



**International Union,  
United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America,  
UAW**

**International Executive Board  
Oral Histories**



**Kenneth (Ken) Bannon**

Interviewed by Warner Pflug  
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Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs

Walter P. Reuther Library  
Wayne State University

**PFLUG:** Ken, as I mentioned, we have an oral interview of you which was done by Jack Skeels in 1963, so we have most of the biographical information such as birth date and family and how you got started in the union. But there are several gaps and some things that have occurred since then that we would like to discuss. And I think one of the things that we would be interested in going over is your role in the election of Walter Reuther in 1946. From what I've looked at, you played a key role in that very important part of the UAW's history, and I'm interested in how that all came about and was put together.

**BANNON:** I think that was a turning point in deciding the program of the UAW that we were going to follow. It was a very close election as you know. For awhile there I thought that we were going to go down the drain. The thing that happened was we had a caucus, which was a very small caucus at that time and Walter was going to run for the presidency and Dick Gosser was going to run on the first ballot for vice president, and then Jack Livingston was going to run on the second ballot. But we were not going to oppose George Addes, because we did not think we could beat George.

**PFLUG:** This was for secretary-treasurer?

**BANNON:** Yes, for secretary-treasurer of the union. We got to the convention and the opposition — the Addes/Thomas group, and Dick Leonard was with them at this point in time — campaigned very vigorously, on the boardwalk and off the boardwalk. They had some strange people working with them. There were all kinds of inducements and enticements. And with all of that we were able to get enough votes to elect Walter. But so many deals were made. Dick Leonard at that point in time was the director of the

National Ford Department of the UAW. Dick and I were quite close, pretty good friends, and Dick was running with the Addes/Thomas slate or group and told me that I could get some votes out of the Ford local unions for Walter if I would vote for Dick.

**PFLUG:** What was your position in the union?

**BANNON:** At that point, I was president of Local 400, the second largest local in the Ford setup. 600 was number one, 400 was number two and 900 was number three. This was before the decentralization program of Ford Motor Company.

As I mentioned, in talking with people that I associated with at the UAW Ford Council meetings, they were willing to do a few things if I was willing to do a few things. One thing, I would vote for Dick, which I wanted to do anyhow, and I could get a few votes for Walter. Also, there were a few people there from the hard coal fields, back in northeastern Pennsylvania, where my wife and I had come from, and I was able to talk with them. So I talked with Walter, I think Walter's room was at the Ambassador Hotel up in Atlantic City, and I told Walter I was not going to vote for Jack Livingston. At that time there was first vice president, second vice president. Walter understood it. Walter wanted to get elected.

**PFLUG:** So he wasn't too concerned about the vice presidency.

**BANNON:** No, well, one step at a time. I'm not saying he was enthusiastic over the gosh darn thing, but he recognized where we're at. A blind man could do that. But anyhow, Walter was elected, and the understanding was that Dick Gosser would run on the first ballot, NOT Jack Livingston. Dick came from Toledo and Dick had station wagon after station wagon filled with all of his banners, "Gosser for Vice President" and so on. Well, the thing got nasty from here on in.

Phil Murray came to that convention and Phil and R. J. Thomas were quite close and he was very close with George Addes and I don't think Phil had a great amount of respect for Walter, Walter being the intellectual type and Phil being more of a shop person. Phil got involved in the campaign after Walter was elected. I'm sure he got involved before Walter was elected, but he, like so many people, didn't think it was going to happen.

**PFLUG:** He didn't think Walter would make it?

**BANNON:** That's right. Most people didn't.

**PFLUG:** Except Walter.

**BANNON:** Well, Jack Conway was pretty good with the gosh darn thing and he would keep count and Brendan Sexton did a pretty good job keeping count. We had a few women there who helped us tremendously to keep count and see where the heck we were at. You never released these things. If people think you have it made, they may not work as hard. But Phil got involved and the end result was that he insisted that R. J. Thomas run for VP, the first VP. I had told Dick Leonard that I would support him for the vice presidency, not Gosser or Livingston. I spent a heck of a lot of time with Dick, trying to talk him out of running for second VP. Phil was insisting that RJ run for the first VP, which he did and was elected. So R. J. was elected on the first ballot and Dick ran on the second one.

**PFLUG:** Who was Livingston running against?

**BANNON:** Dick Leonard.

**PFLUG:** That put you in a bind.

**BANNON:** Well, not really, but Jack never forgave me.

**PFLUG:** So, you stuck with Leonard right through.

**BANNON:** I made a commitment, and you have to remember that about 12 of the people I was associated with had voted for Walter, and at that point in time, 12 was a large number. They voted for Walter, and if I were to vote for Livingston, then where the heck do I stand with those people from here on in? I stayed with a commitment as they stayed when the commitment was made. After the convention Dick became director of the Ford Department and he was vice president, but Dick only served one term as you know. Then in '47 we took everything over.

**PFLUG:** Who were some of the people involved in getting Walter elected? You had mentioned Conway and Sexton.

**BANNON:** The gang that really helped was the gang from Local 50. That was the bomber plant.

**PFLUG:** That was where Brendan was at?

**PFLUG:** Brendan yes, and Glen Brayton was very helpful, and there was a question raised that the people from Local 50 did not have the right to vote the number of delegates that they voted in that convention.

**PFLUG:** Was there some question about the membership?

**BANNON:** Well, you have to remember there was no longer a bomber plant. The war was over, so there's a question whether those votes were legal votes. That question was settled at the convention pretty much so. The bomber group was very, very important. The people from GM were pretty well lined up. So was Martin Gerber. Charlie Kerrigan, yes and no, the East was pretty much for Walter. Charlie wasn't going to antagonize anyone. You want to vote for Walter — vote for Walter. You want to vote for Addes — vote for Addes.

**PFLUG:** He didn't want to make any waves.

**BANNON:** That's right, yes. That was Charlie's way of life.

**PFLUG:** Where did the Ford locals fall in this?

**BANNON:** I would say that 80% of them were with R. J. Thomas. My own local union, Local 400, had 14 delegates and I think I only ended up with 6 or 7 voting for Walter. We did almost nothing with the blacks.

**PFLUG:** They were pretty much with Thomas/Addes.

**BANNON:** Surely. I don't know of any black delegate we had. Horace Sheffield — I think Horace stayed with us. He was from the Dearborn iron foundry — Rouge. Outside of Horace, I don't know of anybody.

**PFLUG:** He was in the Reuther . . .

**BANNON:** Horace was, yes. Horace was a soldier all the way through.

**PFLUG:** He gave Walter fits later on though, didn't he?

**BANNON:** Well, he gave Walter fits because Walter was unwilling to take a position on the TULC and the A. Philip Randolph group. You had Buddy Battle and Horace putting together the TULC and you had Jack Edwards putting together the Philip Randolph group — I can't think of the name of that right now. So you had a big split.

**PFLUG:** Walter was caught in the middle.

**BANNON:** Well, because Jack was on the board. He was more inclined to . . . He and Philip Randolph were kind of, well, very close. Horace created some problems, but back in 1943 at our Buffalo Convention, Horace took the proper position. It was a black issue back in '43 at our convention and Horace did the proper thing. Horace is anything but an Uncle Tom. The guy who really helped Horace was not so much Walter, but Leonard

Woodcock. Leonard needed some help, some black help. All he had left was Beckham, who was left over from Walter. So I recommended Horace. Horace was a loyalist.

There were differences within the black community that began to show up as a result of Dick Austin running against Conyers. When that seat was open, Dick Austin ran for the Congressional seat, as did John Conyers. John Conyers was elected. Well, this split the black community and above all, it split the black group within the UAW. Emil Mazey, for example, was way the hell over with Dick Austin. I was more inclined to go with John Conyers, although I didn't have that much influence in that district, but he used my name anyhow. It wasn't anything against Dick, but John was more my type of person. He was a fighter.

**PFLUG:** He had UAW roots, too.

**BANNON:** Yes, you better believe it.

**PFLUG:** In fact, wasn't he in Local 400 for awhile?

**BANNON:** Yes, John was and his dad was very, very active in our union and on our staff at Chrysler. But that created a heck of a lot of dissension within the organization. It's still in the black community from what I've been told, over who is going to be the leader within the black community. Right now there's not much of a question as far as Detroit is concerned — Coleman, but Bill Lucas is moving and moving fast.

**PFLUG:** Maybe he'll become a Republican any day.

**BANNON:** That wouldn't surprise me. I knew Bill when he first came here, before he was appointed sheriff.

**PFLUG:** Well, we kind of jumped ahead. Maybe we'd better get back. But that whole period after Walter's election, up until '47, was an uncomfortable time for the Reuther forces I take it.

**BANNON:** Well, a lot was happening. There was a lot of sparring going on. Before the convention in '46, we had the GM strike in '45 and into '46. It was a lengthy strike, and while that strike was on (and this speaks well for the people who were in office, Addes, the whole group) . . . Maybe you have this about the Ford settlement while the GM strike was on?

**PFLUG:** No.

**BANNON:** Well, this gets into the politics. So Walter, director of the GM Department, tried to provide an agreement that would give the people the same purchasing power they had in 1942. While that strike was on, the Ford contract came open (In the past, they were not open at the same time). It's February or March 1946 and Dick Leonard got a settlement from the Ford Motor Company for 18 cents an hour. Dick went before Walter and went before the officers of the union and said, "Okay, should I settle?" Walter still had the GM strike on.

**PFLUG:** And they were holding out for how much?

**BANNON:** They were holding out for principle, the same purchasing power in '47 that you had in '42 when the war began. The Ford workers settled for 18 cents and we had one hell of a council meeting. The Commies were accusing Dick of selling out and so on. The Addes group was supposedly supported by the Commies, but they did one hatchet job on that '46 settlement. I did quite a job at that council meeting selling the contract (it was in the Fort Shelby Hotel) and that contract was ratified by the Ford Council. GM settled for



the 18 1/2 cents. Then the politics really heated up — I'm sure you have all the brochures on the "bosses' boy", and so on.

Now we get into the period after Walter was elected. They had Walter hamstrung. Walter wanted to appoint Victor Reuther as Education Director. Now Walter had the right to remove people, and he has the right to appoint subject to the approval of the board. That part of our constitution has not changed. I think Crockett had charge of FEPC at that time, and one of the commitments was that Crockett would go and also we would have verbatim reports to the board, etc.

**PFLUG:** Well Maurice Sugar was still the union attorney?

**BANNON:** Yes, he was general counsel. Maurice Sugar and Ernie Goodman. Both excellent. You couldn't find better. Of course, Maurice went . . . We hired Irv Levy from Washington.

**PFLUG:** You get the feeling that as soon as Walter came in one door, Maurice quickly went out the other door.

**BANNON:** I knew Maurice quite good. I knew Ernie better than Maurice.

**PFLUG:** So Walter is trying to get Victor named Director of Education.

**BANNON:** He doesn't have the board with him of course; he won the presidency, but that's about all we won in '46. So the first board meeting is held in Chicago. The board would meet in different parts of the country at that time; they still do on occasions. He wanted me down there to help with Vic's appointment, because of my relationship with Dick Leonard and Dick's relationship with George Burt, Cy O'Halloran and a couple of other people whose names don't come to my mind.

So how does a local union president go to a board meeting? The Davis-Bacon Act was quite high on the agenda because of all the government work during the war. We had a bundle of money coming, so he decided to put the Davis-Bacon issue on the agenda. Well, Johnny Spagnol was chairman of the maintenance unit at Rouge, at that time. So, Johnny Spagnol and I go to Chicago on the Davis-Bacon issue. Walter places the item on the agenda, and we thought we would be down there for one day. I spent some time talking with Dick, and Walter had talked with me about this earlier, before we went down to Chicago. Bill Oliver, who was recording secretary of Local 600 when I moved over there in '43, was placed on Dick Leonard's staff . . .

**PFLUG:** Was he in 600 or 400?

**BANNON:** 400. Did I say 600? It was 400. He was recording secretary of Local 400. Bill Oliver used to sing with the Ford chorus, prior to the union being recognized, on national radio.

**PFLUG:** After the union got in did he lose his job in the chorus?

**BANNON:** Yes and no. Bill was the right color and capable, so Bill went on Dick Leonard's staff. Walter talked with me about Bill taking over before he went down to Chicago. He asked me what I would think about putting him in the Fair Employment Practice thing and to help to make arrangements with Dick too, to get support for Victor. It was done that way. Bill did not become the director, he became the co-director. Walter was the other co-director. Walter was the director really. Walter very seldom shared anything, but rightfully so, he was the president. It helped and Dick came to me the evening of the first day we were there and suggested that Walter forget about the Victor thing at the present time and get the Bill Oliver thing out of the way. Dick had to do some

homework, it was that simple. Walter, as you know, was kind of — it was the first board meeting — he wasn't too kind to some people.

**PFLUG:** Did you say he was or he wasn't?

**BANNON:** He wasn't. At the first board meeting. He changed completely after that board meeting. Not that I was at the other board meetings or at this one, fully. We decided to withdraw the thing and or to hold it over. The next board meeting was in Cleveland. At that time the boat between Cleveland and Detroit was running and Dick Leonard and I worked it out that we would stay in the same stateroom. This would save me all kinds of expenses. In the meantime Emil Mazey came back from the service and he's going to his first board meeting in Cleveland. Emil talked with me and said that he and Dick got along very well because Emil was part of the Ford drive. So Dick and Emil went down together and it worked out in Cleveland that Victor became the educational director, and this began the Reuther Caucus on a large scale. Our educational meetings, which were held about every year or every two years, were big affairs and it gave Walter an opportunity to appear before representatives from all of our local unions nationwide.

**PFLUG:** Why did you think that Director of Education was that important of a job? Why was Walter fighting so hard to get Victor named into it?

**BANNON:** It was the beginning of a large, large caucus. You'd schedule an educational conference and you'd have them in from every local union in the UAW and great things would happen. Walter was a great speaker. Dick wasn't bad, but Walter could get them going.

**PFLUG:** So this is one way for him to get through to the locals in that year when he . . .

**BANNON:** This was the main vehicle. You check the history of the UAW in the year '46 or '47 and you'll find that we had more damn educational conferences. You not only had them nationally, you had them regionally.

**PFLUG:** And that's how he put everything together.

**BANNON:** That was very, very helpful. He got before the local union leadership and it was nothing like Reagan getting before the general public on TV, but Walter came across good. Walter always said the right things. Sometimes he'd get you out on the edge of a limb and saw it off on you but he was back in the trunk, he wasn't the one out on the limb.

**PFLUG:** After he put everything together in '47 you became director of the Ford Department.

**BANNON:** Yes, I didn't really want the darn thing, I really didn't. As president of 400, I was doing very well there, enjoying it. Emil came back from the service, he took over the Veterans' Department and he wanted me to be assistant director of the Veterans' Department. I told him no way, but I had a candidate for him who did become assistant director of the Veterans' Department. Walter knew that the position was going to be offered to me. We talked and decided it would be wrong for me to leave the local union at that time, because Walter had almost nothing in Ford. You have to remember Dick Leonard was the director of the Ford Department and the vice president of our union.

**PFLUG:** So you were one of the few Reuther people in any of the locals.

**BANNON:** We had a Ford Council meeting in 1946 and I asked Dick to have Walter come and speak and he said, "No way, no way."

**PFLUG:** And he was the president of the union.

**BANNON:** He was president of the international union, so help me God. I got Frank Ellis from the Edgewater local, who's one of the people I could then depend upon; there weren't too many at Ford I could depend upon. I had enough at 600, I could split 600 pretty well.

**PFLUG:** You had 400?

**BANNON:** Yes, we had 400. What we did was to tell Walter he has to go over someplace where we can locate him fast. So we put him over in a hotel near Cadillac Square — where the old courthouse was. Then when the meeting got going in the afternoon, we sneak Walter in the back part of the Fort Shelby, and there was no way that they'd kick him out, so Walter could speak to the Ford Council meeting.

**PFLUG:** So Leonard wasn't going to let him speak and you snuck him in the back door.

**BANNON:** It wasn't just Leonard; Tommy Thompson was president of Local 600 at the time and Tommy was opposed to it. The only people on the negotiation committee who voted for him were Nelson Samp and the tall Polish guy, whose name may come to me yet, and Joe Eccles. I think Joe Eccles was chairman of the council at the time and Nelson Samp was secretary and Tommy Thompson was a member of the committee. It was pretty bitter.

**PFLUG:** What happened when he spoke to the Ford Council?

**BANNON:** Well, that went over good. Who is going to criticize motherhood. Walter is not going to say the wrong things. That was a very important move.

**PFLUG:** You took over the Ford Department in '47, even though you didn't want to.

**BANNON:** Yes, I wasn't keen on the darn thing, I really wasn't. As a matter of fact, I went before my membership and asked for approval, I really did, at Northern High School. I used to have membership meetings at Northern High School and fill the auditorium upstairs and downstairs. Number one: I didn't think that . . . I was never on the staff of the international union, and to take over the operation of the national Ford Department and president of a local union, that's a hell of a job.

**PFLUG:** But there wouldn't be anybody else from Ford on the staff . . .

**BANNON:** Well, yes, it was kind of limited. But there were a few people.

**PFLUG:** Was McCusker on the Reuther side?

**BANNON:** Well, Joe, yes and no. Joe was defeated as president of 600. It was the period of time between the '46 and '47 conventions — kind of a busy political time.

**PFLUG:** I can imagine.

**BANNON:** There's not much that you can point to in terms of accomplishments are concerned for the rank and file, like bargaining or otherwise.

**PFLUG:** I suspect both sides had each other's hands tied.

**BANNON:** Taft-Hartley went into effect in 1947, August 21st or 22nd. Well, the Ford contract was up and this is where Maurice Sugar played a very important part in the Ford negotiations. Under Taft-Hartley you had a liability clause that stated that a union could be liable for wildcat strikes and so on. So Maurice Sugar worked out a non-liability clause.

**PFLUG:** For the Ford contract?

**BANNON:** For the contract, but they were running against the clock, and what they did was they turned the clock back on the 21st or the 22nd, they turned the clock back quite a few hours, so they could say that they did meet the deadline.

**PFLUG:** What do you mean by turning the clock back?

**BANNON:** By midnight Taft-Hartley comes into effect. We had a union shop in Ford. Under Taft-Hartley, the union shop would go out at midnight. If you signed it before midnight, before the effective date, you had one year in which to have an election to decide whether the membership wanted to retain it. As Taft-Hartley then read, it wasn't a matter of getting it, but a matter of retaining it. We killed it in Ford as a result of our vote. Taft-Hartley said that any person who did not vote was a vote against union shop. So it was awfully important that they put this thing together before the midnight deadline, to protect the union shop and some other things. As part of that package, they also had a pension program and this got national visibility.

**PFLUG:** There wasn't any sort of pension program anywhere.

**BANNON:** Except the coal fields. The coal fields had a pension program based on tonnage. So we had nothing we could follow. They put that thing together and again I was the only person that the Reuther caucus had with any meaningful influence in the Ford system. I got my membership to okay putting together our paper called the Watchword, which explained the pension program and why it should not be ratified, and got enough copies out to Ford workers nationwide. I couldn't mail them to their homes, because I didn't have that kind of money, so packets were left at the local unions. There was kind of an emergency meeting of the Ford Council held right before the Taft-Hartley deadline. I defeated the pension program at that meeting; they couldn't get enough support to

recommend it. What they did then was go back and change a few things, but the changes were worse than the original. Anyway, Tommy Thompson took a swat at me (he was chairman of the committee) in front of everyone.

**PFLUG:** You were still in 400 at this time?

**BANNON:** Yes, everything was kind of hectic and I . . . He was so angry.

**PFLUG:** You said he took a swat at you?

**BANNON:** Yes, he really did, he was really boiling mad. Well, that pension program was going to be administered jointly, they claimed. Two from the company and one from the union — he'd already been selected by the union. The fact that we knocked that thing down had a great impact. It left them sort of disorganized . . . I think it took the heart out of Addes, Thomas and Dick. I know it hurt Dick, and that bothered me. Then we got all kinds of national publicity on the union story and then we got ready for the delegate vote, which we won handsomely. Dick was quite bitter and I went over to talk to him on three different occasions. I wanted Dick to come and work for us. He finally did, of course. First, he went to work for Phil Murray and then he came to work for Walter in the IUD Department.

**PFLUG:** When you became director of Ford, you had to start from scratch then.

**BANNON:** Yes, but coming from the shop, I had some excellent ideas as to what the people in the shop wanted. When I became director of the department in 1948, the Ford contract was only open on economic issues and I had a rough way to go politically at Ford at that point in time. Tommy Thompson was president of Local 600 and Walter convinced me over a long period of time to put him on my staff, which I did. But Tommy was bitter as hell. The committee in 1948 was comprised of Shelton Tappes, who was



black and was anti-us, Percy Llewellyn, who was our ex-regional director, defeated in 1947, Pat Rice, a rebel from Ireland, a guy from the West Coast . . .

**PFLUG:** This was the negotiating committee?

**BANNON:** Yes, the negotiating committee. . . . a guy from the West Coast who was a regional director, but he's dead now; his last name began with an "M."

**PFLUG:** Lew Michener?

**BANNON:** Lew Michener, yes, he was on that committee. Warren from out in Northville. 80% of that committee was really opposed to me.

**PFLUG:** You had to work with these people, you thought you could get something done.

**BANNON:** Yes, the union shop vote was up. I had to have that before August and Bugas wanted that thing counted plant by plant. Well, Frank Bohlen was the regional director of the NLRB at that time and Harold Cranefield was the legal counsel. Thank God for both of them. Who the hell could I go to? I couldn't go to Walter, what the hell, Walter was all banged up, he was shot. I couldn't go to Emil — I had enough problems. And I love Emil, I'm very, very fond of the guy, but Emil wasn't too good in a situation like that. Brendan helped me. I can't think of the guy's name who helped me put together the book "We Work at Ford" — Lou Carliner. Lou helped me with putting the leaflets together. Lou helped me greatly as did Frank Winn and Conway.

**PFLUG:** He was in the Education Department?

**BANNON:** Yes, Lou helped me greatly. Anyhow, as a result of the intervention of Frank, we went down to Washington and went before the General Counsel for the NLRB, I can't think of his name now. It occurred at a time when Ford was having a

showing for their car in New York city, so they had to come in too, to Washington. The legal counsel for the NLRB ruled that the vote would be counted nationwide.

**PFLUG:** So it was company-wide and not plant by plant.

**BANNON:** Yes, but the company ran it plant by plant and you had to work a lot of things out. I wanted elections on company property. Well, Bugas was willing to agree to have elections on company property, but he wanted to pick the locations and the hours. Well, again, this is why we were in negotiations. I had a committee. Now, this committee would like nothing better than to see me go down the drain.

**PFLUG:** They were going to pull the plug and watch you go.

**BANNON:** So I went to visit Walter, who was at home on Appoline street at the time, recovering. He said maybe Jack Livingston could help me. I said that I didn't want Jack in there. Jack came in anyhow. I don't know if you know Jack too well, but I hope you spend some time with Jack. Anyway, Bugas said that you can have it on company property, but I'll pick the location and also the timing. I told John, no way. Livingston came in and tries to smooth Bugas over and Jack agrees with John. I said, "Jack get your ass out of here"; I had to say this in front of the whole committee.

**PFLUG:** He was vice president?

**BANNON:** Yes. I was appointed director of the Ford Department, I wasn't elected. So we go ahead and we have the union shop vote, not on company property. Anytime you have a crisis, anytime you expect to bargain, you can always rely on the corporations to help you — they're stupid. They're absolutely stupid, unbelievably stupid. If you want to rile up the membership, just keep your mouth shut and let the company do the job. So that's what they did. They take a guy who worked for our union, who helped

organize Ford — John Ringwald, who then worked for Ford Motor Company out at the bomber plant — and put him in charge of the union shop vote. It was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. This guy was well known for jumping over to the other side of the table. Well, that did it. We had 90% of the Ford workers voting 90% plus in favor of the union shop. That was under Taft-Hartley, or that part of Taft-Hartley, rather. That was a worrisome time for me. I really was being tested; can I organize the thing and do the thing and so on? It worked out wonderfully well and the following day, after the count was official, our negotiations were taking place at the Rackham Center and I went into that meeting cocky as hell and I just ripped that company apart 15 different ways. My language was pretty, pretty vile.

**PFLUG:** So you had to put together a staff in the Ford Department as well. Where were you going to get these staff people while the locals were fighting you?

**BANNON:** Well, as I mentioned to you, I had quite a few friends at 600 and almost all of my staff came from 600. Nelson Samp, who was Secretary of the Ford Council, had been on Dick's staff and I retained him. The other people — I gave them their notice and they left. I kept Monroe Lake for quite a while, but then the officers, Dick Gosser in particular, insisted that Monroe Lake go, because Monroe was very close to Dick Leonard and campaigned viciously against Gosser in '47. I took Gene Prato from the steel division. I was going to put Bill McIntosh on from the A building and then we decided to put him out in McAulay's region. He had a region out there at that time, because Ford was moving into the Sterling Heights area. I needed somebody from the assembly plant so I took Sonny D'Agostino from the B building, Dearborn assembly. I really had a very small staff, five, but that was enough.

**PFLUG:** You only had five friends.

**BANNON:** I had many friends — my quota for staff was 5. Once you're in that chair and do the work . . . The thing that I would do is I would go to the membership meetings. At that point in time you weren't competing with TV and they didn't have enough money to go into the beer gardens. Most locals had their meetings on Sunday.

**PFLUG:** There was a large turnout.

**BANNON:** Yes, and I'd go to the membership meeting and I used to have some fine times. The leadership would try and take me on. It gave me an opportunity, what the hell, you can't lose at a membership meeting. They may vote against you, but that doesn't mean a damn thing.

**PFLUG:** As long as you're there.

**BANNON:** Yes, but heck, they can't take you out of office; they'd have to defeat Walter to do that. It gave you an opportunity to get to know the membership and the most important thing it did — word went around, "Don't tamper with the guy because he'll come to your meetings and he'll tear your ass out." This creates friends and it nullifies the enemies.

But I always did that, and as the years went by I continued to do it. If you're willing to go before the membership and talk to the membership — no one's perfect, I made mistakes, but I could tell them why and how and I got along well with them. There wouldn't be problems that way, and if you earn the respect of the people, you earn the respect of the leadership. It didn't take very long to turn it around, it didn't take long at all. In 1949, when we were getting ready for the pension thing . . . It was unbelievable that we came out of the '49 negotiations with just the pension thing, and we had some new plants at

that time in New Jersey. People down there, hell, if you had two years seniority you had a lot.

**PFLUG:** Pensions were the farthest thing from their mind.

**BANNON:** Yes, but they voted for it. It was unbelievable. There was no wage increase, because the Truman steel fact-finding committee was meeting. Then we got the green light from Phil Murray, but that's another story.

**PFLUG:** This pension plan that was put together in '49, was that the first one in the auto industry? Was it the first one in any heavy industry?

**BANNON:** Yes, in any heavy industry.

**PFLUG:** Who were the people who put that together?

**BANNON:** It's a long, long story.

**PFLUG:** You had mentioned that there was a plan proposed in '47.

**BANNON:** There was a plan proposed in '47, and the actuary who was working for the international at that time is now one of the biggest concerns in the entire world on pension programs. They don't function too much outside the country, but where need be, they're the ones who are called upon. The actuary was Segal who was employed by the international union — Addes, Thomas, Dick, in '47; their offices were in New York. They put that program together in conjunction with Ford Motor Company. I tore it apart and — well, what do I know about a pension program?

But Abe Zwerdling worked for us at that time, worked with Walter and his brother Morris was a federal attorney. So I would go to all the Ford Council meetings and I would get all the information and take my notes and then I'd call Morris or I'd go down to see him, because for pension approval you go through the Treasury Department. I had a lot of

ammunition from Morris Zwerdling. At the next meeting that we would have on the pension thing, I just asked all kinds of questions, some rather embarrassing. The top man Segal, whose name is on the concern, who headed up the organization at that point in time, he hired a young fellow, a brilliant guy — let me tell you I met my match. He did a fine job, but you couldn't overcome the fact that it was a contributory program. In early '47, GM (again, we weren't all tied together) had settled for a 12 1/2 cents an hour wage increase and three paid holidays.

So now I have to go back to this midnight deadline. Ford Motor Company recognized that the pension program was going to be down the drain. They didn't think that it was going to be ratified and they had said this publicly. So when they put this thing together in August of '47, Bugas suggested the 12 1/2 cents an hour and three paid holidays or the pension program or none. Bugas takes credit for that in the staff meetings he held. I would get copies of these staff meeting books. It wasn't a difficult thing to turn down, the pension thing, because of all the reasons that I had just mentioned to you.

There was a real big to-do about the non-liability clause and 20-minute paid lunch period, the non-liability clause which was really built up to protect the union and all that. The 20-minute lunch periods thing was to go to the arbitrator, Harry Shulman. But that was a giveaway and I ran like hell with that, because we had the 20-minute lunch period in the greater Detroit area. I tore them apart with that darn thing with the publications that I put out. Why would you submit an issue involving 20-minute paid lunch periods to an arbitrator?

**PFLUG:** When you already had it.

**BANNON:** We had it, a deal was made. I could smell it, it had a bad odor. I became Ford director at this point. I asked Harry, the arbitrator, if there was a deal made. He said, "Yes." So I said, "Write it up. I'm not going to come down to testify why we should have it if there's been a deal made. Do it!" And he put it in his decision, the 20-minute lunch period decision. The non-liability clause stated the director of the department and legal counsel would be the union committee. Abe Zwerdling was my legal counsel. The clause said that the union and the company would meet and put together language whereby the union would not be liable providing they did a certain number of things.

I got with Abe and we met in Bugas' office. Bill Gossett was there, vice president of Ford Motor Company in charge of the Legal Department, in-house lawyer. Bill Gossett is Chief Justice Hughes' son-in-law. Bill is a decent son-of-a-gun, I always liked Bill. Anyhow, we got to 3000 Schaefer Road — that was Ford world headquarters then. Bugas' office was all white mahogany. Bill Gossett was reading out of a dictionary and John Bugas was bouncing a hardball on the floor and catching it. Abe and I were sort of astounded. Anyhow, that was my first meeting. They had prepared a document with all the things that we should do and would have to do in the event that there is a wildcat strike. If we did all these things, the company would not sue us.

**PFLUG:** A long list?

**BANNON:** A very long list. You did everything except commit suicide. Honestly, it was unbelievable. TV was very new at that time, but you even had to get on TV, radio, rent space in the papers, send your staff out and so on. Abe and I left and Abe's office was over at 411 W. Milwaukee downstairs through a back door. We sat there and glanced through the darn thing. I went up and saw Walter and went through the thing with

Walter and told Walter exactly what I thought about it. Walter was tickled to death. I'm going to tell them to stick it up their ass. So we set up another meeting and Abe and I went back over with Gossett and John and had a conversation, just a casual conversation to open the meeting. I took out the piece of paper and went over it and I said, "You know what you can do with it."

**PFLUG:** What did they do then?

**BANNON:** Bugas was really thundering. He said, "You can't do that!" He went through the history of this thing — Dick Leonard and Maurice Sugar, all the time they spent. "You almost caused a strike and now you're ignoring it." I said, "John, all you have to do is to sue us once and then you'll have problems selling cars." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You won't have any to sell." You see, we had a right under that contract to strike on production standard and health and safety. There was always oil or something on the floor. Anyhow, you have to go through the procedure to do it. And that ended it. That ended the glorious clause — the Maurice Sugar clause, that's what it was known as, the Maurice Sugar clause. But you think back and maybe it was a daring thing to do.

**PFLUG:** You got their attention though.

**BANNON:** If you had bought their package, I don't know if we would still have a union at Ford. There were quite a few wildcats back then at Ford Motor Company. We weren't too civilized and the pendulum had swung our way and we were trying to get redress for the old days. Ford Motor Company wasn't too sophisticated in labor relations then. Harry Bennett, I thought had a little bit of sense after the union came in. I think Bugas thought that he was with the FBI.

**PFLUG:** He was director of labor relations for quite a while.



**BANNON:** John?

**PFLUG:** Yes.

**BANNON:** Yes, John came to Ford . . . Mrs. Edsel Ford had him come in there in '43. He worked for Harry Bennett. I think he was on the payroll in 1944 for the Ford Motor Company. John handled the negotiations until 1958 — maybe it was '68 — he was there for quite a while. John was very close to Henry. He was on the Board of Directors at Ford Motor Company. He also became a very, very wealthy person. In order for Henry Ford to attract personnel to build up Ford Motor Company, it wasn't enough to give them another \$100,000 a year raise. So what they did was they set up two different corporations. This is how Mr. Breech came aboard.

What they did was they set up a Metropolitan Coach and Dearborn Motors. The Ford Motor Company made busses for years and years, and after the war they resumed making busses and in order for any city or any group to buy a bus, they had to buy it through Metropolitan Coach. Metropolitan Coach was owned by Ernie Breech, Davis, Caruso, that whole gang. When the tractor suit was settled, the Ferguson tractor suit, the same thing applied to the tractors; if you wanted to buy a tractor, you had to buy from Dearborn Motors. Dearborn Motors was owned by the same group. Once the Ford stock was offered, it became a different ball game. So John became a multi-millionaire.

**PFLUG:** Did Henry Ford II himself play any role at all in these negotiations? Did he become actively involved?

**BANNON:** Yes, he was there. I got along well with Henry. I cannot fault that guy, I really can't. We had our ups and downs at Ford. That was primarily because we were learning and they were learning. But there were other reasons than that. When the

product was moving, the relationship was good. When the product wasn't moving, forget about it. The other thing was that they brought in so many new people. Most of them came from GM — Caruso, Del Harder and people like that. They were bringing the GM approach in Ford and so you're having growing pains, us trying to get them to grow out of it and them trying to get us to grow into it.

**PFLUG:** Well, both sides were learning.

**BANNON:** Yes, but when the chips were down — not so much during the pension fight, but from that point on — if I needed help, I would call on him. He was there all the time — I shouldn't say all the time, but if there was a deadline, well, a few days before the deadline, when the crunch comes, he moves in. I can't fault him. Some people said that I'd never get 25-and-out for the foundry workers. He told Malcolm Denise to give it to me. It wasn't a big, costly item but there was a big principle involved with the thing. On the SUB, you can read all the things you want to on the SUB. That came about as a result of Henry and Bob McNamara, Dick Johnson and Nat Weinberg. You hear many stories about SUB. Nat did a lot of work on it, but Dick Johnson is the guy who did most of it; he did it after getting the go-ahead from Bob McNamara, who was then president and also Henry Ford.

**PFLUG:** The SUB plan was put together by those people.

**BANNON:** Jack Conway also had a lot to do with it. We were at our house at 9300 Piedmont in Detroit and Bob McNamara was living out in Ann Arbor. Jack and I sat on the stairway at our house on Piedmont and did a lot of talking by telephone to Bob McNamara out in Ann Arbor. We knew they had it. We didn't know exactly what form it

would take, but we knew they had something, because there are leaks in every organization.

**PFLUG:** You'd still be at the table.

**BANNON:** You wouldn't know how to go, you know. You're not going to throw it out, then throw it away. You want to make sure it has some meaning. The only way you're going to find out is if you get a little taste out there.

**PFLUG:** I think we got off of the subject a little. We were talking about the '49 pension plan and putting that together.

**BANNON:** We had no model to follow. I'll have to go back this way. We had this slogan: "Too Old to Work, Too Young To Die." We knew we were going to go to Ford because Ford had already recognized pensions in the '47 negotiations.

**PFLUG:** The seed had been planted.

**BANNON:** Yes, you'd take a look at all of these things. You had to take a look at the age group also. Rouge was not a new plant and it was heavily populated at that point in time. Harry Becker played an important part in this. He was not an actuary; he was more of a health medical man. Harry Becker used to be our Social Security guy. He was no pension expert, although he put together some heavy booklets. The three things we talked about in '49, the three things that we were opposed to in 1947: One, it had to be a funded program, there had to be some guarantees to it; two, it had to be non-contributory; three, it had to be jointly administered. These were the three things we talked about.

To give you a little background on the thing: Harry Truman was very apprehensive about high inflation, and the steel contracts were up in '49. The Truman steel fact-finding committee eventually came out with a recommendation that you could spend 10 cents in

steel, but not any of that 10 cents could be spent on wages. You could do it for pensions, for insurance, but you couldn't spend one penny for wages. But we didn't know exactly when the report was going to come out.

Walter and I met with our committee and said, "Okay, we can't put together a deadline at Ford, if steel is going to go out on strike." It would be foolish; while Ford had their own steel mill, they didn't produce enough. So we had to get the green light from the steelworkers before we could put a deadline together at Ford. Well, we got word as to when the fact-finding committee report would come out. Walter, Jack Conway, Harry Becker and myself went down to Pittsburgh. We went down on a Friday evening. The fact-finding committee report was coming out on a Saturday.

Phil Murray was president, and Dave McDonald, the secretary treasurer. We were across the street from the steelworkers office in Pittsburgh having lunch when the guy who used to be the steel representative over in Europe, from the Research Department, came dashing across the street and said that the report was there, they had flown it in. On Saturday, noon, the tail end of August, we went across the street and went through the thing and it was pretty much what I just said, talking about the pension.

We thought that we'd meet with Phil Murray that night, but Phil went to a corpse house, an Irish wake. Walter and big Jim Sullivan were there, Walter's bodyguard. So we went for a walk and Conway and I wanted a beer. We went into a bar, the four of us — I don't know where Harry went, maybe he was still studying the report. We had a couple of beers and had a lot of good fun.

The following day, Sunday, Walter was to sit in — only Walter, not the rest of us — on the steelworkers' committee meeting. They were going to make a decision there as

to what they were going to do with the report. Walter went to the meeting and we sat at the hotel and since we were going home that night, we checked out, but we forgot to tell Walter. We were in the lobby waiting and he came back and went directly to the room and put his key in only to find that it had already been rented to a man and a woman. So he came downstairs and told us that they were going to try for pensions.

So we flew home and got word to our committee that we were going to meet them that Sunday night in Walter's office. We met them Sunday night in Walter's office at 411 W. Milwaukee. We told them that we had to wait until steel had a try at it. Well, steel had their try in Cleveland and they didn't move, they didn't get ahead. Then we got the green light from Phil Murray to go ahead, because there would be nothing more happening from steel until we came out of it.

We gave Ford Motor Company a deadline, the 29th of September. We had begun our meetings with Ford on June 6th of '49. Ford Motor Company had a good committee put together and included in that committee was Bill Ford. Bill Ford sat that entire summer until we put that contract together on the 29th; I think he missed two or three sessions. That was a long, dull summer. I don't know if it's still there but there was a bowling alley down the street from the Rackham Center — the Engineering Center — and they had a little bar in it and we used to go down there, maybe two or three in the afternoon after the meeting broke up, and have a beer or two.

Almost all of the contract work was done before we got to the nitty gritty part of the pension plan. Where we began to fall apart on the pension thing was when we said that 8 and three quarters cents would be spent for pensions, eight and three quarters cents, leaving a penny and a quarter for insurance. I forgot exactly how we arrived at 8 and three quarters

cents, because, again, we had no background in this sort of thing. Maybe it was in the report, as I mentioned. Most things I remember well. Anyhow, as we went through the summer that year, we had big meetings, like the retirees at Cass Tech — you had pictures of that — and the picketing around the Rackham Center and different places. We did a lot of homework.

On September 28th at 3:00 in the afternoon — at this point we were over in the Wardell Hotel, that hotel adjacent to the . . . , over on Woodward Avenue. There was a penthouse there at one time.

**PFLUG:** Across from the Art Institute.

**BANNON:** They used to have a bar in there with girls with real short flimsy things on.

**PFLUG:** The Park Shelton.

**BANNON:** Yes, the Park Shelton. So we were meeting there, because now we're in the crunch. The deadline was the 29th, midnight the 29th. This was the 28th at 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon. Bugas called and got word to Walter that he wanted to talk with him. So he talked with him and said he wanted to meet with Walter and Conway at 6:00, but he doesn't want me there. No way, he doesn't want me there. Walter told John he'd meet with him, but he didn't tell him whether I'd be there.

I went up and there was Mel Linnquist, Malcolm Denise and John Bugas. At this point Malcolm Denise was working for the Legal Department, he wasn't working on John's staff. Malcolm was a brilliant son-of-a-gun and did a lot of homework on the pension plan. John looked at me and looked at Walter and said, "I told you I didn't want him in here." So John started off, practically begging. He said, "We don't have enough time. We didn't

think that you were serious. We can't do this thing by midnight. We haven't done enough work on it." He was pleading.

**PFLUG:** Let's back up a minute. Why didn't he want you at the meeting?

**BANNON:** Well, he knew I would kick him in the butt, because he knew that I'd made commitments to the Ford people that we were not going to extend this thing. I told them that when they started on June 6th. Our original deadline was July 15th, that's when our contract expired. That was renewed on a day-by-day basis because of steel. I had to answer to the membership. John did not understand — there weren't any of them that really understood the Rouge operation. You had an integrated steel operation in there. You can't cut that thing off at midnight! If you do, your kettles are going to freeze, your open hearth is going to freeze, etc.

**PFLUG:** You just don't turn it on and off.

**BANNON:** No, what the hell, at the point where you turn off the open hearth, you have to re-brick them. You have the steel haul, the thermal thing, if you want to call it the thermal thing. So you stop the hauler and the steel freezes, the hot metal freezes. Red Cassidy was chairman of the transportation unit at that time and I told Red to begin to stop the haul at 4:00 in the afternoon for the midnight deadline. It would take us that long to empty the place out. We still couldn't empty all the open hearths by 12:00 midnight.

**PFLUG:** So Bugas just wanted to have some more time.

**BANNON:** Bugas pleaded for more time. Walter listened to Bugas, pleading. I told John, "John it's turned on and I can't turn it off. It's not like an electric light switch." Walter knew what I'd done as far as steel was concerned and why I did it. Walter came from Wheeling, West Virginia. Walter knew steel. The furnaces are one thing and I'm not

talking about the steel furnaces, I'm talking about for annealing, for curing. But anyhow Walter said that it wasn't like a light switch — I'll never forget it — no way could you turn it off. Bugas made the mistake in saying, "Well . . ." I said, "John just give me the goddamn piece of paper saying you'll do these things. That's all I want. I just want that damn piece of paper. You read that '49 memo, and all that is is a little piece of paper saying that we were going to have a pension program, so help me God."

**PFLUG:** And we'll work out the details later.

**BANNON:** That's right. We'll work out the details later, and we put an effective date in there — March 1st, 1950, when the benefits would begin. We didn't make that one, by the way. The three points were in there — the non-contributory, the jointly administered and the funded. These three things were in there and in a vaguely worded way the 8 and 3/4 cents was in there.

**PFLUG:** You just filled it all in later on.

**BANNON:** What we did was we got Leonard Lesser from the Social Security Department in Washington — Leonard did a fabulous job working with us — and Ford Motor Company had their experts. We spent months, actually months, in the Fort Shelby Hotel working out that pension plan. Months! We lived there. Malcolm Denise — I can't think of the guy they had there, their pension guy, they had three people — and Leonard Lesser, Jack Conway and myself. We finally came up with a document that is pretty much intact today. The benefit structure and the eligibility rules have changed, but the basic program is the one we put together that far back. We were more concerned at that time with establishing the principle of a pension. Our benefits then were one hundred dollars a month, including Social Security, if you had thirty years of service or better.



**PFLUG:** This was . . .

**BANNON:** In '49, this was the benefit and this is what was in the formula, the benefits that were paid in 1950. It was retroactive to July 16th, 1949 — I told you the contract expired the 15th — so anyone who left Ford from July 16th up to March 1st would get their benefit, not retroactive, but they would be eligible as of March 1st.

Social Security had passed in '35 or '36, but there hadn't been one change in Social Security since that piece of legislation. The benefits remained the same, the eligibility remained the same. Shortly following our agreement with Ford, Ernie Breech, chairman of the Ford board, spoke in Youngstown, Ohio — I think it was Youngstown — to an industry group. He said that they had to change their thinking, they had to go to work, they should be going to Washington and doing something about Social Security. And Social Security did change; for the first time since it was enacted, the benefit began to go up. And I'm proud, so proud that we not only helped the people who were part of UAW and part of the Ford contract, but everyone else.

Art Johnstone was really the director of the General Motors Department, but he worked for Jack Livingston, who was the vice president. Art was the director of the General Motors Department the same as I was director of the Ford Department, appointed by Walter. Walter was the director and Art ran it for him.

In May of 1950 GM put together the five-year contract, as the Korean War began. As part of that contract, the benefit was changed to \$1.25 per month for each year of service, instead of the 100 dollars per month if you have 30 years of service or better. We directly tied it to Social Security. We not only had to put the language together but you had to meet the two federal regulations, one the Treasury Department and one the Department

of Labor. If that money wasn't going to be tax free or if the Labor Department wasn't going to okay the plan, then forget about it. A pension program has to show permanency for government approval. You can't put together a pension program to take care of the icing that you get on the cake maybe every two or three years financially. In short, you can't take a good year like '55 and say that you are going to pay up your liabilities now. You can't do that.

**PFLUG:** It has got to be year by year.

**BANNON:** You can't pay it off in less than 11 1/4 years. I think it's 11 3/4 years. The average benefit at Ford would have been about \$35.00 a month, Social Security-wise, which meant that at 65, it would come out of the funds. Top benefits at that point in time I think were \$45 or \$46 dollars. You had to do it every quarter.

The morning we settled, we were beat. I'm going back now to the morning of September 29th at the Park Shelton Hotel. Billy Ford comes up there with two cases of Pabst canned beer. Now canned beer at that time was something new. Hilda Sexton, Brendan's ex-wife, who was my secretary, was a clever person in many ways. How Hilda got this thing done I don't know. She got a decent piece of paper and made a scroll which said something like "This collective bargaining college of . . ." and presented it to Bill Ford as a graduate of this school, and I signed it and Walter signed it.

**PFLUG:** This was his diploma from negotiations, and it only cost him two cases of beer.

**BANNON:** It's these little things that count when you get through a very hectic session. The pictures that you have over there show people from many Ford local unions at

5 o'clock in the morning, witnessing that signing. That's the kind of pressures that were there.

**PFLUG:** What was Walter's role in this and other negotiations at Ford? Did he sell the package, or was he actively involved in putting some of these together?

**BANNON:** Walter was a key player. He seldom got involved in anything except the principle, when it was involved. Like pensions, and things like that.

**PFLUG:** He would just sell the idea that there should be a pension.

**BANNON:** Yes, Walter, philosophically, could convince almost anybody. Walter contributed greatly. His greatest contribution was the very fact that he had the power, the fact that Walter was there and he argued well and gave great presentations and he represented authority and power. You don't move people because you're right. You don't move these corporations because you're right. The fact that he had the long strike at GM following the war didn't hurt Walter at all as far as demonstrating to the corporations that he was willing to fight. Ford Motor Company would get upset with me and say, "How come you're not going to GM?"

And we had a period of time in '53 when we had the five-year agreement. In order to break that thing we had the "living document" theory. I'm sure you're familiar with the "living document" theory that almost killed all of us. In '55, the SUB. In '58, it was a no contract period. Again we went to Ford.

**PFLUG:** I've heard it said that when the UAW wanted money they went to GM, and that when they wanted an ideal or a concept they would go to Ford.

**BANNON:** Well, I've heard that said many times, but it was not quite that way. GM was too big.

**PFLUG:** That's what it really came down to.

**BANNON:** I signed a letter — it was a Reuther letter, but I signed it. We went back in with Ford and we wanted an increase for the retirees. Well, legally we represented the employees of Ford Motor Company, GM or whatever. We do not represent retirees; they were not employees. It was a fact. So Ford Motor Company made it very clear. Walter tells them, "Well, just this once and we'll never ask for it again." So Ford Motor Company put together the "never-never" letter. I signed it! We're going to have an increase for the retirees, but I signed a never-never letter.

**PFLUG:** You'll never come back and ask for an increase.

**BANNON:** Never. It's comical now, but it wasn't then. We used to have picnics for our retirees over on Belle Isle. They were all assembled over on Belle Isle, the place was very crowded, buses coming from all over, Flint and all over. At that point we used to serve them beer. Walter gets up there and gets carried away saying, "We'll get you an increase next time at the bargaining table," and so on.

**PFLUG:** This was after the never-never letter?

**BANNON:** Yes! After the never-never letter. I'm on the platform, listening. Emil came over and asked me, "Did you hear what he just said?" I said that I heard it and that he didn't have to worry — he didn't sign the letter. That was bad, and Ford Motor Company accused me of bad faith. It was bad, there's no question about it, and I felt bad about it. Anyhow, when we went to bat again, the company said that the letter was legal and we don't represent the retirees, and so on. There was a court decision on this. So Walter said, "Okay, good. We don't represent them, so therefore at the point they picket you, don't ask us to remove the picket line."

**PFLUG:** Those aren't our people.

**BANNON:** Yes, that kind of thing. That kind of quieted things down. But it did not erase the bad faith issue, and I think Ford Motor Company eventually forgave me, if there was such a thing, in collective bargaining. I think they realized what had happened. I did not say it and Walter was the one who said it. But we should never have put the letter together anyhow. As I said earlier, I've made mistakes, and I don't know who hasn't.

**PFLUG:** The idea that you go to GM for money and Ford for the concept was mainly because GM was so much bigger. There wasn't anything particularly progressive about the people at Ford that made it easier to sell.

**BANNON:** Just look at history. We didn't win the strike in '45-'46 at GM that we settled at Ford for 18 cents! We didn't win the strike in 1970, but GM recognized that there would be guerrilla warfare if they beat us. There's things worse than a formal strike. The imagination of a guy working in that assembly line is greater than the imagination of Einstein.

**PFLUG:** You mean in terms of slowing things up?

**BANNON:** In terms of I'm going to screw you. He has eight hours a day to think about how he's going to screw you! Then they get together and they talk to one another and . . . Guerrilla warfare is the worst thing that could happen in any shop.

**PFLUG:** Because you don't know what is going to happen.

**BANNON:** You don't know then they are going to hit. If GM had kept us out over the Christmas holidays in 1970, you can imagine what would have happened.

**PFLUG:** You'd have real problems.

**BANNON:** Sure. I have said many times that I don't buy that thought that you go to Ford for principle and you go to GM for money. You have to remember that money is fairly easy to get in collective bargaining. Why? Because they price the end product.

**PFLUG:** It's not coming out of their pocket.

**BANNON:** People who have been part of this business . . . And I can understand the newspapers saying this and that — it makes good reading. I knew and everybody who sat there knew that money wasn't the issue. It's the principle of the issue with these guys. What part of management are they going to give up? What rules are they going to live with? These are money matters. You can keep raising the price of your product, which they've done. They take advantage of the wage increases. I've never bought that thought, and it's only a thought really. If Chrysler could set prices, then you would go to Chrysler.

**PFLUG:** What was the position of Chrysler in the forties and fifties? They had to go out on strike for their pension in '50.

**BANNON:** Well, we put together a pension program. After we put it together, Phil Murray goes back in with steel. They take the 8 3/4 cents and instead of talking about funding, they said this is what it's going to cost. Then this becomes a pattern in steel. Now we have the steel pattern and the Ford UAW pattern. The steel pattern is cents-per-hour — it's not a funded program. I mentioned earlier that the 8 3/4 cents was in this memo, but in a vague way. The Chrysler Corporation took the position that the steel pattern applied to many more workers than the Ford pattern. Therefore, that was the pattern, and they took us on that issue. This was when they offered us all kinds of money — I don't remember the exact amounts. But they were prepared to put it into a pension program, which in their opinion would give the people security — pension security. We didn't buy that. We

wanted a funded program. But they didn't understand the difference between cents-per-hour and a funded program. Chrysler hung onto that and that's why we had the long strike. That's why we had that strike with Chrysler. It was kind of a foolish strike, but some of the people from Chrysler said that they had protected the funding principle, which in reality they did.

**PFLUG:** They didn't set the principle.

**BANNON:** No, they didn't set it. The steelworkers monkeyed the thing up.

**PFLUG:** One of the other things in the '55 negotiations was SUB pay. That was the beginning of the annual wage — the guaranteed annual wage.

**BANNON:** Yes, the GAW as we called it. There were different ways of going about it. Nat did a lot of work on the program that we were presenting, and Nat would bring the results of his labors to the study group. They would chew it up. I got into one or two of the meetings a little bit, but it was too technical; furthermore I had an idea what was going on at Ford. Dick Johnson had taken a suite of rooms at the Dearborn Inn. There was all kinds of equipment in that room and through Paul Domini we were able to pick up some of the papers. We had a pretty good idea that they were doing some work on the project. There wasn't any SUB thought or anything like that — just the principle of pay during layoff time.

In '55, GM tried to avoid it. I'm sure that GM knew what Ford was doing. They worked pretty closely together. More so than they do now. Jack Livingston was the Director of GM during this period of time. We were really making progress with Ford — at least it seemed that way. We were talking on the subject matter and so forth. This was around May. So Ford Motor Company asked for a recess. They wanted to put some

papers together, and we were very happy to get a recess. They were going to present their package and our hopes went up. During the recess GM presents their wheel of fortune to the UAW GM Committee. It was very close to Memorial Day, and we went back into a session with Ford. Ford trots out their presentation. Ford passed out their books and Walter sat next to me and Malcolm Denise started reading. While Malcolm is reading I'm thumbing through it, and I said, "Wow, this is GM — the GM book" with Ford's name.

**PFLUG:** That's when it hit the fan.

**BANNON:** That's when the shit really hit the fan. It was the damn GM thing and it was really bad. That was a nasty, nasty session. We called a special meeting of the Ford Council. We called it in the cafeteria of Solidarity House and we invited Henry Ford to come to our meeting. Henry didn't come of course, but we went through the proposal and it was rejected unanimously. We knew why Ford was doing this. What the hell! GM said, "This is what you do." GM called the shots you know. GM could put Ford out of business by just cutting the price of their car. They may end up with a problem down in Washington with the Justice Department, but they could slice it so Ford would make very low profit, if any.

I didn't get too excited and I don't think that Walter got too excited, except that he wanted to whip up the troops, just in case. Then I went back home on Piedmont Street and Conway came with me and Jack talked to Bob McNamara by phone. This was over Memorial Day. Then we came back into session and Ford Motor Company begins to present their SUB program. We put that thing together, and we had some long sessions on that because when you have a rank-and-file committee, you have to make sure that they



understand what is going on so they can explain it the right way. Sometimes it takes a hell of a lot of patience.

**PFLUG:** You asked me to remind you to discuss Jack Livingston.

**BANNON:** Okay. So we put the SUB thing together and it was about 12 noon, and we were at the Detroit Leland. So we were drinking with Walter and he eats the cherry out of his Manhattan that we mixed for him, because he's going over to GM. He rushes right over to GM. You know Walter was a peppy guy. So he goes over to GM and brings Jack Conway with him. Jack Livingston doesn't want Conway at the meeting of the committee. But Walter was going to explain to the GM Committee about the Ford settlement. Walter isn't relaxed at all and he goes over to Jack Livingston.

**PFLUG:** Why was that?

**BANNON:** I don't know — just doesn't like him — his personality I guess. Their social backgrounds are completely different. So Walter is up on cloud nine and tells Jack to leave. So Jack leaves, which was unfair to Jack because Jack was a very key part of the SUB. He did more of the talking with Bob McNamara than I did. Walter goes to the committee and then he wants to meet with the company. Jack Livingston doesn't want anything to do with meeting with the company. He doesn't want to go in and he doesn't want the SUB program. It's hard to believe. Then there was one hell of a row.

**PFLUG:** Within the union?

**BANNON:** Between Jack and Walter. That started the big split in our union.

**PFLUG:** Why was he opposed to the SUB?

**BANNON:** He was upset with Walter's activities. He wasn't satisfied with his role in life. He thought that he should be more important within the UAW. One thing

everybody should recognize is that if you're part of the UAW, there's only one president. If you want to change it, then change the constitution. No one has any important rights in our union, except the president. The secretary-treasurer has a few rights as far as money is concerned, but damn little. Maybe you remember this term: "Chinese copy." Lou Seaton was head of the Industrial Relations Section for GM. Lou Seaton had said publicly that he bought the SUB program, Chinese copy, patches and all.

**PFLUG:** What does he mean by that?

**BANNON:** Chinese copy is exactly what was signed at Ford, including the corrections that were made. In short, the point is that you put a program together at Ford and you're reading the thing and you cross out this word or that word and pencil in something else. You may change this word and put your initials here and there. That's a Chinese copy.

**PFLUG:** So Seaton is saying he'll buy it word for word.

**BANNON:** That's right.

**PFLUG:** Livingston is saying that he doesn't want it.

**BANNON:** That's right. Well, that was within the committee. Then word came back to Walter later on that Jack had already told the GM Corporation that. But GM knew well that they were headed for a strike and they didn't want that either. How do you strike when the pattern is there? Particularly when they had their crack at leading. They had their wheel of fortune. So they had a bite of the apple and they lost. That was a pretty nasty situation. There were big differences between Walter and Jack Livingston, very big differences. Would you be interested in knowing how Jack left the UAW?

**PFLUG:** Certainly.

**BANNON:** Nat Weinberg played an important part at the bargaining table. Dick Johnson did the work on putting together the framework for the SUB. You're talking about supplementing unemployment compensation — the state laws here and the state laws there and so on. Nat did a hell of a job. We had our [AFL-CIO] merger convention in New York City in 1955. The IUD Department was set up and the Organizing Department was set up. It was understood that Walter would head up the IUD Department. But there was no understanding as to who would head up the Organizing Department for AFL-CIO.

Jack Livingston called me following the convention to set up a meeting and we set it up for Saturday. We went over to Red Kemp's Restaurant and snacked there. Jack asked me if I would talk to Walter about him becoming Director of Organizing for the AFL-CIO. I said, "Are you serious?" He said, "Yes, I want to become Director of Organizing for the AFL-CIO." I said that I would talk with him.

Jack and I chatted in greater detail. He didn't have to tell me about the problems and differences — we all knew what they were. As a matter of fact, we had a staff meeting on what Jack was doing at the Detroit Hotel before it turned into a nursing home. What I mean when I say "staff" is that we called them in from all over the country. It was on a Saturday and it wasn't a very nice thing. Walter really put the wood to the ones who were with Jack Livingston. I went back to the office and called Walter. He asked me if I could come out — he was out on Longfellow at that time — and I said, "Sure."

So I went out and saw Walter, and he knew that I had had a few drinks. Then he asked, "Are you drunk? He couldn't have said that to you." I said, "Walter, damn it, I don't lie." He said, "Okay, have him see me Monday and tell him I'm willing to give real serious consideration to talking about it to Meany." I called Jack on Sunday and he went in to see

Walter on Monday. At the AFL-CIO board meeting in Washington, Meany is making appointments (I got this from Walter. I wasn't with him so I wasn't witness to this). So the meeting begins and George gets through the appointments and they're all approved, including Jack. George says, "Now let's get into our session and I'm asking all the appointees to leave." Walter said, "Poor Jack had to sit out in the hallway."

But Jack did a good job of organizing for the AFL-CIO. I liked him. I always thought that he was too ambitious. He was in the wrong league for that. He was a very capable guy. He had the ability, but he didn't have the personality to rise up.

**PFLUG:** One of the things we skipped over and that I want to get back to is the shootings of Walter and Victor. I hadn't realized that you were involved in that too — some thought that they were after you as well.

**BANNON:** That's what the police said, and they staked out our house on Minock for a year and a half. No one could get in or out of our house. They had to get through the police. The police didn't take it lightly and neither did the two people that the UAW hired.

The day that Walter was shot I had breakfast with Walter and May on Appoline. I picked Walter up to take him over to 3000 Shaefer Road to meet with Ford Motor Company. Don Montgomery, who was our Washington representative at that time, was to meet us there. The reason for meeting with Ford was . . . As you know, they had an integrated steel operation. At the point that you bake soft coal, you create gas and you have the big storage tanks at Ford. 1948 was kind of disastrous for industry in the greater Detroit area. There was a shortage of fuel — gas. The purpose for meeting with Ford was to ask them to take their gas and store it in the cavities out in Mt. Clemens. There were all kinds of cavities out there where you can store gas so that when the winter months come,

you can pump it out of the cavities and use it for industrial purposes or for whatever purpose you wanted.

We had the meeting with Ford and it went very well. Some work had to be done on it. Don Montgomery wanted to see Gate 4, where the Battle of the Overpass took place. I drove Walter and Don over to Gate 4 and I talked to the plant protection people; I didn't go up with them. Don and Walter went upstairs and Walter went through the gymnastics — I could watch him from down there. They even sat on the steps. Then I drove them down to the Book Cadillac Hotel and dropped them off at the board meeting.

That evening Alice and I went over to Canada for dinner and the little girl across the street was baby-sitting for us — we were in Herman Gardens. We got word that Walter had been shot, so we dashed home. The little girl who was taking care of the children told us that Walter was in New Grace Hospital. So I went up to New Grace and Vic was up in the room and May, of course. I got there before the doctors came and his arm was in shreds with a towel over it. I spent a few minutes talking with him. The guy who was prosecutor at that time, the Irishman from Grosse Pointe, I can't think of his name, he wanted to know what Walter said to me and he was going to arrest me if I didn't tell him.

Then the thing happened to Vic. Vic lived near the Kelvinator Plant, which, again, wasn't too far from where we were at. We lived at 9200 Minock in Detroit and there was a big vacant lot in back of us. On occasion, according to the neighbors, there was a car parked back there — sort of a lovers' lane or something like that. Then this one evening — we had Venetian blinds on the window — there were young boys playing out on the street there and this car pulled up to the side and parked kitty-corner so it could move four different ways. A driver was in it and a guy came up to the window and the kids saw him

and they yelled and he ran, but he left some materials there. And that was it. Following that, the guards came out and you couldn't get into your car unless everything was checked. That went on for about a year and a half. It was a pretty ugly way to live. When you traveled you had to have somebody with you. The reasoning being, I think, that we had cut off the racketeering.

**PFLUG:** In the Rouge Plant?

**BANNON:** Yes, and in Highland Park and other places, we just cut it off, period. We made certain that it was cut. This was the conclusion of the police. I haven't read all the police reports on it, but they're there. I don't think it was a personnel thing, a result of grievances that workers may have had.

**PFLUG:** You said that it was a terrible way to live.

**BANNON:** Well, the kids had to go to school with the policemen. And you never know what's going to happen to your children. How are you going to protect them all the time? In '48, the oldest was 12.

**PFLUG:** Were you director of the Ford Department when the administratorship was put over 600? Were you involved in any of that?

**BANNON:** You mean as far as the politics was concerned? Conway handled that more so than I did. The rationale at that time was this: I had to live with them. The administratorship is 60 days. Then you have to go through an election, and somebody has to pick up the pieces. I was the good guy. Even Mike Rinaldi and Carl Stellato said, "You can't fault him." As a matter of fact, one of the five Commies I put on my staff later was Dave Moore. And Ed Lock, Ed and I were personal friends. Ed and I worked in the same

department in the Motor Building and both of us were organizers back in the early days.

Johnny Gallo — I was there when Johnny was fired for laughing at old man Mays.

**PFLUG:** That's a bit of UAW history.

**BANNON:** Sure it is.

**PFLUG:** Did you have any involvement in the problems with the skilled trades?

**BANNON:** I didn't have a big problem. At Ford we were pretty pure.

**PFLUG:** What do you mean by that?

**BANNON:** The history of old man Ford was that he didn't want any outside contractors in there. Therefore, he developed his own — we had the best apprenticeship program, the best in the world really. We inherited it, when we got recognition, a department called N-700. N-700 was a construction department — built the buildings. You had in N-700 a fabricating shop, they'd roll the beams. The steel division at that time was more of a jobbing shop, except during the war, when it was pretty hard to roll beams to your specification. You had to roll them to the government's specification.

As a result of all this, we had skilled tradesmen of every variety. They weren't employees in training, they weren't upgraders, they were apprentices. We had the problem in the strike of '67. The '67 strike was a skilled trades strike. That was over money. The Society of Skilled Trades wasn't that strong in Ford. They were strong at GM and at Chrysler. You've got diluted trades there. In 1949, there was a letter in our contract addressed to Walter Reuther, having to do with the discontinuance of Department N-700, the Construction Department. But even in that letter it talked about under what conditions an outside contractor could come in. And then Harry Shulman clarified that thing, more in our favor I would say.

In 1967 we had the strike at Ford. It was a completely unnecessary strike. We knew that we had to get something for the skilled trades people. How much should we get for skilled trades? Before that strike occurred — this is where Henry comes into the act again — Malcolm Denise wants to know from me just what it will take. He wants to avoid a strike. I can't tell him. Does it take 50 cents? Does it take 30 cents for the skilled trades and half of that for production? Again, coming back to what I said earlier, money wasn't the big issue at the bargaining table.

**PFLUG:** You can always find the money.

**BANNON:** Yes, it was a matter of ratification. If you gave the skilled trades a buck and only gave the production workers 50 cents, would the production workers ratify?

**PFLUG:** Both sides had to ratify.

**BANNON:** Oh, sure, and one of the biggest mistakes we ever made in this union was made at the Long Beach convention. The convention said that we should have separate ratification rights for the skilled tradesmen — it was ridiculous.

**PFLUG:** It's given you problems ever since.

**BANNON:** Doug and I were not officers at that point in time and we had nothing to say about that thing. Then Woodcock called a meeting — Walter naturally condoned it — of skilled trades people at that convention in Long Beach. He presented to them — what the hell, they're not going to say no to something that's in their best interest. Then it gets out on the floor. What are you going to do — fight it? You're not going to win if you try it. So that was ratified and now I'll go back to '67.

That strike was on and it lasted about 60 days; it wasn't a short one. The only issue in that strike . . . And I don't care what you may have read or heard, it wasn't the cap on the



cost of living. That had nothing to do with it. The only issue in that strike was how much we give the skilled tradesmen and how much do we give to the production workers. I would sit with Walter and I would say, "Okay, where the hell are we at so we can settle it." He said, "What can you get ratified?" That's a hell of a thing to say, and I'm saying it for the record here. I'm sure Doug will agree with me.

**PFLUG:** Then you'll settle for what you can get ratified.

**BANNON:** That's right.

**PFLUG:** Did you have any idea?

**BANNON:** Hell no! I knew where we were headed. We just had to sweat it out and when they're out long enough, they'll ratify almost anything — almost anything, not anything. So we ran it out. Lyndon Johnson got into the act. This was done behind our backs. This is the dirty history of the UAW. Lyndon gets into the act and talked about the cost of living — like the cat chasing its tail and catching it — and how something should be done with the cost of living because it's inflationary. Time is running out and our people are getting a little bit anxious. You can keep them out for so long, but you better have a damn good reason. Ford Motor Company is not a bunch a slouches either. Nor is GM or Chrysler or any corporation that's worth its salt. They were getting word out into the field about what was going on, and once you get that play back . . .

**PFLUG:** You have to do something.

**BANNON:** We end the strike, cap the cost of living — we put together 50 and 20, if I can recall correctly, 50 for the skilled trades and 20 for the production workers. It was ratified and so we have the cap on the cost of living. Now we want the strike to end fast, because we're running into the holidays. We rent time on TV, not just in Detroit, but

throughout the network where Ford has plants. We put the thing together and we call a Ford Council meeting. Again, we're in a big hurry. We call it for 7:00 at night at the Veteran's Memorial Building. Well, a riot broke out down there. Pete Kelly and his gang were down there. We can't keep secrets. So they know what's in that contract and there was a big fist fight down there that night. I chaired that thing and Pete would stand outside chanting and so on, and I told our gang to go out and shut them up. Well, they did, they shut them up. The police didn't interfere, and so we got rid of Pete.

That afternoon, I got a room across the street from the Veteran's Memorial Building at the Pontchartrain — I was tired. So Walter comes upstairs, he and Irv, about 6:00. They could take their catnap, because I had to live with the committee. Walter is concerned with big principles. He's not concerned about how the committee is going to take this and take that. That's my job. That's true with GM, Ford and Chrysler. I wasn't treated any differently than anyone else. Walter and Irv started telling me how we're going to explain the cost-of-living thing. "Oh no, I'm going to tell them the truth, I'm not going to tell them that." So Walter said, "We may not get it ratified or approved." It isn't that the council ratifies it, they recommend it. "You want to explain it that way, go ahead." So he tells Irv to explain it.

**PFLUG:** To the Council?

**BANNON:** To the Council. Woodcock is at that meeting, sitting over on the register at the side. He said to me after, "How come you let Bluestone make the presentation on the cost of living?" I said, "Because I wasn't going to lie to them." He said, "Did he tell the truth?" I said, "No, he didn't! It's capped! There's no recovery until 1970, and then at the point when the cup is filled — the money — I forgot what the factor was at

that time, but any amount over it could be spent for wages or other benefits in the 1970 contract. But let's assume you had a dollar coming or if the cap only had 50 cents, there's 50 cents left there for the 1970 negotiations that you could spend. But you couldn't get the 50 cents until the '70 negotiations. So you lost that for part of the '67 contract. Irv didn't explain it that way. No way!

To make matters even worse, Pat Greathouse was in negotiations with International Harvester. Pat handled Ag Imp. We were on strike while we were in the process of putting the contract together. Once you reach agreement with Ford Motor Company, you have to call the officers together before you go to the Council meeting. So we had all the officers over at the Dearborn Inn. While we're at the Dearborn Inn, the phone rings in my suite. All the officers are there, except Greathouse. It was Pat Greathouse on the phone. He said, "I want to talk to Irv." I took the call, and he tells Irv that in Harvester they put together the contract, but there's no cap on the cost of living. Irv never said a word to me. He told Walter, "I have something to say to you." So they went into the bedroom and he told Walter what Pat had said. I didn't know this at that point in time, but I found out later that International Harvester was settling without the cap. Nothing was said. The reason Harvester settled without a cap is that they had already settled with the IAM without a cap — IAM had bargaining rights for the trades. So Pat was in an ideal position. It was pretty hard for me to forgive Irv for not telling me.

**PFLUG:** He was told to just hold off.

**BANNON:** That's right. But he did put together International Harvester — doesn't have a cap on it. That's not to the credit of the UAW, because we're pure and all that.

Well, in this instance, we screwed the workers.

**PFLUG:** Why?

**BANNON:** We put a cap on the cost of living and the workers lost some money.

**PFLUG:** Why would they have done that, just to get an agreement?

**BANNON:** Well, I mentioned that Lyndon Johnson got into the act. Well, maybe we were being patriotic, but I wasn't. But I didn't know about it. You don't do things like that. If something is happening in one part of the union that involves the other part, you should be told about it. That didn't happen. These are the things that are pretty hard for people to understand. There's great integrity.

**PFLUG:** Most of the time.

**BANNON:** Well, sure there's exceptions to everything, but as you can see, it still bothers me. Particularly if you went through what I went through — letting the strike run until we can get it ratified and then we'll make a decision how much it takes. How would you like to sit across from the top people at Ford Motor Company and say, "I don't know what it is going to take"?

**PFLUG:** We'll know when the day comes.

**BANNON:** Yes, "Tell us, we don't want this strike, tell us." Then Henry would call Walter and Walter wouldn't answer the phone. He wouldn't talk to Henry.

**PFLUG:** There is that limb again that you were talking about.

**BANNON:** Yes, but this time it was a damn tree! That's one you won't get from anyone.

**PFLUG:** Surely, not from Irv.

**BANNON:** No, but he won't deny it though. I sent him a memo on it. Then he called me and said, "Don't put things like that in writing." I said, "No, you don't say things like you said to me either."

**PFLUG:** How did you stand on the UAW split with the AFL-CIO? That was in 1968 when it came to a head.

**BANNON:** Well, Walter wanted it. I was upset with the AFL-CIO anyway, but not for the same reasons that Walter was upset. I supported Walter's position for a few personal reasons. He was head of the organization and that's what he wanted to do. Frankly, we weren't getting any benefit out of the merger. The IUD Department wasn't doing the things we thought they should.

The thing that disappointed me the most was . . . When I became a board member-at-large, Walter assigned me to Borg-Warner, Bendix, and Midland Ross, etc. I had a large number of them. Many of the companies, such as Borg-Warner and Bendix, had unions other than the UAW representing the workers. When I would call meetings of that council together to agree upon a program, you could get an agreement from the rank- and-file people or the local leadership, but you couldn't get support from the other international unions. I became very, very dissatisfied. And then the Allied Industrial Workers Union — they had bargaining rights with Bendix and other places — really gave me a rough way to go.

**PFLUG:** That was what was left over from the old UAW-AFL.

**BANNON:** Yes. The biggest problem that I had, though, was Ford building a plant in Sheffield, Alabama and the Building Trades Council in the Wheeler Dam area

petitioning for bargaining rights at the Ford plant. Number one: The Building Trades Council is not a labor organization and they had no right to petition.

**PFLUG:** Were they petitioning for the right to represent assembly workers?

**BANNON:** It was a die casting plant. No, they wanted all the workers. We were part of the AFL-CIO at that point in time, and Walter and I went down and met with Meany. Meany suggested we go to arbitration. [laughter] Honest, and the arbitrator ruled in our favor. Kirkland was his administrative assistant at that point.

So, different things have happened. The Borg-Warner thing was the biggest one. We never had a national contract with Borg-Warner and someone got word to Borg-Warner top officials that I didn't have horns. Their offices were down on Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Mr. Borg was willing to sit down and talk with me, so the two of us sat down and talked and we worked out a pension-guarantee system for our people and Borg-Warner. I figured that some of the other unions would . . . Nothing has ever happened, even to this day.

**PFLUG:** They never picked up on the pension plan.

**BANNON:** Well, it's a pension guarantee, plant by plant. If they go out of business, the people who were part of the plant will receive their pension benefits based upon the worth of their benefit at that point in time — that comes out of the general fund of the corporation.

So, I was with Walter . . .

**PFLUG:** Was there much opposition on the board?

**BANNON:** No, Emil was the only one. Emil was right. Emil said that we shouldn't have moved out. Emil expressed himself. Emil said that it was a personal thing.

**PFLUG:** Do you think that it was more than a personal thing?

**BANNON:** With me? I had my own reasons that I just mentioned. My serious thinking? It was VERY personal, VERY personal. Walter thought he was going to set some new standards. Walter was a great person, but he was in different league. They're playing hardball while we are playing softball or vice versa — it's the same ballgame, but you're using different tools.

**PFLUG:** So, because it was personalities, that's why the UAW and the AFL-CIO were able to come back together again in '77?

**BANNON:** Irv opposed that, but that's personal again.

**PFLUG:** For the same reasons?

**BANNON:** Well, Irv opposed it because he didn't think Walter would want it. Irv was pretty much like an adopted son. That was pretty much how Walter treated him. Walter always wanted a son, but never had one. I think that there was only one vote against it and that was Irv. There may have been another one, but I doubt it — with re-affiliation.

I had no problem with Meany. When you handle aerospace, you also handle GE, the big plants that are part of the UAW. So you get into coordinated bargaining, and the guy who headed up coordinated bargaining was George Meany for the electrical groups. You had five unions. We were third or fourth in size. You had the IBEW, the IUE, the IAM and the UAW and the Teamsters is another, about five or six of them. Well, George Meany was a coordinator with Lane Kirkland, who was like the administrative assistant, so he was the guy who did the work. I had representatives on that coordinated bargaining

thing and didn't involve myself until the point that I thought it would be helpful. I got along well with Lane and I got along well with George. There were no big problems.

Don't misunderstand, I didn't know him that well. I knew Lane quite well. Conway and Lane were very close. I always thought highly of Jack and Jack was upset with me over the Paul Schrade thing. They thought I double-crossed Paul — I didn't. As a matter of record, everybody knows what I said to him, because people were there when I talked to Paul. He asked to meet with me and Bruce Lee was there and Jerry Whipple was there and his administrative assistant was there. It's a matter of record what I said to Paul — and what I said at the board meeting to Paul, they understand me. But Lane talked with me one time and I told him to talk to Emil. So Lane spent some time with Emil Mazey well before they went back in. Emil was the stumbling block, not Irv.

**PFLUG:** Emil was opposed to re-affiliating?

**BANNON:** Well, he wanted some standards set. He wasn't really opposed to it.

**PFLUG:** He wanted to get something for it.

**BANNON:** He didn't want to go back with his tail between his legs.

**PFLUG:** Did he get anything?

**BANNON:** No, I think that he got the satisfaction of sitting down with Lane and having a bull session. At that time it was important.

**PFLUG:** Of course, in the period when you're out of the AFL-CIO, for awhile you were affiliated with the Teamsters — the Alliance for Labor Action.

**BANNON:** In the organizing activity. Well, we did a great job, didn't we?

[laughter]

**PFLUG:** That must have been an interesting marriage.



**BANNON:** Well, let me tell you, Jimmy Hoffa wasn't all bad. They can say all the damn things they want, but Jimmy took over an organization that was as corrupt as can be. I can say some things about the UAW that I'm not too proud of either, but the UAW didn't have that background. When Jimmy took over the Teamsters, it was rotten. I think he tried to do some decent things and that's why he's no longer around. It's pretty hard to change.

**PFLUG:** There were a lot of people entrenched like that.

**BANNON:** The power! Christ, it's cancerous. It keeps growing and there's no cure for the damn thing except killing it. That's the only way to cure it.

**PFLUG:** Walter paid the price and you almost did for doing the same thing at the Ford plants.

**BANNON:** Except he didn't die that way.

**PFLUG:** No, but you could have easily . . .

**BANNON:** It's hard for people who talk about the Teamsters and the racketeers and that stuff. But I know some things, too, about the UAW which I'm not happy about. Dick Gosser sure as hell wasn't a saint! A camp at Sand Lake, a hardware store and the uniforms, Christ! People knew this was going on. The Region 4 scandal, Emil and Doug knew about that long before it happened. Leonard knew about it. Jim Hamby came into my office with the cancelled checks and said there's nothing I can do about it. We photographed them and took them down to Leonard and showed them to Leonard. Bob Johnston . . .

**PFLUG:** The regional director in Chicago.

**BANNON:** Yes, Jim Hamby was his administrative assistant. And they had a falling out. Jim was his bag man. I showed the photographed checks to Emil. You know

what Emil told Ray Majerus when Ray took over? He said, "In that drawer on your right, there's some bad news." That's where the cancelled checks were.

**PFLUG:** So Majerus inherited the problem. Nobody is all pure.

**BANNON:** No, and they shouldn't pretend to be either. Then they're hypocrites.

**PFLUG:** You were telling me about how things came together after Walter was killed and what led up to Woodcock being elected. Can we go over some of that?

**BANNON:** Sure. We had the services for Walter and May in the Veteran's Memorial Building — we had them laid out at the Veteran's Memorial Building and had the services at Ford Auditorium. That was on a Friday. Following the services Ford Auditorium, it was prearranged, that the board would meet at Solidarity House and decide how we'd go about things. So the board met in Solidarity House immediately following the Ford Auditorium events. We had decided — the officers had met earlier, I might add — that Emil would be the honest broker and each of us would let Emil know our preference for who should succeed Walter. The officers would do it on a Monday and the regional directors would do it on a Tuesday. We were not to campaign for one another. We were to keep things confidentially to ourselves. We were not to talk to the press, not to talk to anyone. If we talked to anyone, word would get out to the press. **PFLUG:** It was big news.

**BANNON:** Sure. It wasn't just the Detroit press, either. There were the wire services, the international press was there, everyone. A lot of people said, "Why don't you have your telephones listed?" It was bad enough that they were unlisted. We went through hell at times.

Following the board meeting, we went down to the Pontchartrain at a big suite there, three bedrooms. It was called the Reuther suite. There were drinks and the board members' wives were invited. There were some very dear friends of ours there. Dick Leonard was down at the bar, and I had Dick come up later. People who were close to Walter were there for a cocktail or two.

When I got there I looked for Marcellius Ivory because he had worked for me and had become regional director. I'm told that he is in the bedroom with Victor and I wonder what the hell is he doing in the bedroom with Victor. I don't knock. Why should I knock, what the hell! There's no such thing as anything being confidential after a board meeting. So I go in and they're talking about Doug Fraser. I said, "Come on, Vic. Christ, we had an understanding." He said, "Well, you're for Doug aren't you?" I said, "Well, we can talk about that." I already knew what the hell I was going to do. Doug and I had talked about it well before the board meeting. There were several days between the tragedy, which was on a Saturday, and the Friday board meeting. What the hell — it doesn't take a mathematician to figure out that things are happening during that period of time.

Marcellius left and Vic talked about a meeting the following morning over at Doug's home. I said, "Who's going to be there." Vic said, "Doug, Irv and myself." I said, "Okay." Doug and I would be the only two board members there. Doug and I had a pretty damn good idea where the hell he was at. We wouldn't be talking out of school. He said, "Don't talk to anyone, it's a very confidential meeting." I said, "No problem." Anyhow, Vic was kind of a womanizer and Carol Johnston, Bob Johnston's wife, had had a few drinks and Vic was making advances. Bob wasn't drinking at all — Bob used to be a real alcoholic — and so words fly and then it cools off and a few other things happen. I go

down to the bar and invite Dick Leonard up. I figure, Christ, it wasn't getting too nice up there so I'm getting my ass out of here and going home.

I get home and Alice tells me that Jack Conway called and asked me to call him. He left word that he was at the Book Cadillac Hotel. So I call Jack and he asks me if I would drop by after the meeting tomorrow morning. I said, "What meeting are you talking about?" He said, "You and Vic and Doug and Irv are meeting tomorrow morning and I would like you to drop by." I said, "I don't have any idea what you're talking about, Jack." If it's off the record, it's off the record. The only thing you have in this game is your integrity. You don't have anything else. I was amazed that he knew about the darn thing.

The following morning it was raining and I got over there and Vic and Doug are going to Philadelphia to the Stonorov services. Milt McCartney was in from the Vehicle Workers Union from Australia. He was in for our convention and then he was on his way back when he got word of the tragedy of Walter and May so he came back. Winnie was there preparing something. I think Zelda was there. But the four men that were there that I just mentioned — it's a rectangular table in their room right off the kitchen. Doug lived downtown and Irv lived very close by. Vic was sitting at the head of the table and we were sitting alongside. So he tells us that Doug is going to be the next president and we have to keep all of our people in line. He said that Irv was going to be vice president. There was no way that Irv could become a vice president at that point in time. The constitution read that if there was a vacancy, it's filled from board members.

**PFLUG:** This was Victor?

**BANNON:** Yes, Victor. The Reuther dynasty, as he thought it was. I said, "Vic, are you certain of that?" He said, "Yes." So I said, "Tell me." So he starts off talking

about Harvey Kitzman. I said, "No, forget about him." He said, "Oh yeah, Harvey owes Walter this." I said, "Walter's dead." Vic says, "But he'll do what I ask him." We mentioned Ken Worley. I said, "I don't think so. Woodcock is aerospace director. Ken will lose his ass. You're not going to get Ken Worley. 80% of his region is aerospace." He says, "Bob Johnston." I said, "After what you did to Carol?" He said, "Bob owes it to him. He used to go fishing with Walter." I said, "Walter's dead. I'm sorry! Christ." I just shook my head.

They left for Philly, as I mentioned, and we sat there for quite awhile. I didn't do a hell of a lot of talking. Mostly it was reminiscing about Walter with Vic. Walter and I did this and Walter and I did that. Anyhow, I wasn't going to do it, but I dropped by the Book Cadillac Hotel. I had the room number, by the way, because I called the night before. I went into the suite. There were a lot of empty glasses and the smell of stale booze and beer around. But what the hell, everybody had to celebrate, or drown their sorrows, one or the other. Jack said, "Ken, what happened?" I said, "Woodcock is going to be our next president." He said, "What do you mean?" Paul Schrade says, "It can't be Leonard — he hates me." I said, "Well you campaign for him and maybe Doug can win."

**PFLUG:** So Schrade was in the room with Conway?

**BANNON:** Yes. So Jack wanted to know exactly what happened. I said, "I can't tell you what happened. Vic Reuther thinks Doug is going to win, and I don't think so." I'm not going through names with him. Paul would talk to our friends and we'd lose those people. I left and drove Milt McCartney out to the airport. Then I went home and that was pretty much all of Saturday.

Then I had a commitment to go to Oshkosh — a GE plant, I might add, was up there. I had delayed this thing on two different occasions. What reason do I have for not going? I'll go tell Emil where I'm at. I think I can do that tomorrow or the following day. I live up to my commitment at Oshkosh. But I told Emil; I called him at home and told him where I would be Monday. This refers to the agenda on Tuesday. Monday evening I fly in from Oshkosh, and Carl Stellato who was on my staff, and Walter Dorosh who was president of Local 600, met me at the airport. They knew where I was at — not that I said it to them, but they knew my relationship with Doug. The papers said that Doug was going to be a candidate and there was no hiding that one. There was no use denying it or admitting it. They told me that Pat had gone on TV, on the 6:00 news or whatever it was, and they interviewed him about his meeting with Emil Mazey and what his thinking was and what he told Emil.

**PFLUG:** This was Pat Greathouse.

**BANNON:** Yes, Pat Greathouse, and he was telling them he was supporting Leonard Woodcock and why he was supporting Leonard Woodcock. So I told Carl and Walter that I didn't believe it. They got a little bit upset with me, but I was in shock. I apologized to them and said, "Okay, let's get on the phone." So I call Doug at home. Doug said, "Yes, that happened." I said, "I'll go on Channel 4." (That's what Greathouse was on.) "And I will come out in favor of you." He said, "Will you talk to Emil?" I said, "Yes, what the hell, why not, he broke the rules, I didn't." He said, "No, let's be decent about it."

I went home and Alice told me that Leonard had called and Leonard said that he knew that I was away that day, and that he had called the other officers and he wanted me to know that he was a candidate. He wanted me to call Emil the following morning and

tell Emil that I wanted him for the presidency. I told him that I was sorry that I was not going to do that. He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, I don't want to talk about it now. If Emil gives me an okay, I'll talk about it after I talk to Emil." He said, "Why is that?" I said, "I'm not going to pull a Greathouse. I made a commitment. Remember, we weren't to talk to one another about this thing until it's over with." I was rough to him.

He didn't know about the Saturday meeting until well after. He should have had some better CIA people around him. But Leonard doesn't believe in things like that. Leonard did a good job for our union. Thank God they made the right decision in electing Leonard. I'm sure they did. I think Doug will agree with that. Leonard was disappointed.

So, I go down Tuesday to meet with Emil. I knew where the hell Emil was going, but this way he has to question me. I thought, "Brother you've already made up your mind." I was with Emil for about a good 45 minutes to an hour, but I wasn't going forward, I was going backward.

**PFLUG:** He almost had you switching.

**BANNON:** Oh, no! No! When it was all over with, I said that I would like to go down to talk to Leonard. So I went down and when I got there, Ernie Moran was there. He was going to leave. I said, "You don't have to leave, Ernie." I told Leonard why — no punches through the whole darn thing. Leonard wept. He thanked me for being honest with him. And I was the only person, by the way, who told Leonard why I voted the way I did.

The first board meeting we had after he took over the presidency, at Black Lake, he asked me to take over all of aerospace. I said, "Hold on, look what I have now." He said, "I'll take some away from you." Jack Edwards will take Bendix, Borg-Warner, you name

it." I said, "Well let me talk to Alice." She was up there with me. Leonard said, "Mind if I'm with you when you talk to Alice? He sent one of the people and got Alice, and we sat in one of these student classrooms and Leonard explained why he made his request. I said, "Okay, if that's what you want, I'll do it." I'm not used to saying no to the president.

**PFLUG:** So you voted against him and got more work.

**BANNON:** I think it's strange that he would want me to take it. I think it's because I didn't do anything behind his back — I heard this from Ernie Moran before he passed away. I think I did Leonard a great service by getting through some of the things that many people were saying about him, but not to his face. And we're the best of friends, Leonard and I. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, I think the Board made a wise decision in putting Leonard in there rather than Doug.

**PFLUG:** Why do you say that?

**BANNON:** Well, I think if you take a look at the financial conditions that we had to go through and the GM thing which had to be met sooner or later and Leonard's diplomacy as far as Washington was concerned. Leonard was very close to Jimmy Carter and I don't think it was the UAW that elected Jimmy Carter if you look at the results. I think, overall, it helped Doug. I think it matured Doug somewhat. He is a hell of a lot more sophisticated now than he was then. At times I think he's too damn sophisticated, but there's ways of knocking that out of him. [laughter]