They have it.

INTERVIEWER: That's a good place for it, I think.

NEWMAN: I'm not sure, because anyone who wants to use the papers, who would think of going to the Labor Department instead of to archives?

INTERVIEWER: Well, it's listed I think. There is a book that lists where all papers of different organizations and individuals are. I think it's listed there that the Department of Labor has.... and Washington is very central. Lots of people get there.

NEWMAN: In Washington the National League papers went to the Congressional Library; we have a very lovely letter that says they were very glad to have it. When Radcliffe--Women's Archives--wrote to me, I told them I had a lot of Women's Trade Union League papers which they can have and that most of the national papers are at the Library of Congress. They were very glad to know it, because evidently they have quite a bit of the Women's Trade Union League papers now, and I have a lot that I don't think I'll ever use, so I wrote to them and said they can come to New York to my office and get them.

INTERVIEWER: Are they going to come and pick them up?

NEWMAN: I think they will sometime because they really ought to know about my own papers. And then I told them I still have the job to decide which papers will go to them, and which will not, and that takes time, and I waste so much time!

INTERVIEWER: We all do.

NEWMAN: Instead of doing all the letters that I have to write, I should be working on the papers. I had one from a woman who was here from Africa; she was with a group, the State Department used to bring them over. She was the only one who spoke English, and she corresponds with me, calls me Mama. I got a letter from her apologizing for not writing sooner, she was very busy, and would I forgive her. I write to her. I answer her letters every time she writes.

December 14, 1976

INTERVIEWER: Today we're going to talk about the 1940's. And you were saying that 1941, December 7, Pearl Harbor Day, you and Miss Miller were at Vassar. Why were you at Vassar? If you could start with Elizabeth . . .

NEWMAN: Well, why we were at Vassar: we celebrated Elizabeth's birthday, which is December 7th, inviting her classmates to dinner and

NEWMAN: generally having a pleasant time. When we got back to the college we were told the news--the attack on Pearl Harbor. Needless to say, we went back immediately and the next day Miss Miller called a meeting of labor women trying to formulate a program in connection with working hours and general conditions under which women would have to work and we did that and I think it was the following morning that we organized an advisiory committee for labor women and men to see to it that the people who were making ammunition and are employing women more and more as days go on, that they are not exploiting them. This was our job, and I think we did a good job, because some of the employers wanted women to work until after midnight. Our committee, under Miss Miller's direction, decided that they should not work later that ten, and that they get taken home, so that they won't be forced to go home alone at night.

INTERVIEWER: What about overtime? Did they get overtime pay?

NEWMAN: Yes. Overtime pay, and in some instances, they changed with the day workers. In some cases, the employers found it necessary to have two shifts so they changed off on one week or two weeks.When they would work until ten, the men worked because there was no limitation of hours for men. That came much later. Then Miss Miller had an idea that it would be well to have some black people on committees, and she was the first commissioner, I think, to appoint two blacks.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember who they were?

NEWMAN: Oh, the other day I was asked the same question. He was a very well-known--a very prominent Negro in New York City. I couldn't recall his name. The other one was Lester Granger.

INTERVIEWER: Was he a labor leader?

NEWMAN: No. But he was an eminent black person. The second one was Lester Granger. She appointed him to be chairman of the Minimum Wage Board; she appointed a number of others whose names I can't recall. Of course, Dolly Lowther was also on the committee, and Maida Springer from the ILGWU, and quite a number of black working women on different committees. And she had lawyers--women lawyers; Dorothy Canyoner was one, and some from upstate. Everybody was willing to cooperate with the commissioner to see that standards and working conditions for working women during the war years were decent and humane. Minimum wage committees went on during those years in spite of the war. We felt that some of the women, especially trades like the laundry industry, they were so underpaid, you know, that we felt that the minimum wage was absolutely necessary. They passed the minimum wage law in the state of New York and then the employers appealed; it went to the United States Supreme Court to find out if it was legal to have a minimum wage law in the state of New York.

NEWMAN: Well, we had a very fine attorney general, and again I can't recall his name--Epstein, I think--and he was very good. He went to the United States Supreme Court and pleaded for Miss Miller. And he won. The Minimum Wage Law in the state of New York is valid today as it was then. It was necessary to appoint committees that represented labor, the public, and employers. And we had committees for the laundry, candy, department stores, cleaners and dyers, and hotels and restaurants. I served on all of them. Dolly was another one who served not on all, but on most of the boards. We had one or two women from upstate. We had Betsy Lane who was quite active in the Hotel and Restaurant Union. She's gone, as you know. She died a few years ago. So there we were. We didn't get what we wanted, but at least we got a minimum. And if I can find it, I'd like you to read a letter from an employer representing the laundry industry in Buffalo, and one representing the same industry here in New York, to me.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to.

NEWMAN: And one of them--one of their letters ends with: "She can be like a queen in the night time, but fights like hell in the daytime."

INTERVIEWER: That's wonderful.

NEWMAN: Well, it was a time. For instance, [Louis] Simon from the Amalgamated [Clothing Workers Union] was on one committee, and if I say so myself, we needed somebody to let the employers know how little they paid for labor that was really unpleasant. At some laundries you had to stand in water; you had to make them see the human side of it, and still fight for what you thought would be at least a minimum. And I think we succeeded in all the cases. When we came to the hotel and restaurant workers, who do you think was on the Minimum Wage Board?

INTERVIEWER: Who?

NEWMAN: No other than the representative of Schrafft's [Restaurant]! Savage was his name.

INTERVIEWER: Savage. That sounds appropriate.

NEWMAN: He was quite decent. We got along more of less, even though he said we were asking too much. In the end they gave in.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, very good.

NEWMAN: Well, today it wouldn't be considered good. Fifty cents an hour. That was the war time, you know. They earned so little, some of them earned ten to twelve dollars a week. And Dolly, I think, told them at one meeting that she was working in a laundry at one

NEWMAN: time. She knows exactly what the work was like and she was convincing; she was pretty good. Well, that took up quite a lot of our time during the war. At least we could feel that we are doing what is possible to see that conditions improve instead of letting it go down because of the war. We had an awfully nice group of women outside the labor movement who worked with us. I didn't tell you that Mary Drier was one, and the League secretary was another. There was one that was a professor of something from an upstate college. And they were all terribly interested, and worked very gladly with Miss Miller and her program. That was only part of the ILG's concern; we had organized a group among the girls who worked voluntarily for the Red Cross. We were called, I think, the Brigade, or something like that, and they did all they possibly could to help in every group, whether it was the Red Cross, or Labor Department, or anything that went on; they participated in that. I don't recall anyone among the women I knew--the labor women--who were neutral or against the war. I recall only those who did what they could to help in every way.

INTERVIEWER: What was the effect of the war on the ILG? Did you get a lot of new members?

NEWMAN: Not during the war. It was no time for an industry like ours. We got some of the uniforms. There were women in the Army and we got some of their uniforms, because in those days they didn't wear pants; it was skirts. So we got the skirts and we got the jackets. But not as much as went to the Amalgamated, because naturally there weren't as many women as men who went into the Army; but we got some of that, which kept our people at work. But those who came in and were new in the industry joined the union. But it wasn't until '33, really, that we got the workers into the union, and that was prior to the war.

INTERVIEWER: The Second World War began in '41.

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you had a little expansion, but not a great amount.

NEWMAN: Not a great deal, no.

INTERVIEWER: What about women leaders in the ILG at that period? Was that a period when Rose Pesotta was very active?

NEWMAN: I think she was. I'm not sure, you see; we would have to look it up. I think she was probably vice-president at the time, in which case she would be active in organizing. And she did organization work in Canada, upstate New York, later on in California until she decided that she had better get back to the shop. She did not wish to forget what it is to be a worker.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the convention where she resigned?

NEWMAN: 1946. Cleveland, Ohio.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a little about it? What was it like? Why did she resign, and what did she say when she got up on the stage?

NEWMAN: She asked for the floor. President Dubinsky was in the chair, and she said that she was resigning. She did say, definitely, that she wants to get back to the shop. That was her philosophy. That one should not really get out of the atmosphere that you have in the workshop. That you're likely to forget you're a worker unless you do that. And that's what she said. She wants to go back and do that. And then she said, at the end, she didn't see why the ILG whose membership consists chiefly of women, should have only one woman vice-president. And she thought we ought to have more than one. And that finished her speech, and got the president so excited that after the session was over--I was with Rose--he came over and said, "I want you to have dinner with me. I was too rough on you today."

INTERVIEWER: How was he rough on her?

NEWMAN: Well, he didn't do anything....you see, his idea of having a vice-president wasn't really a question of sex. His opinion was that if you're going to be a vice-president you've got to be able. You've got to know the industry. You've got to know how to negotiate. You've got to know all that he knew. And Rose didn't have the chance to reply that all the men vice-presidents are not so capable either. But she didn't have the chance to say it. Even in later years, and in earlier years as I remember; in '36 we had our convention in Chicago and a black man was an organizer for us--Frank Crosweight. He got up--he was always called to speak whenever we had a convention--because I suppose he was the only black organizer. And he was a good speaker, a very good speaker. He was a socialist and a fine man. And he said that he felt there ought to be a few more blacks on the executive board. Well, Dubinsky as usual got excited, and he said that the ILG never had any objection to have blacks on the executive board, but they've got to have ability to represent the ILG in every respect, and there are not many who can do that. If this was to happen today, I'm sure there are many members in the ILG who will say, "But Mr. President, how can they get experience if they have no opportunities?" But in those days, nobody said it.

INTERVIEWER: But there's still only one woman on the executive board. How do you explain that?

NEWMAN: One explanation is that women are not willing to fight for it. And some of them really don't want to. Too much bother. I have spoken, as you well know, for many years to the women. I think

NEWMAN: if women would really wish to have top positions they would have to fight for it. Now the reason they don't want to fight I think, is because, you said, if you are an organizer in a local, you'll go up to the vice-president. Usually. To fight a vice-president at the convention and to work for him the rest of the year is....it just doesn't go that way. So rather than fight or be disliked by the men you work for, they don't like to do that. No. The third reason I think, especially in these years, is not wanting responsibility. Now some women love it. They would love to have the responsibility of being a vice-president. Rose Pesotta enjoyed it immensely. The one before her didn't really do very much, didn't care very much. So if you begin to reach for capable, fighting, knowledgeable women, there are just not many in our organization. I don't mean to say there are not capable women in many organizations. I know some of them who I thought very capable. But it's one thing to be knowledgeable and capable, and another thing to want the responsibility. Some do, some don't.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that one reason they don't fight for it the way you said they would have to, or maybe that they don't seem to want the responsibility, is because they don't know how the organization works in terms of getting yourself up that ladder?

NEWMAN: I don't know that they need a ladder, and I don't know how you would go up there. Except getting to be known as an able organizer or an able field person or an able secretary or a legislative representative. In other words, you really have to be active and show what you can do before you can be designated for a higher-up position. Now I don't think that's impossible, I think a good many of them, if they had the opportunity, would make good. But I don't think many of the able people got what they deserve. We had one who was an organizer for the ILG for many years, a capable woman, a good speaker. She was later appointed to be in charge of the union label, and she did a very good job. Then she decided that she wants to retire. What happened then nobody will ever know except she herself and her husband. But for the first time in years, an officer of the ILG was just let go. No gathering, no party, no luncheon, nothing. Well, there was apparently a disagreement between the president and her. But she was a very able woman. And she was never a vice-president. She should have been. Many years ago, I said to her, "For heaven's sake, why don't you do something?" I still think she was one of the ablest women. Then we had another vice-president, Jenny Charter, who did a very good job. And she was vice-president until, I think, '56, and then she retired and moved to California and she could have done organizing work in California if she wanted to, but what she really wanted to do, you see, she went to Wisconsin University for a while, not for long, but long enough to teach senior citizens. And that's what she's doing now.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting.

NEWMAN: When she retired, she said goodbye at the convention in '56. And Dubinsky didn't say anything--that he was sorry because she was leaving. She wasn't an old person; she didn't leave because of age. But she did get a gift from him, a little chain or something; I dunno, I didn't pay much attention. Now to repeat what I said before, if more women wanted to be vice-presidents in the ILGWU they'd have to make it known. And, well, it wouldn't hurt if they did a little lobbying. Maybe that would help. But this vice-president that we have now....

INTERVIEWER: What about her?

NEWMAN: I'm trying to think and I can't remember. Anyway, she was told at the convention, after she was nominated, to make an appointment with me so I could tell her about the ILGWU I said, "She's an organizer. Doesn't she know?" Well, somebody told me, "You'd better talk to her, tell her." Well, the point at that convention was to have a black and a woman. And instead of having two, a black and a white, they had elected one black woman.

INTERVIEWER: They got two for one?

NEWMAN: What?

INTERVIEWER: I said, they got two for one.

NEWMAN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Two things in one person.

NEWMAN: That's right. And....

INTERVIEWER: What is she like? Is she a lively active person?

NEWMAN: Well yes, she was. She was in charge of some local union in California and apparently did well. Otherwise I don't suppose they would have chosen her, just because she was black and a woman. No, she was active in the ILG for some years. And finally, the general executive board decided that they would nominate her and have, as you say, two in one. No, I don't-- I have never defended that attitude on the part of the ILGWU I think they should have made an effort to give people an opportunity to rise; some of them have gotten the opportunity to rise somewhat, not to the vice-presidency. But a number of educational directors in various parts of the country, we have business agents, we have organizers, and they have quite a few in charge of a locality. Now these people certainly know enough about the industry to be eligible for a vice-presidency, because they've been years on the job, you, Like the one I told you,

NEWMAN: she's Italian, in Pennsylvania, who married an American not very long ago. She's been there for years. She knows the industry, I suppose, as much as any vice-president. And yet she's perfectly satisfied to be in charge of the Pennsylvania region. And that's quite a job. Because it isn't one city; it's the region, you see. And she's doing quite a decent job. There are a few others here and there. I think there is one in the Middle West, and one in Tennessee, and when they come to a convention, we have about 1200 delegates and mostly women. Few men. And the disappointing thing to me always was and is, that there's no participation on their part to discuss questions, ask questions. They attend. Their attendance is very good. They're on time. They like to be on time. But to speak--very few. At the last convention, I think only about a dozen women have taken the floor. And that's very disappointing. And whether they don't know much, or whether they don't really feel like it, or whether they are not used to speaking before so many people, I don't know. I only know that very few women participate in deliberations of the convention, and that's disappointing.

INTERVIEWER: I think that's very interesting. Well, during the war years were there any major strikes or did the union keep from striking during that period? Do you recall any big strikes of the ILG in the early forties?

NEWMAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: What happened after the war with the ILG? Was there a period of cutback and recession? Did the industry boom because there was more material available and people wanted to buy women's clothes again?

NEWMAN: Yes, that's one thing. One of the chief reasons for the ILG coming to life again was simply the legislation that was passed under Roosevelt. Collective bargaining and unionization was made the law of the land. And people were no longer afraid to be fired if they joined the union. They couldn't be fired under the law. And that was a tremendous inducement for the people who formerly wanted to join the union but were afraid of being fired. They flooded the organization and the union was very pleased. And then the collective bargaining law passed. And eventually the other legislation, social security, and all that, an inducement to workers to join the union. But before that, from '33, we, the ILG, wanted to testify for the--I'm trying to think what it was called; it wasn't called collective bargaining--another name, another term--anyway, Mr. M. Hillquit, who was our chief attorney, was ill. And ill as he was, he and Dubinsky went to testify for that law to be passed, and after that it was a great inducement for the people to join.

INTERVIEWER: That's the National Labor Relations Act?

NEWMAN: That's right. But it wasn't--even then there was a seven in it, and I can't remember what it was.

INTERVIEWER: Section 7A.

NEWMAN: Probably. Well, organizing still went on, because you see, the South was our problem. Was the problem of the textile workers, and the Amalgamated, and everybody else. And all the people who could do organizing were really sent to the South. And the Middle West. And we still haven't succeeded in organizing the South; neither has the Amalgamated or the Textile Workers. That is still a problem, for these three unions, anyway. But I suppose they've made progress.

INTERVIEWER: I guess not nearly as much as they would want to.

NEWMAN: No. You see, at the last general executive board the ILG decided to spend all it can, and send the most capable organizers to the South and see what can be done. And as I understand it, the Amalgamated has done the same thing. Well, we'll wait and see.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when Taft-Hartley was passed in '47?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did that have any effect upon the ILG, or on its organizing efforts? Maybe in the South as well as the Midwest?

NEWMAN: I don't think so. We didn't like it. We opposed it. Still oppose it. But I don't think that had a greater effect upon industries like steel, mining; our industry as well as the Amalgamated, after all is not a skilled industry. It isn't affected by everything, just as the others are not affected by imports, for instance. I don't think the Taft-Hartley bothered us a great deal, though, as I say, we opposed it whenever we could. Whenever there was a need to do that. We always had somebody doing our legislative work. I was doing a lot of the legislative work during the early years for the ILG in Washington and in Albany.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what year?

NEWMAN: In the thirties, and much earlier; I think it was in 1914 when I represented the ILG in Albany. And I still have very fine letters from the chairmen of the various committees. I have a lovely letter from the late Idaho senator Borah. I testified against the ERA and he was nice enough to write and say he never thought of it until he heard me. [He referred to the economic parts] And a lot of others also wrote. I did a lot of testifying for the ILG in my time.

INTERVIEWER: What was that on? Was that on hours, or a minimum wage?

NEWMAN: No, that particular letter from Borah was on, believe it or not, the Equal Rights Amendment. Because he said in the letter he never thought it had any connection with working women. And I stressed that point that it had. And all the legislation we worked for to reduce hours and all that would probably to to the dogs once this is passed. You see he never thought of that. Well, we testified on many other pieces of legislation which we favored. I was the one who was always sent by Dubinsky. I served on the Women's Bureau representing the ILG. One thing, I never did; I never represented myself.

INTERVIEWER: You always spoke for....

NEWMAN: For the ILG or the Women's Trade Union League.

INTERVIEWER: And you at that time, and the League, were not in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment?

NEWMAN: None of the labor groups. Beginning with the AF of L, and including almost every local, and every international union, was opposed to it. And they're on record. It's very amusing to me that now everybody's for it. All those who were against it are now for it. And I don't remember whether I told you or not, I had the finest collection of documents from eminent lawyers pointing out that in its present form, the Equal Rights Amendment is not desirable. And oh, people like Mr. Pound of Harvard University, Dean Acheson, and others. And if I am not mistaken, I think Justice Brandeis was on our side. I still have those letters and documents, and one of these days I suppose it will all go to Radcliffe archives. But I think the people who are for the amendment--either they don't remember or they are not interested. Everybody now is for women, why not, let 'em go. I don't believe that the people who changed their minds did give it a thought or remembered that they were opposed, and why they were opposed.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

NEWMAN: Why? They don't remember . . .

INTERVIEWER: I mean . . .

NEWMAN: Why they were opposed? For the same reason that....why we of the Women's Trade Union League were opposed. Needless to tell you, that the women who are affiliated with the Women's Trade Union League weren't opposed to equality. I think we were probably advocating equality long before the equal rights people came on board. And when they did, and introduced that amendment, Mrs. Robbins of the Women's Trade Union League invited them to a meeting which she had in Washington to discuss it. Because we were quite willing to work with them, provided it would not hurt the legislation we had worked for

NEWMAN: improving the conditions of working women. They did not reply, and did not accept the invitation. And so we continued in our way to oppose it, and they continued in their way to work for it.

INTERVIEWER: This was in about 1923, '24?

NEWMAN: About '20, '21.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see, as early as that.

NEWMAN: Yes. I debated on the Equal Rights measure with an equal righter whose name was Miss Young, and the debate was held in Syracuse. I was invited to debate. "Oh, yes," I said, "I'll debate." And we had a very good audience, very well-attended for a thing like that. And afterwards, Miss Young said, "Well, I guess you got away with your side." Mary Beard sent a lovely letter of congratulations. If they had cooperated with the Women's Trade Union League, we might have had something that everybody would have been in favor of. In those days, not only the labor movement was opposed to it, practically all women's organizations of any standing--the League of Women Voters--college people, were all opposed to it, because of what may result, litigation, etc., and documents we got from knowledgeable people concerning law and things like that, and I am amused, really, when I see that the League of Women Voters is now in favor of it.

INTERVIEWER: Is one reason because there are more women in unions today that are covered by contracts with a minimum wage law and a maximum hours law, time-and-a-half for overtime, and a lot of the laws the League fought for so hard, are really in effect now?

NEWMAN: Those achievements are not due to the Amendment. No. Because it is due to the New Deal, and because of the....the question then, I don't know now, but the question in the twenties and the thirties and even in the forties, if the amendment had passed, what would have happened to the legislation we worked for? We don't know. The lawyers told us that it would have lost effect and caused a lot of litigation. And that we didn't want to see happen. We worked so hard for it, for what it meant for the organized and the unorganized, especially for the unorganized women. It's a different world today. It's not only because there are more women that they have been able to gain--after all, the contract system was used at that time. It's possible to include what we wanted then and now. The change, I think, came about because of the general demand on the part of women to do everything and be everywhere. And many of them make good. And the impression among other people now, I suppose, is "Well, they can do what they do just as well as other people, why not give them a chance?" They didn't think so in 1920. They didn't think so in 1930. But I'm sure when you read the papers or get it from your friends, they're everywhere, doing everything. I don't think we were in favor of having women work in the mines, but some of them are doing it now.

INTERVIEWER: They have women in the mines?

NEWMAN: And did you read in the paper, I get the New York Telephone bulletin once in a while, that women are climbing up on the poles? I don't think I'd like it, you know, but they are. There was on a while ago, interviews with women who work there. "Oh, yes," they said, "We work hard and its very cold, but we earn a lot of money."

INTERVIEWER: And they do, too.

NEWMAN: And there they are. In other words, women have come to the point where they are not afraid to work in mines or climb poles. Men have accepted that.

INTERVIEWER: Has there been any change in the ILG as a result of this movement of women that you have just described? How has the ILG reacted to it?

NEWMAN: I think you know well that we were always in favor of women's emancipation.

INTERVIEWER: What about women as cutters? Are they moving into jobs as cutters in the ILG?

NEWMAN: Someone told me, I hadn't heard about that, but someone told me last week there are just a few women cutters, which is more skilled. And I suppose in times to come, there'll be more than a few.

INTERVIEWER: How would they get into that? How would they start learning the job?

NEWMAN: In my time--when I worked in the shop--we used scissors, long scissors to do the cutting. Now they have a machine. Now if you're the pattern maker and you put a line here, what you have to do is to see if the machine cuts just on that line, which is much easier than with scissors. Now you have to.... you probably have to begin by doing minor things in the cutting department. There are not many. You have pattern makers who are also cutters, because the cutters have to follow your patterns, and you have to be the skilled person in the department. And if you're admitted as a member, Local 10 Cutters Union, you're probably given minor things to cut until you learn.

INTERVIEWER: If I wanted to get into Local 10, would I be able to? Would they take me?

NEWMAN: If you were able to do the job, yes. If there is a job for you they'll take you. They make no discrimination, but you see, the last year or two they lost ten thousand members because of the

NEWMAN: imports. And that's only in New York City. Same thing exists in other parts where they have other local unions. So accepting new members is a problem which the executive board has to decide what to do. On the other hand, there are times when old people retire. There are an awful lot of people who've retired lately. They have to be replaced with new people. And people who come into the industry now, some are Italian, mostly Puerto Rican, and Chinese. There's a Chinese local in California, and we have Italian locals in New York. They're replacing people who retire or who die, and the employer needs somebody. Now there are not many employers who need people. There is work--some seasons better, some seasons not so good. But if you need people, you'll call up the union. They'll send them.

INTERVIEWER: So a woman would have to go to the union and say, "I want to be a cutter." I see. Now when did Miss Miller go to Washington? It was in the forties, you said last week, remember? It was during the war, right?

NEWMAN: She came back from England, she was there during the war. And she was there because she resigned when the Republican government was elected in New York State.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

NEWMAN: She came back from England, Mary Anderson was to retire. Mary Anderson said to Frances Perkins that if Frieda Miller doesn't replace me, I don't retire!

INTERVIEWER: Really? How interesting!

NEWMAN: She thought a great deal of Miss Miller. And she said she was just the person, and if she doesn't take it, I don't retire. It was Roosevelt's appointment, however. She came back in '43, I think, and she was there until Eisenhower was elected. He kept her until '53, when he had too much pressure from Republican women who wanted the job. And one woman from Connecticut, her name was Mrs. Bluphole, went to see Eisenhower quite often and finally got to Miss Miller that she's bothering Eisenhower so much, so she decided to retire. She retired in '53, and had a lovely send-off from the entire department, including the new Secretary of Labor under Eisenhower, and then she's starting to--she always did have time for the ILO [International Labor Organization]--and she got several assignments from the ILO to go to India and the Middle East, and the Southeast, and that was over, and came back, gave her time for the United Nations.

INTERVIEWER: When did she get sick?

NEWMAN: 1969.

INTERVIEWER: And she was sick for several years, right?

NEWMAN: She got sick in '67 and died in '73.

January 4 and February 1, 1977

INTERVIEWER: I'm Barbara Wertheimer, recording. And we have been discussing where we got, as of the last tape. And we talked a bit about the second World War. And now I wanted Pauline tonight to talk about her experiences after the second World War, when she did a number of things, but one of them was to go to Germany. And how did you happen to go to Germany, Pauline?

NEWMAN: The U.S. Labor Department, and specifically the Women's Bureau, thought it would be worthwhile to know what the conditions, the post-war conditions, were under which women worked in Germany. And the State Department, the Labor Department, and the Army agreed, and decided to send a labor person and a management person so they would see both sides in approaching what they saw and what they heard. And so they selected a personnel worker from the International Harvester Company; her name was Sarah Southall.

INTERVIEWER: Sarah Southall?

NEWMAN: And the labor representative was yours truly. We sailed, I think, on the fifth of July. That would be '45, wouldn't it?

INTERVIEWER: I don't think the war was over in July of '45. It was over in Europe but not in . . .

NEWMAN: I'm trying to recall the date. That would be '47. The boat landed in Berlin. I think we went from there to Frankfurt where our U.S. Commissioner lived; we still occupied West Germany. They had to report to the high commissioner and the staff mapped out a program for us. He decided, and we agreed, that we had to attend meetings of the trade unions, especially trade union women, but not excluding men's organizations. To find out from them what hours they work, what wages they get, what the conditions in general are; and confer with management. And I think we really covered almost every industry working at that time. We even included the Ruhr Valley, where the miners worked and lived. We got all the information we wanted, and we had time enough to discuss with the trade union people--especially with the women--what they think and how they feel about the post-war conditions. The one thing that was really quite encouraging was the fact that the trade unions came back so quickly; that when we were there, they told me they can already count about 400,000 who came back to the movement. But the hours were still forty-eight a week and that, of course, was not what they wanted. What they really wanted was a shorter work day. The women had the slogan, "We want one day for what they called wash day."

NEWMAN: In other words, they wanted what in our opinion is a wash day--sixty minutes a day to go home and do the shopping and do the washing. Because, you see, by the time they got through working, the stores were closed, they couldn't do any shopping. They worked on Saturdays, too, you know, The main demand at that time was for a "wash day", and we suggested that instead of demanding just a wash day, that they ask for the five-day week! So they'd have two days to wash and do anything else. Well, we had a great deal of discussion about the sort of hours, and of course the wages were by our standards rather low; but they said that they'd rather have a shorter work day than higher wages, that was their contention. They were intelligent women, old timers in the labor movement. They were out only during the Hitler nightmare, and came back as soon as they could. Two of them came to visit America after we were there, and they were terribly impressed at what they saw. They went back, and they wrote, we corresponded for quite a while, and they transferred their enthusiasm and their impression about our standards here to their membership and they always used to tell us new methods which made a great impression upon the others, and it helped, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they work? What kinds of industry did they work in?

NEWMAN: Well, the first factory we visited was a perfume factory, believe it or not. And that was located in a little town called Cassell. After the war nothing was left in Cassell, except the monuments, an old monument. No houses, nothing at all. But one of our representatives that was sent there to see what can be done for that little village, we went there and met them in his office. And when we came into his office they saw a big map with green pins and red pins and yellow pins showing what was needed. And that was so strange that I just couldn't hesitate in telling him, "What do you want a map and pins, and telling people who look that there are no houses? They can see there are no houses!" Nothing was left, but we had a number of people who were sent to Germany who didn't do anything that was really worthwhile. Anyway, that was the only large factory in Cassell, making perfume. I talked to the girls and they, like the older women, wanted a shorter work day. That was the general demand. We went to a factory where they make cameras, and they told us that they remembered a time when the employers housed them in company owned houses, and charged them for lodging. And they didn't like it, but there was no way out of it. That was the only job in town, and there was nothing else to be done for the defense. Then we went to a place where they make the eye-glasses and in another department of the same building the same number of people made what they called "spy-glasses". Now spy-glasses, of course, are used by proctologists and by a number of other people. Then we went to the shoe factory in Munich, and our representative--we had representatives in every city; wherever we went, we found our representatives that were appointed by the high commissioner--

NEWMAN: we did not go there. Why, I don't know. They probably hadn't come back yet from the destruction. But we covered Germany, I think, from one end to the other. Different factories, and we talked to different people, and when we got back we sent the President a report, and he sent a report to the State Department, Women's Bureau....And then, of course, the Labor Department organized a big meeting in which Sarah, my partner of management, and I spoke. It was a big meeting; the auditorium was quite full. And everybody felt very pleased for us to know what went on there after the war, after Hitler, and what the women thought and what they intended to do. And they were very active in the labor movement. And then we went to Nuremberg, which is only about ten miles from Dachau. When we get through with the trade union meetings--they had a luncheon meeting for us, and they had an evening meeting, it was very good for us to talk to them and tell about how we do things in our country. And after we got through, I said to Sarah, "I want to go to Dachau." She wasn't keen about it, but I went, and I wrote up my impression of Dachau. I think it appeared in the survey on Life and Labor. Because once you went there and saw what was left after the war was over, you wanted everybody to know what we saw. And it was an unforgettable sight. For instance, there was a--the crematoriums, the ovens. Well, I see it now; it was an oven shaped like a human being. And on the wall, before they were put into the oven, apparently some man or woman had the courage to cut their hand and write with the blood on the wall their name and where they came from. Then you saw the tree which had a sign that said, "This is one of the trees on which anyone who tried to escape was hung." It was a very horrible sight, there's no question about it. And I didn't blame Sarah Southall for not wanting to go. But on the other hand, I couldn't have left Germany without seeing....Dachau was the nearest to Nuremberg. We didn't go anywhere else; we didn't have time, but I'm still glad that I went to Dachau and saw for myself what had been done. I was there, you know, in '23. And as I recall, that was the beginning of the Hitler movement. Because I woke up one morning and saw a lot of youngsters-kids--parading in the streets, you know, singing; and that was the beginning. But when we saw Nuremberg in '47, it wasn't the same city at all. The old city was a beautiful spot, you know; it was gone, destroyed during the war. And I recall Nuremberg when I was there in '23, it was after the first World War. And that's the year that I learned the meaning of inflation. I got something like eight, nine <u>million</u> marks for a dollar.

INTERVIEWER: That was in '23?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That was in '23 you're talking about, right?

NEWMAN: Yes. But the city was lovely, and in '47 it wasn't the same at all. A lot of lovely things were destroyed during the war. Well anyway, we were there--we spent three or four months: July, August, September, October. And then we came back. And, as I said before, I think the government agencies that sponsored us while we were gone were satisfied with what we reported. Any other questions?

INTERVIEWER: Well, what were some of the . . .?

NEWMAN: It was a great experience. Go on.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask what some of the basic needs that you found that had to be filled in order to revitalize the trade union movement in Germany.

NEWMAN: It's hard to say. We could see the basic need of that moment in housing and work. There were people we met who had to walk six miles back and forth to a job because they had to live with relatives; they had no homes of their own. And that was a great need, you see. And they didn't have enough jobs. I spoke to the miners; they had some work, but not much. And miners are exploitable people, you know; they don't really want very much.

INTERVIEWER: But this was a time when so many of the young men who would have been in the work force had been killed.

NEWMAN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: So you probably found a lot of women who really had to support themselves.

NEWMAN: That's right. And children to bring up.

INTERVIEWER: And children to bring up. And so it was really essential to get the factories moving again.

NEWMAN: That's right. Well, that was a great need, and the housing, especially the housing; not many people could walk six miles a day to a job. And they didn't have any money for transportation.

INTERVIEWER: How was the food situation? Were they able to feed their families?

NEWMAN: More or less. It wasn't the best food.

INTERVIEWER: When you came back, what was the result of your trip? You filed a report with the U.S. Department of Labor?

NEWMAN: We filed a report with the U.S. State Department, and they sent the report to the President--President Truman, who wrote us a very nice letter of appreciation; and we had meetings in the Labor Department for the people of the Labor Department and other people who wanted to come.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what were your recommendations in the report?

NEWMAN: Well, we were not supposed to make recommendations.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

NEWMAN: We were supposed to report what we saw. The rest--the recommendations or any action--was up to the Army and the State Department.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And you came back to your job with the health center of the ILG?

NEWMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like then? This was the post-war period in the United States, also. What was it like as far as unionism?

NEWMAN: Well, as I recall, that period was--I mean people in that period of responsibility were busy trying to find jobs for the men who came back, and the problem of giving the men back the jobs but what about the women who were doing the work while they were away? That was the thing that I think occupied government as well as civilians.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about that whole period in terms of women being sort of apt to step back and out of the work force, or into the jobs that they held before the war?

NEWMAN: Well, as far as I can recall, that was the time the U.S. Women's Bureau was most active. We tried to find a way by which to retain women--as many as possible--and to get women to understand what the situation is. I think on the whole they worked out a very fine solution. If women could find other jobs, they were perfectly willing themselves to give the men back their jobs. But not many of them came back.

INTERVIEWER: You're talking about in the garment plants, right?

NEWMAN: No, I'm talking about jobs in general. In the garment plants, in '47, '48, it was--it seems to me as I recall--as usual; some days were more busy than others, and a lot of workers were used to being out of work for certain times of the year, and it wasn't any different then because people could then go back to work and had enough money to buy clothes and so they got a little more business.

INTERVIEWER: It was a good time for the industry right after the war?

NEWMAN: I cannot really say that it was good. It was better, of course, than before the war. People earned more; people bought more, but whether you could call it good, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the period in 1947 when the Taft-Hartley Act was passed? Do you want to talk a little about that, and labor's campaign to keep it from being passed and to get President Truman to veto it?

NEWMAN: It passed?

INTERVIEWER: It did pass, and he vetoed it, and they passed it over his veto, right?

NEWMAN: That's right. That was Truman, wasn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. But from the union standpoint--from the ILG standpoint--do you remember what was involved in it and why the union was so against it?

NEWMAN: Well, every union was against it.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

NEWMAN: It wasn't....you see. the whole piece of legislation had a number. It wasn't just one union or one industry; it was a federal thing against labor. And so every union--the AF of L or the CIO, too--was against it. Everybody opposed it. We still do. I wonder why it's been on that long?

INTERVIEWER: We haven't been able to get enough votes to repeal it, I guess. But it would affect a union like the ILG very much because their organizing in the South would be hurt very much by the Taft-Hartley Act.

NEWMAN: Well, in addition to the Taft-Hartley, there is also now in the South the Right to Work laws. Oh well, the troubles of labor is not yet over.

INTERVIEWER: For sure. We talked a little bit about the McCarthy period. That was the early fifties, remember? The Joseph McCarthy period?

NEWMAN: Yes. I can talk about that. I was left out; I don't know why. [laughs] Because people who were not left out really were proud of the fact. And I was left out; I don't know why. Well, it was a disgraceful period for everybody, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I wanted to find out also what the effect of the McCarthy period was on the labor movement. I thought you might want to think about that and talk a little about that.

NEWMAN: Well, I can't recall anyone who thought that what he did was right. Most people I knew then were outraged at what he did to some people. He didn't hesitate to characterize good people as traitors, radicals; they were un-American. And there were a

NEWMAN: few, I remember, who talked back. He had a terrible fight with Dorothy Kenyon; she certainly won't take it. And of course we must give credit to Margaret Chase who was the only senator.... I think she was the only senator who investigated him and thought he was terrible. As far as the labor people were concerned, I can only surmise and assume that they felt about him as I did. He was a liar and I wouldn't hesitate even now that he's dead to call him a skunk. I don't know of any labor person, man or woman, who thought the victims were wrong. How could they?

INTERVIEWER: What was the effect on labor organizing?

NEWMAN: Labor organizing, at that time?

INTERVIEWER: Organizing in the South, for example.

NEWMAN: Very difficult. It's bad enough today; it simply was worse then. I remember that the Women's Trade Union League at one time in the twenties appointed a special organizer to go south and see what she could do to organize the women's textile work. She was there at least a year and I can't say that she accomplished anything except to get in touch with individuals. It was impossible to get them together as a group because they were afraid of being fired the next day. It was very difficult--much more so than today. In other states, you were satisfied with making slow progress. And you made progress slowly. Let's see, in the early twenties and after the first election of President Roosevelt, when organizing really became the law of the land, and it wasn't so difficult, because people weren't afraid anymore that they'd be fired if they organized. They knew that the law was there; they were allowed to join with others, and so the movement really began to grow after his first election and then afterward. His election really gave us the right. Membership was low, there was no finances, we had internal difficulties....and it was only after his first election when people began to know that the boss couldn't fire you if you joined the union, that it came in.

INTERVIEWER: When you mentioned the League, and we're talking about the period of Joe McCarthy, it was also the period when the Women's Trade Union League closed its doors for the last time, in about 1951, I guess it was. Do you remember that particular period, and some of the feelings that people had when the League finally decided to shut down?

NEWMAN: Yes. I remember definitely, because we had the last meeting in Washington at the headquarters of the Machinists Union. And I think I wrote about that last session, and it was published either in Life and Labor or in Justice--I don't remember where. The feeling we had of witnessing the end of an era, the end of more than fifty years of activity in organizing, educating, and

NEWMAN: legislating for the working woman. The contribution we had made to the labor movement in general; we remembered our share in the great strikes of this country: the shirtwaist-makers strike, the coal miners strike, the steelworkers strike in 1919--all the major strikes. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers in Chicago--all the major struggles that took place in the last fifty or more years. And that we were proud of our share, but very sad to see it dissolve, because we had the feeling that we could still do quite a bit of work with the unions, for the unions, and simply for the women workers. But the unions got strong enough, had enough money, to hire its own organizers, to conduct its own campaigns for organization. They felt that we were not needed anymore, and since we had to exist on the support of the unions, we could no longer exist without their support. So the decision was to....well, we've done our share, and that's that. I can see most of our members on the executive board feeling very sad, because they were all still in a position to do a lot of things for and with the labor movement, and certainly women. Elizabeth Christman was on the verge of tears. Rose Schneiderman was quite practical; she said, "Well, we can't exist without money, so what's the use?" Mary Drier said, "I wish I had money to have it go on." And so we didn't feel happy about dissolving, but there was nothing else to do.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the other people who were at that last meeting?

NEWMAN: Well, the whole general executive board: Elizabeth Christman, Agnes Nester, Rose Schneiderman, Mary Drier. Myself. And Miss Stedhagen--is she still alive?

INTERVIEWER: I guess so.

NEWMAN: If I had Life and Labor, I could show you a picture of them.

INTERVIEWER: Then some of the real old timers were still there.

NEWMAN: Yes, from the very beginning. We organized in 1903, I think, in Boston. Well, Rose was there; I came in 1904, I think, a year later. Oh, some of course were dead. Kneffler from St. Louis was gone, but most of us were there--the majority, anyway, of the old timers were at the meeting.

INTERVIEWER: In the mid-1950's, sort of right after the McCarthy period, was the merger. How did you feel about the merger of the AF of L and the CIO?

NEWMAN: Well, we said it was about time that we had one labor organization. I think even Meany and Reuther were glad, until he [Meany] began to disagree with Reuther's philosophy. I attended every meeting of the merger, and I remember Eleanor Roosevelt speaking at one of the meetings, expressing her feelings about having a united labor movement. Everybody was happy. That was a general feeling,

NEWMAN: as far as I know. Even those who were not delegates to that merger attended every session. I did. I knew quite a number of people, you know, but I wasn't a delegate. And everybody felt very happy. The speeches....the speech of the merger between Reuther and George Meany was really quite exciting. At last there was one movement. We didn't know that some would withdraw actively, some would come back, and some are still out. The automobile workers are out.

INTERVIEWER: The miners, I think are still . . .

NEWMAN: I think the miners are out.

INTERVIEWER: And the Teamsters, of course.

NEWMAN: But on the whole, the delegates who attended the meeting and the speakers who spoke were very happy about the merger.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there's been a real impact all the way over the last twenty years? It's been twenty-two years now; what has been the impact of the merger? Actually, in terms of numbers, the labor movement has pretty much stood still.

NEWMAN: Frankly, I don't know what the impact is now. The hope was there that the merger will help to increase the membership, perhaps to be infused with a new vision. But as I look at it today, I don't think that it resulted in that. Membership has not very much increased; some of the big unions, like the automobile, are out. There doesn't seem to be any inspirational activities in the organizations; they have a legislative representative and work for the proper legislation, proper from their point of view. I don't think their views concerning the international situation are encouraging. They're quite ready to quit the ILO and they're afraid to try to influence the administration to withhold our share from the ILO because one of the vice-presidents or somebody there is a Russian. Now anything that is Russian, Meany would have nothing to do with. Reuther was more tolerant, even if he disagreed, he was more tolerant. And so....

INTERVIEWER: How long do you think it will be before you find women in the ILG as cutters and markers or patternmakers?

NEWMAN: As cutters, I don't think it will be long, because someone told me the other day that there are a couple of women in the cutting department in one of the shops now. And, and I have a feeling that it isn't going to be long before women will be in the cutting department. The patternmakers is a different story; it's a more difficult job, and should the cutters follow the patternmakers? Should the patternmakers have to be quite ready to be above the cutters? And that's quite a while. But I think it's coming; I really do. Perhaps not in my time, but

NEWMAN: it'll be coming. Because there isn't going to be anything, as I see it, where women are going to be left out. They'll get into anything they want.

INTERVIEWER: What makes you feel that way? What makes you feel so sure?

NEWMAN: Just watch the trend today. A couple years ago you wouldn't think of women in mines. A couple years ago you wouldn't envision a woman climbing the height--God knows how high--to fix a telephone pole. A few years ago you wouldn't think that a woman would work in Alaska on the pipeline. And everywhere, a few years ago, there were....if any, I think, got so involved on the radio, television, video; now they're there in full swing. They broadcast; they issue their opinion on questions, on the television, on the radio. They are in the mass media more than they ever were before. Incidentally, there are a few excellent women on the Times. The woman who writes on architecture--Upstable--she's very good. And who's the other one? Anyway, they're very good. And so more and more are coming in and doing what the men are doing, and why should I think that this will stop? It will go on.

INTERVIEWER: If a woman wanted to become a patternmaker in a garment shop, how would she go about doing it?

NEWMAN: I think she would go to....they have....it's not the Fashion Institute, it's another school on West Twenty-Fourth where they learn sewing, marking, finishing. And I think that will be the school where they're going to learn before they go into a shop. Because if you go into a shop, somebody will have to give you time to teach you, and the employer isn't going to do it for nothing. Well, who's going to pay? But this school on West Twenty-fourth Street is teaching the garment trade to anyone who wants to learn. And people who want to go higher and become designers, go to the Fashion Institute on Twenty-seventh Street.

INTERVIEWER: Is that how men get to be patternmakers? They go to this school and then go to the factory?

NEWMAN: Well, at the moment I really don't know how a man gets to be a patternmaker and he may not. I remember that my brother was a patternmaker, and he never went to any school. He just learned; first cutting and then trying to make the patterns. At that time it didn't seem to be very difficult just to mark out what you want to have and then you and the cutter come along and make the pattern. It didn't seem to be very difficult at that time, really, and I don't see why women should find it difficult. It's only a matter of getting to the place where you could learn, and I think that the trade school on West Twenty-fourth Street is probably the place. But don't despair about women not getting into anything they want to get in; they'll get there.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure you're right. Now we were into the 1960's, when we talked about the Civil Rights Act and equal pay and the Kennedy Administration and then the Johnson Administration and the Vietnam War, and I wondered what were your feelings about that war? I know there were several labor unions that were strongly opposed to it, and there were some unions that seemed to support the administration--the Johnson Administration and the conduct of the war. How did the ILG feel about it?

NEWMAN: All I can say is, as far as I know....now remember, I'm not in the office, the general office, but all I know of our members were terribly and definitely opposed to the whole business. The only person who chummed with Johnson was Stolberg, who was president. And we got to know President Johnson in this way: we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our union health center, and he got Johnson to come and speak. And that was the only time I shook hands with Johnson. I was speaking and when he came in, and somebody, of course, told me that the President had come, and so I had to stop. But he came on the platform and shook hands with everybody; well at the time Louis Stolberg got to know Johnson and they became quite friendly. Louis would be asked to visit the White House, and when Johnson was in town, he would see Louis; but that did not indicate his favoring the war. The General Executive Board, I know; the rank and file, I know, were as opposed as you and I were. Some unions did support Johnson, and if I am not mistaken, I think Meany supported Johnson. And, of course, he hated the countries wherever communism exists; whether Russia or anywhere at all, Meany is against. A good many of us would go along with opposing the tactics of communism, but we are not as bitter or as selective as he is. To him, anything and everything that's communism must go down. Well, as I said, we too are opposed as far as I am concerned. I oppose communism, I oppose their objectives, I oppose the peace we lost as far as human rights were concerned....

INTERVIEWER: It was a long war, too long.

NEWMAN: I don't think anything will change there until somebody collapses--have a new leadership. When that happens, it may be another kind of revolution if you don't kill off the people who have the power and believe in what ought to be done. Men like Sakharov, I don't think he is going to last long. I think in some way or other they are going to kill him or put him in the psychiatric wards or do something like that. Or exile him, as they did Solzenitsyn. Only they wouldn't do it. I read in the paper yesterday--because Sackarov knows how to make a hydrogen bomb. So they won't let him out of the country. But they could put him in a psychiatric ward, you see. I mean that sort of thing makes you sick, and you go along with Meany along these lines. But he goes further; to him nothing matters if it's communism. And then our other unions....the carpenters, I think; the bricklayers; the millers union--I mean the old conservative "bread-and-butter" unions

NEWMAN: supported Johnson. But the people in the Amalgamated, the ILG, the millinery, and the needlework--and there were many others--have opposed all the intrigue and the Vietnam War. And, of course, we had the military; it made me sick that they spent billions of dollars on what? The man who killed the private people in Vietnam....

INTERVIEWER: Lieutenant Calley.

NEWMAN: Yes. It's unbelievable. Incidentally, I must buy that book; Gloria Emerson spent a lot of time in Vietnam during the war. And once upon a time, in the early days, she was a member of the Women's Trade Union League in Chicago. And in 1912 or 13, I met her in Chicago at the League meeting. And she has now written what Salsbury calls--the New York Times says, "Wow, what a book!" And other people are raving about her story as she saw it in Vietnam. So I'm going to buy that book.

INTERVIEWER: That should be very good.

NEWMAN: There is a good one....what's his name? Who wrote on Vietnam and was very good. But these people who read Gloria Emerson's are raving.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's good; I'm glad. Well, now that we are moving through the sixties and into the seventies, where do you think the labor movement is going now and where do you think women are going in the labor movement today? Do you think that there is in the future a chance that we'll have some women union presidents and women on the AFL-CIO executive committee? Do you think women have a future in the labor movement?

NEWMAN: Barbara, I think it will depend on the women. I think it will be a while before the unions controlled by men will open the door to women for higher positions unless the women show courage in their desire to occupy these positions. Secondly, together they can do as well as men, and they're ready to do it. In other words, when women are ready to fight for higher positions in the labor movement, they'll get it. It'll be a while, because I don't think at the moment women are ready to make the fight for it. Now, I was at our last convention three years ago when there was no woman vice-president, and some people have told the president that we've got to have at least one. And so he....they thought, I suppose, more than the president, probably; the General Executive Board recommended that we have an organizer in California who is black, and, according to the California people I met on this trip, knows very much about the labor movement in general, but they decided to kill two birds with one stone. Have a woman who is black. Now there is no reason at all why an organization composed of ninety percent women should have only one woman vice-president. The Amalgamated definitely have three, I think, two or three women. We have only one. We always had one, since I remember. When you talked to David Dubinsky when he was president, you talked to

NEWMAN: him and he said, "Well, find me one who is able and capable." And one time, just laughingly, I said to him, "Were men capable and able to be on the board?" Well, they felt then, and apparently feel now, that one is enough. And if the women who are in the organization--and some of them are quite able; girls from the middle west and I see them at the conventions--they're able enough. And, apparently, satisfied with being a secretary; being a member of the executive--not the general executive board, but the local executive board; being educational director here and there. Last month I got about a half a dozen letters from the middle west; one of our organizers must have talked about me. And they were very nice letters, and most of them were asking, "Would you please answer me?" And, of course, I answered every one of them. Now they wouldn't have done it if they weren't interested in what went on as the years went by. Well, I think if we had more people on the road to talk to the younger generation of age, we might make them realize that we really depend upon them if we want the higher positions. In one of our locals which is located in the Phillipines to help build a health center; she's Italian, and she started as a member of the local executive board and she was very happy about it. Then she was promoted to the business agency and now she goes into the factories and makes suggestions, and oh, she's very happy. I don't think she looks forward to anything more. There were people who were, I think, more capable than some men on the General Executive Board, but they are out of the organization. One was in charge of our union label; she was a very capable woman.

INTERVIEWER: Who was she?

NEWMAN: Minnie

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes. From Pennsylvania.

NEWMAN: And she was a very capable speaker; and she knew the organization as few do today. She got married, had two daughters who moved to Boston, and her office was in my building. I used to see her very often and one day she said, "Well, I may as well say goodbye right here and now." I said, "What?" Well, what happened, I don't know. She didn't say it and I don't gossip. But she left the ILG; very few people knew that she left. And I met a friend of hers who is also an officer of the joint board, and I said, "What happened to Minnie?" "Well, I'm going to organize a little party." I said, "You're going to organize it, after so many years with the ILG? First the Local 22, and the offices there; then in charge of the label and before that organizing in Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania. So what do you mean, you are going to organize a little party? What about the ILG?" "Oh," she said, "Don't talk about it."

INTERVIEWER: Hm.

NEWMAN: Now she was a very active woman. Rose Pesotta, before she died, was one of the finest organizers and speakers in the ILG. She was vice-president only for three years, just one term, but she resigned on her own, and she had ideas of her own. She wanted to go back to the shop; she didn't want to lose the aura or the atmosphere of a shop girl. But when she stood up on the platform in Cleveland in '47, offering her resignation, she had the guts to say that she didn't see why the ILG should have only one woman vice-president, why we can't have more. And Dubinsky got mad as hell, although he apologized to her in the evening. So it's really a matter of women who want the higher position, and if they want it, to be able to fight for it; otherwise they won't get it. They'll get it in the way they got this one.

INTERVIEWER: When you say, "Women have to fight for it," how do you see that fight? Do you see it as something that is involved in knowing how the union works politically, or is it in the motivation of the woman herself who has to be willing to push herself and not only devote time to the union, but really push herself? What is involved in that word "fight"?

NEWMAN: Well, as I see it, there's more than one way in which they can do the fighting. We're a democratic organization, and people are nominated for office. That politics goes on before the nomination goes without saying. Any woman who is interested in getting the nomination, getting nominated, would naturally have to get together with the other people and see how many would be willing to nominate her. That she is willing to run; that she would like to be on the General Executive Board. The other way would be, when the nomination comes on the floor, that she could get up and make a little speech about having more women on the General Executive Board, and ready to nominate anyone she pleased, which we did. That may be defeated, but there'd be bidding to let the other delegates on the floor--usually a thousand delegates--to let them know it's not fair to have only one woman on the....If she only made this little speech, it would be a beginning. And it came that I was somewhat discouraged at the last convention, because the delegates really didn't participate. In my day, when we were small, young, we would spend hours making--needlessly, but we did--debating the question, discussing a question, opposing the resolution, for the resolution. There was talk; people talked and participated, and I did not see it a few years ago. Why? Why? The delegates come; there are thousands of people--mostly women--and they sit there. They ask for a vote; they vote. Last convention, I think there were two women who took the floor and spoke. I think when they come to the convention, they come as a group: ten to fifteen, depending on the number of members they have in their local. They go to the convention as a group, from Local 25 and Local 22. And there's a chairman of the delegation, naturally, and they do what the chairman says should be done. And that's not only in our organization; that's in all unions. Now, but when it comes to women, you see they could do, if they had the

NEWMAN: will and the interest, they can voice their opinion. That they'd be allowed to do. And they could talk about having more women in higher positions. At least it would be known that they're thinking about it, and that would be something. Someone got up to speak at the last convention, and the one before I think. Anyway, Dubinsky was still president, and he called on me to say a few words. And after I got through, he called on a girl who was on strike for a month. And she made a beautiful speech; it was on the other side of the record. Here was a girl, an able speaker, who spent months, I think it was ten months that the strike lasted. Never failed to be on the picket line. She was abused by scabs, but she stood her ground. She could be developed into a very, very able woman. She comes from the South, I think. And to have someone like that from the South I think would be worth....if I were president of the ILG I would have her as an organizer in no time. It would be bizarre, but she would be one of the women I would use. And there are others they could find if they really wanted to; they could find capable women. There must be 400 really, 450,000 throughout the country. There must be some capable women. But as I say, I can't blame the organization itself alone. I've got to remember that if the women were very deeply interested, not only for themselves but for the entire organization, to raise the position of women, they'd have to do it. But they don't do it, so it's abandoned. Why is it now and then a woman would be appointed to a lower position and, as I say, the lower jobs there are a lot of women who are doing good work. We have a--I think she's Puerto Rican--in one local; she's doing a very fine job for the rest of the Puerto Ricans. And we have a Chinese girl who's doing good work for the Chinese in the organization. They are, they'll be satisfied with what they have now, with the position they have now. I can't see them going up and fighting and for something higher. In time it may come, but at the moment I don't see it.

INTERVIEWER: Now I think we may have enough room on this tape for a very important comment that I think we should record. Because it comes from you and it comes out of your experience out of almost all this century. And that is your opinion about the Equal Rights Amendment. I have a feeling that you have some mixed feelings about the labor movement's support of the Equal Rights Amendment. And I think it's important for people who are going to listen to this tape to know what you think and why you think it.

NEWMAN: Well, if you turn it off now.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. We were talking--Pauline Newman and I--on May 3, 1977, about the editorial that appeared in the New York Times today on feminism and NOW. And you were saying, Pauline, that you wondered what has made people change, the labor movement and other organizations.

NEWMAN: Most of the organizations that were opposed to it in the twenties are for it now and it made me wonder what it was, what it is that made a change. Because the Equal Rights Amendment has not been changed; it hasn't been re-written. It's just the same amendment that was introduced, I think, in the twenties. And yet the people who fought to defeat the amendment are now for it. And you talk about women, what it is that made them change their minds. It is really, shall I say, the "growth" of the feminist movement--their slogans. Their complaints against discrimination, against women on the basis of sex. Is that what made the people change? I just don't know, because the fundamental principle of the amendment is still in the amendment; they haven't changed it. And I think it would be interesting, would interest you to know, that as far as the labor movement is concerned and the women taking the lead, that most of the women's organizations who stood by us and with us felt that it would hurt the working women economically if that amendment would pass. Now the opinion was the theory of the most eminent lawyers of this country: lawyers from Harvard, Roscoe Pound, B.F. Atchinson, Felix Frankfurter, the late Justice Brandeis--people who knew the law, who knew what it might do if it passed. And at one hearing before the judiciary committee of Congress, after I testified I'd like you to see this letter from the late Senator Borah.

INTERVIEWER: It's a letter congratulating you for your statement before the subcommittee of the judiciary committee on the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution, and it's dated February 9, 1938. And he goes on to say, "The preponderance of the resolution persists in stating that the working women are in favor of this amendment. That is the only matter which has disturbed me at all, and, therefore, I was anxious to have your view on that particular phase of the subject." And it's signed, "William Borrah". And he was on the judiciary committee; he was on the committee and that's the stationery that he used to send you the letter. Did you know him personally? Is that why he wrote you?

NEWMAN: No. That's the day he was chairman and listened to....

INTERVIEWER: He heard your testimony.

NEWMAN: And he was chairman of the judiciary committee at that time, and he wrote this letter after the hearing was over, of course. And people like him didn't know that it would affect the legislation and the labor corps to improve conditions for the working women, organizied and unorganized. There were people like Dr. Alice Hamilton, an authority on industrial medicine, and she wrote a piece on; "Why I'm against the Equal Rights Amendment."

INTERVIEWER: And this piece....let me just get on the record where this was printed. It was printed in the Ladies Home Journal, July, 1945. And it says, interestingly, underneath that: "To secure additional copies, communicate with the National Committee to Defeat the Unequal

INTERVIEWER: Rights Amendment", which is an interesting name for the committee. She wrote this as president of the National Consumers League. And that's interesting.

NEWMAN: Well, if Alice Hamilton and women like her--there were others involved: Frances Perkins, Frieda Miller, Mrs. Roosevelt--all of them very familiar with the contents of the amendment, and all of them opposed to it. Now, of course, what these people would say today--unfortunately they're all dead--I really don't know. But you can see the impression that statements like Dr. Hamilton's and the letter of Senator Borrah, and statements that you must have seen and maybe you even have it in your office, of Frances Perkins, her testimony. And the testimony of the working woman representing the Women's Trade Union League. Now all of that showed why we were opposed to it. Had working conditions changed to so great an extent for the working women that they don't think that if the amendment passed it would hurt them. Dean Acheson said at one time that the Constitution of the United States is no place to correct discrimination against sex.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you know, times have changed. Let me read you a paragraph from Alice Hamilton's article in 1945, and I think that indicates something of why people have changed their attitudes, and I'd like you to comment on it. These are her words. She writes: "No law can compel a man to employ a woman or to promote her. No law can compel a hospital to place women doctors on its staff, or to admit them as interns and residents. No law can prevent an employer from passing by a competent woman and appointing a less competent man. These are matters which lie outside the domain of law. They are decided by men who are often swayed by the old prejudices." And then she goes on, but you see those--just those things <u>have</u> been changed by law. And I think other things have changed, too. Isn't that your feeling?

NEWMAN: Well, as I said yesterday, in the <u>Times</u> editorial this morning, that things have changed; there's no question about it. But what some of us who are still opposed to the amendment maintain is, that if it passed, there would be a run of litigation to people being inclined to disagree and to sue. And one of the reasons why all of us, like Hamilton and other people in government and outside government are afraid of, is this uncertainty of enforcement and what would happen afterward. If you were certain that people would sue, employers, for example, would ignore the legislation that was supposed to protect women's conditions. Who would win, and working women wouldn't have the finances to employ lawyers, and that was one of the reasons why we who were opposed to the amendment were in favor of specific bills; a bill against the laws that discriminated against women to do this, that, or the other thing. "Let's have a bill for a specific ill," is what we used to say. And what does it sound like today?

INTERVIEWER: One of the interesting things to look at is who was opposed to the amendment then, and who is in favor of the amendment now. Because all of the liberal people that you mentioned--Frances Perkins, yourself, Frieda Miller, Alice Hamilton--all the pioneers--Eleanor Roosevelt--who were against it then were on the liberal side of the fence on issues. They were liberals; they were progressives. Some of them were socialists. Today, the liberals and the progressives are all in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment.

NEWMAN: So's labor.

INTERVIEWER: And labor is in favor of it; and it was opposed then. So the people today who are opposed to the amendment are the most reactionary groups who are getting money from places that are really....like the Right to Work Committee is helping to fund them.

NEWMAN: Well, you probably know I don't think much of them, and I'm not in favor of their tactics. What bothers me is, and what I'd like to know is why did the people who were opposed to it change. Did they come to the conclusion that things in general had changed for the better? Is that the reason?

INTERVIEWER: I think that's one reason. I think also that the protective laws have been pretty much wiped off the books by the Civil Rights Act-Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. So the Equal Rights Amendment really doesn't deal with protective laws in employment. It really tries to put into the Constitution equal rights for women, and that would be something that could be applied from the federal government, and not have to wait for state by state legislation.

NEWMAN: Have you got a list of what are still the discriminations against women?

INTERVIEWER: And you were saying....The last tape we ended where you were asking or stating what are still the discriminations against women in employment, because then you went on and what we missed, because the tape ended and I didn't realize it, was that you were saying that women seem to work everywhere in all kinds of jobs. And then we discussed the fact that there were a few women in many, many jobs, but there were many women in a few jobs. And we talked about the clerical jobs, hospital work, elementary school teachers and librarians, and nurses and sales clerks, and service workers. And then you were saying--and this is another bit that we didn't pick up on the other tape--that equal pay really exists only where it's enforced. And then you were telling me about this case that came to your attention, and that didn't get on the tape. So maybe you would tell the story again for this tape.

NEWMAN: I think it's important to know that unless it's enforced, either by inspection or by complaints on the part of the employees. And I recall there was one woman who worked in a department store up in Harlem, perhaps not one of the biggest stores. But she came down to the Department of Labor and reported that she was doing the same work the man was doing in her department. He was selling coats and so was she. But he was getting more pay than she did. Why? Well, the department took up the complaint and she won the case. But there aren't many women who will take the trouble or have the courage to go down to the Department of Labor and make a complaint; and there are not enough inspectors to check on the employer to see if he really pays the women the same as men for the same work. And that's the difficulty. The Equal Pay Law is a good law; I was on the commission and I approved it, but it's the question then and it's the question now of enforcing it. And I think this holds true for New York State, and I think it's probably true federally as well.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think so. I think you're right, although more and more women seem to know what their rights are and seem to be insisting on them.

NEWMAN: That's right. They're better informed today than they were in the twenties. And I must give the Women's Bureau much credit for enlightening at least the organized wage-earning women what the laws are and what the laws can do. And they're very much more informed today than they were in the twenties.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure that's true.

NEWMAN: Actually, there is a younger generation since then, who is not only better informed but more courageous to demand what they think is their due. So that these, after all, may be the reasons why those who were opposed to the amendment in the twenties and thirties are in favor of it today.

INTERVIEWER: One of the big changes is that, at that time, there were only about twenty percent of the work force that was made up of women. The latest figures show that in about five years or so, fully half of the work force will be women. There is such a growth of women in the work force. And that has made a lot of difference to the women, I think. When you see so many women around, then you think, "Well, why can't I have the same kinds of jobs that men do, and why can't I get paid the same?"

NEWMAN: Well, eventually they're getting there. The best example you could show, I think, is the Alaska pipeline. Don't you think so? Or the women climbing the telephone poles. Who would want to do that? It's a risky job.

INTERVIEWER: I know, but it pays well.

NEWMAN: So they're doing it. Well, they have a union, they're organizing.

INTERVIEWER: They have the rights to get that job now because of the law. And that law is not the Equal Pay Act as much as it is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act that says that they can't discriminate against a woman who wants that job.

NEWMAN: That, I suppose, answers my question why opponents are now the proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment. I personally still believe that a specific bill for a specific discrimination would do the trick, and would have the same, perhaps even better effect. There would be no threat of litigation or anything like that. Why they're opposed to specific measures I don't know. It would take....one of them said it would take too long.

INTERVIEWER: Well, look how long it's been so far. Over 200 years.

NEWMAN: Oh, I guess this amendment....let's see, '27--it's '77 now. It's more that fifty years.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh, and we still don't have it.

NEWMAN: You only need three more states.

INTERVIEWER: Only three more states.

NEWMAN: And by the time you may get one more state, another state may rescind the former vote. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: It isn't clear, though, that a state can rescind.

NEWMAN: Yes. They did.

INTERVIEWER: Three states have done so, but it isn't clear that it's legal.

NEWMAN: Oh.

INTERVIEWER: It may not be. We have to wait for the decision on it.

NEWMAN: Is anybody working on that?

INTERVIEWER: I guess so.

PAULINE NEWMAN INDEX