

Don Ephlin

Oral History Interview

Conducted by

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Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs

Wayne State University

Barnard: I'll be talking with Don Ephlin at the Reuther Library. It's June 25, 1993, and we're going to be talking about Don's work in the UAW over the years that he was involved. I thought we might start out with some information about your origins. Your family, your boyhood and youth, and then we'll get into your work in the factory and your joining up with the union.

Ephlin: I grew up in Framingham, Massachusetts with one older brother and very wonderful memories about my mother, who was a very strong and wonderful woman. My father passed away when I was only four years old, in 1930, so my mother had the task of raising my brother and I in the depths of the Depression. She worked very hard as a waitress, working for a caterer during banquets and the like. So my memories of the Depression are the problems she had hanging on to the house we had. But she remarkably managed it well over the years, refinancing it every couple of years. All around us people were losing homes, and so forth, and she managed to keep us in that house. Later on we were able to make improvements to it. In fact, I lived there when I first was married.

My mother, following years of working as a waitress, went to work for General Electric in a clock plant in Ashland, Massachusetts, and became active in the United Electrical Workers.

Barnard: When was this?

Ephlin: Well, I think she must have started there in the late thirties. I can't be more specific than that. Eventually she became a steward for the UE. I recall her going to New York for a meeting, probably in the early forties, coming home rather frightened by the speeches she had heard. The UE was a little radical in those days. She wasn't quite prepared for that; it was a new experience for her.

Also, my first exposure to hearing anything about unions, really.

Barnard: So you learned it at your mother's knee.

Ephlin: In a sense, yes. Later on, other family members also had an impact on that. Because of our circumstances, obviously like a lot of kids in those years, I worked a great deal, in the paper business, both as a paper boy and then as time wore on, I worked for the company that distributed papers in the area, and for the local newspaper itself. So, all my high school years, six days a week I got up at 4:30 in the morning, and on Sunday mornings I got up at 3:30 in the morning. When I got old enough I drove a truck distributing papers to the stores, and things of that nature, as well as having routes both morning and night.

Then as World War II got going, and a lot of young people were being drafted, I started picking up part-time jobs in the local paper called the *Framingham News*, everything from taking papers off the press to bundling them up, to sweeping out the press room and even setting a little type, and things of that nature.

Barnard: Handy man.

Ephlin: Yes, did a little of everything.

Barnard: How old were you at that time? Seventeen?

Ephlin: Well, I started much earlier than that. My brother had routes, and I helped out and gradually grew into them. But as I got to be in my teens, sixteen when I could drive back there, I could do more duties. Right up until I graduated from high school, when I was... seventeen and a half at the time I graduated, so I worked all the way through. This caused a change in my life, because being in high school during World War II there were a number of programs being offered to students. One was a Navy V-12 Program, where they would send high school graduates to college to become officers. And while academically I was in great shape, the fact that I had never participated in sports caused me to be passed over and denied the opportunity. So, I learned early on that there are injustices that happen, and you pay a penalty for being poor. In the long run, things worked out all right.

Barnard: What were your mother's political views?

Ephlin: She was always a good Democrat, of course, being Irish. She had grown up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She was a good influence in that direction also. A very wonderful woman, very independent, had to be. Had worked very hard to keep her family together during those very difficult days.

Barnard: You say you had one other brother. Were there any other children?

Ephlin: No, just the two of us. He being older than I, went in the service in 1942. As I was getting prepared to graduate from high school in 1943, obviously, as all young people at that time, I wanted to go in the service. And yet I felt badly about leaving my mother alone at that stage. It was one of the first difficult talks we ever had in which she said, "I fully understand that that's what you want to do, and that's what you have to do." So, I attempted to enlist first in the Navy Air Force, which I did not pass the physical. Then in the Army Air Force as a cadet; I always wanted to fly very much. I was only seventeen at the time, and although there were some complications, I did get in the Air Force while I was still seventeen. But you couldn't go on active duty until you turned eighteen. So, shortly after my eighteenth birthday, I reported for active duty in the Air Force, in North Carolina, where I encountered another physical problem that ruled me out as an aviation cadet. I had a lot of problems with Army Air Force bureaucracy, in trying to get in the cadets. I needed surgery, which was not critical, and so they wouldn't perform it. I managed to get it done anyhow, in the Army. But in any event, I ended up as an aerial gunner on a B-24 bomber, and was over in England, in fact flew my first combat mission a few days before my nineteenth birthday. I spent ten months over in England, and flew a total of 27 missions over Germany as a gunner. The war ended at that point; if we had done thirty, I would have completed a tour, but the war ended in Europe, and we came back to the states, and were scheduled to be retrained on B-29 bombers and shipped to the Pacific.

Before I left England, in the local newspaper there was an article that the congressman who

represented our area was going to conduct an exam for West Point appointees. I had before taken a competitive exam for Annapolis given by Senator Lodge at that time, but I did not get an appointment. But I wrote and said I expected to be home in the states when this exam took place, and I'd like to take it. So I was home on furlough at the time. Took the examination, and of course then went about my business not knowing what happened. I was out on the West Coast in the Air Force, when the war in Japan ended. I never got to the Pacific, thank goodness. I thought Harry Truman's decision to drop the A-bomb was a wonderful one.

I returned to Framingham, fully planning to go to school. In fact, I applied at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), where, because of the avalanche of veterans returning home, there was a long, long waiting list. But I did have the academic grades for it. In the meantime, when I got home, someone said there's a big construction job starting just down the street, within about a half a mile of where I lived. They were starting to construct the General Motors plant. So I went down, and got hired. In fact I was there before they had their official groundbreaking, working as a laborer, and I stayed on that job then for a couple years.

Barnard: This was on the construction crew.

Ephlin: Right. In fact I became the recording secretary of the laborer's union on the construction job. Again, that was my first direct exposure to unions. I must say that the building trades, and the way things worked there, were not all to my liking. Maybe that led to my becoming active in the UAW later on. In any event, I continued thinking about returning to school, when lo and behold, I was notified that I was the first alternate to West Point, and I went to Boston to take an examination, a physical. All the others were young, students directly out of prep schools, and high schools, and they were all enthused about the hazing and all at West Point. Being a two-year veteran of the Air Force that had no appeal to me. So I never went back. Months later, I got a telegram from West Point. Apparently, the principal appointee had failed somewhere along the way, so they said, "Report to West Point. Come prepared to stay at least a few days. If you fail the exam you'll be home in three days. If you pass, you'll be there for a year". But unfortunately, just before this time, they had separated the Air Force from the Army, and my interest was in the Air Force, not the Army. So I said, "No thank you", and did not pursue a military career.

Barnard: And I don't suppose you ever regretted that decision.

Ephlin: No, not a bit. The Air Force was, and remained, my true love. I wanted to fly desperately, but otherwise a military career was not to my liking. No, I have no regrets over that decision. I did not get enrolled in a college, even though I had fully intended to, so as time wore on, I started studying accounting nights while I was still working. After two years of construction, the construction job ended and I was laid off one day from the construction company. Went to work the next day for General Motors, because during the course of construction, we got to know many of the people. A fellow who was to become my supervisor in General Motors was an

inspector during the construction days, a maintenance person. He's the one who offered me a job. Again I found out how the system worked a little bit. The employment manager did not want to hire me because of my involvement with the laborer's union, and was further incensed that my application was not on file in his office, but had been sent to the plant manager's office because of my accounting studies. But nevertheless he was required to engage me and, over his objections, he pointed out that the laborer's union had no impact, and no standing, and I understood all that, of course. But nevertheless, that was the way he behaved.

Barnard: This must have been in 1947?

Ephlin: Yes. Now the plant was still incomplete, and so although they were prepared to give me a job in the accounting department, I went to work in maintenance for some period. By the time they came around and said, "We are now starting to staff the accounting department, and we have a job for you in accounting", I was working in maintenance, had become a millwright, and was very comfortable there and enjoyed myself. So I decided I would stay in maintenance rather than pursue an accounting department job. As an aside, another fellow who is now prominent in the Detroit area started in the accounting department in that same plant. His name is Jack Smith, he's now the president of General Motors [laughter]. And I joke that he took the job I turned down; there were a few years in between. But in any event, I went to work in maintenance.

Another union connection: during the construction of the plant, the business agent for the bricklayers' union on the job was an uncle of mine on my father's side. Meanwhile, my favorite uncle on my mother's side had become a business agent for the Teamsters in Boston. So, I had a lot of union influences.

Barnard: Did you have a lot of relatives right there in Framingham?

Ephlin: In the Boston area, not so much right in Framingham, but in the Boston area I did. Because of the tie-in with the construction trades, while the only employees in the plant at that time were maintenance people, the UAW-AFL approached us, and in fact gave us a charter. Fifteen of us, I think it was, each put in a few dollars. They issued us a charter which I still have, somewhere. And I was the president of this group, who really represented no one; we had no bargaining rights or anything. But that was the way they operated, they issued a charter.

Barnard: Collected an initiation fee?

Ephlin: That was the incentive.

Barnard: Had the UAW-CIO made any appearance?

Ephlin: No, it was only a relative handful of people working, all in maintenance. So, in early '48 the plant was getting into production, and they hired hundreds of production workers. Then the UAW-CIO came to town, started an organizing effort. I contacted the representative of the union, and advised him what was happening. His response was, "Well, that's up to you. That's what you have the charter for", and so forth. So my colleagues had a little gathering and we

decided that was not for us, and we all went over and joined the UAW-CIO. So we were involved in the organizing effort then.

Barnard: Who came in from the international office, do you recall?

Ephlin: A couple of them. One was named Scotty Hill, a man I got to work with years later in Boston as an organizer. Another one was named Adams, who was originally a Detroit, I think. The third was a man named Gallagher. Again, another I think from Detroit. Scotty Hill I got to know the best, because we had a long-standing relationship after that. The three of them were there on the drive, and there was no contest.

Barnard: There was never any question that the production workers were going to go into the UAW-CIO.

Ephlin: Oh, no. Unlike organizing efforts today, which are very difficult, GM helped considerably in the organizing effort, and it was just a question of, "Give us the cards". Didn't take a lot of convincing, even though the UAW-CIO was a little foreign to Framingham, obviously. Even though there was a Ford plant in Somerville, Mass., represented by the UAW at that time. Otherwise they didn't have much going in the Massachusetts area. But we quickly got certified in 1948, and the original officers were elected for a temporary period, and I was not successful in that initial election process.

Barnard: But you were interested; you were a candidate?

Ephlin: Yes, I was involved, and in 1949 I was elected financial secretary of the local, first time. Because of my accounting studies, which I had then dropped, but I enjoyed. One of the first things that I had got involved in, was I created the credit union there. I headed that up for a number of years. In those days we did not have check-off. So myself and a couple other maintenance fellows used to collect all the money on payday. Because we were on maintenance we had freedom to roam around the plant, with pockets full of money and bank books, and the like, and ran the credit union for several years.

People used to laugh at us. One of our jobs was repairing conveyor breakdowns. With the money and books sticking out of all our pockets, trying to do the job. It was no secret to anybody what we were doing; we were very open about it. We used to set up in the cafeteria at the table. General Motors didn't approve, but didn't know what to do with us either.

And so, I was involved from the beginning. One of the unique little tidbits that occurred. I worked for this general foreman who was an old-time mechanic himself, very little formal education, and he had working for him a wonderful mechanic from the local area. Again, a very natural mechanic but with very little education. When it came time to getting the plant started, one of their responsibilities was to set the line speeds. Line speeds were very controversial in assembly plants in those days. But they were unable to figure out; they wanted 35 jobs per hour; how many minutes and seconds is that on a stop watch? So, I did all of the arithmetic for them, and through

that process I ended up with the assignment of setting the line speeds for every line in the plant, from the beginning of the plant.

This old general foreman had a role in history himself, back here in Flint during the sit-down strikes. General Motors made a decision to turn off the power and the heat. He was an electrician at that time in the plant, and was given that task to perform. He told me about going to the workers in the plant, saying, "This is what they're making us do. You know, it's not our doing", and so forth. But he was a very practical and direct person.

So, as I got involved in the union more and more, he came to me and said, "I know you're very involved in the union, and you've got this job of setting line speeds". He said, "I'll make a deal with you. There are only two people in the plant that can tell you what to set the speed at. One is the production manager of the plant, and myself". He said, "I want you to set it exactly at what you're told. The foreman might ask you to give them a little more, don't do it. Some of your friends in the union will be saying run it slower, don't do it. Set it exactly at what you're told. If you want to go down to the union hall afterwards and advocate strike because it's running too fast or something, that's your business. As long as you and I have an understanding". I said, "Fine". So I had that job for a number of years, even up until after I became president of the local union.

Barnard: Did your union pals ever try to put any pressure on you?

Ephlin: Well, they'd gripe about it, but they understood. I had no problem with it. It was, again, one of these first experiences of understanding roles. I had this job for several years until we got a new plant manager, who was sent in to straighten out the plant. He was reputed to be one of the toughest in GM, and I guess it was a well-deserved title. And when he found out the local union president was setting line speeds [laughter], he removed me from the job retroactively! That was the end of that. But I enjoyed working in the plant as a millwright.

Barnard: You hadn't had any formal training as a millwright.

Ephlin: No, construction work. I started as a laborer, but I worked with the carpenters on the construction as a kind of helper. I used to get the supplies and the like. Then in the first years in maintenance, working with this wonderful mechanic, kind of on-the-job-training. But I was reclassified as a millwright before the union organized the plant. So I became a journeyman as what they call a contract journeyman, because I was there before the union. I enjoyed life in the plant.

I became the financial secretary in 1949, and served for a couple years. I did not run in 1953; I took off for a year or two. But then in 1955 I ran and was elected president for the first time.

Barnard: Did you have any political factions in the plant? Any echoes of the old factional days?

Ephlin: No, we did not have organized caucuses and those things in the beginning. It was

more a personalities type thing. The early years in the plant were relatively calm. Starting in 1955, with this new plant manager, we became embroiled in controversy that never ended in the plant. Never ended.

Barnard: Until the plant was closed?

Ephlin: That's right. In 1955 I became the president. It was at a unique time in history. The UAW at that time was advancing the idea of a guaranteed annual wage. This had great appeal to me, and I got to go to some meetings and hear speeches about GAW, as it was called in those early days. A fellow from my local union who was the chairman of the committee at the time was on the national bargaining committee in 1955, so that gave me greater contact with what was happening here in Detroit. At the convention early in 1955, I went to the convention, I had been elected president, had not yet assumed office, and I was not a delegate. But I did attend in Cleveland.

Barnard: Is that the first national convention you attended?

Ephlin: Yes. It was at that convention that Leonard Woodcock was elected a Vice President. I didn't know how important that would be to me, but it turned out to be very important. To this day I use this in making speeches, lecturing. Attending that first convention and hearing Walter Reuther's opening speech, GAW itself had great appeal to me, and the UAW did a fantastic job in that year of advancing this program all across the union, running educational seminars for people all across the union...

Barnard: In preparation for bargaining?

Ephlin: In preparation for bargaining. I can never recall, before or since, such an extensive effort as was done at that time. Attending that first convention, not being a delegate, I had plenty of freedom. But listening to Walter's speech, opening the convention, I say to people today, "Walter's vision of the world, and how the union could play a major role in changing it, was not built on another penny or two in the pay envelope". In fact, Walter used to say, "We can't make progress at the expense of others, but only as others do". And so, becoming really active in the UAW was like enlisting in a crusade to change the world. It was not for personal gain, and it was not about even just for ourselves. It was the impact that we, as working people and as members of the union, could have on the world. I liken it to a crusade.

Barnard: Was this the first time that you had been exposed to Reuther?

Ephlin: To that extent. I'd heard him on the radio or something. Walter's opening speech to the convention used to be rather lengthy. Covered all types of things. I try to compare that to today, and somehow we don't have that same zeal, goals and objectives. Partly because of circumstances we've turned inward much more, and we have to worry about survival, etcetera, whereas Walter was always talking in grand terms. It made becoming a member of the union very exciting. I had just been elected president, so I was obviously very enthused. I had remained active after that. That spirit, I think, has been lost somewhat over the years. I don't know of anyone in

the labor movement today that represents that global view the way Walter did back in those days. It was a wonderful period in which to get started.

I was the president from, I think it was one-year terms at first, then it became a two-year term. But I was the president from 1955 until 1960, and this was a very turbulent period in our plant. We had a number of near-strikes and strikes.

Barnard: What issues...?

Ephlin: Production standards and discipline. I was part of what was called the BOP division of General Motors, Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac. They had seven plants, and production standards were a major issue in all of them, but we had perhaps more than our share. New England workers had never been exposed to this kind of work, or management...

Barnard: Assembly line...?

Ephlin: Yes, brutality,

Barnard: Pretty hard-nosed management?

Ephlin: There was a book written, a study done, it's called Plant X in the book, but it was Framingham. The book was called Man on the Assembly Line, in 1949, by Bob Guest, Walker and Guest, but Bob Guest has been a friend of mine ever since. I've known him all these years.

Barnard: You met him at the time they were working on the book?

Ephlin: Yes, I was interviewed and discussed it. Many years later when I got involved in trying to make changes, I went back and read the book again, and it was much more meaningful to me. Because the Framingham plant, being brand new in New England, had probably the highest educational level of any plant in General Motors at that time. So the resistance to the management style, and the work, was a real problem in Framingham, which came to be a real problem throughout the system in later years. But I think Framingham, because of those circumstances, may have been ahead of its time. The book that Walker and Guest did, with the benefit of hindsight, really pointed out the problems that neither the union nor management paid much attention to back then. Many years later as I got involved, I had trouble getting a copy of the book. Later Bob Guest got it for me, out of the library at Dartmouth, as a matter of fact. But the plant represented a new type of worker who wanted different things, and was not willing to submit to the autocratic, very harsh discipline system that GM employed. So the plant had more than its share of problems.

Barnard: So, it was both the nature of the job, to some degree, and the way that GM chose to manage its operations that contributed to the dissatisfaction?

Ephlin: Yes. Well, first of all, assembly plant is hard work under any circumstances. But the first few years of the plant were relatively easy, until this new manager was sent in.

Barnard: Who was that?

Ephlin: A man named Carl Dobos. He was infamous from General Motors history. A real

tough, rugged individual.

Barnard: Did he come from Detroit?

Ephlin: Yes, through Framingham. But originally he was from Baltimore. He was a tough, hard-nosed guy. When he first came to the plant, he spoke at a community group meeting in a church in Framingham. He said, "I have found out that the people here don't know how to work, but I'm going to teach them how to work", which was a great introduction to a community like Framingham.

So, I was the president during a very turbulent period. In 1956 we had one strike letter settled just shy of a strike. Later that same year we actually had a strike.

Barnard: That was an authorized strike, I take it?

Ephlin: Oh, yes. Over production standards. I got to know the GM Department staff people pretty well as a result of this.

Barnard: They were coming out to help you?

Ephlin: Yes. And in 1959, GM chose to cut the plant in two. Instead of it all being one bargaining unit, Buick-Olds-Pontiac, they wanted it to be a Fisher Body and a Chevrolet plant. In those systems, they used to cut the existing plant in half so we had seniority problems galore. The agreements were different in both Fisher and Chevrolet, with Chevrolet being the most difficult. We actually took some pay cuts for doing the same job. There was a dime difference between BOP and Chevrolet rates. We had people take a cut. So we're in the very controversial negotiations in 1959, and we had a national steel strike. So the plant was shut down anyhow. We had no bargaining power; we couldn't shut it down, it was already down. Because of the nature of the bargaining in two units, the International Representative was on one side and I went in the other one (kind of led the local bargaining), and again, got to work with some representatives from the General Motors department of the union very closely, a couple of guys who became my friends and, I think, helped recommend me for the staff.

Barnard: Who was this?

Ephlin: Joe Zangaro and Tom Turbiville. Couple old timers, that I later on worked with.

Barnard: Were they on the regional staff or GM department staff?

Ephlin: GM department staff. If I could back up a little bit. On the regional staff, the fellow who serviced the plant, not right from the beginning but almost from the beginning, was a very big influence on my union life. His name was Tony DeLorenzo. He's a very close friend of Irving Bluestone's. In fact, he went on the staff replacing Irving when Irving came to Detroit. Because our plant was a hundred miles or better from where he lived in Connecticut, when he would come to the plant he would stay overnight, so he and I spent many, many hours together in which he helped to educate me about what the union was about. Why things were the way they are, what had gone before. He was a very wonderful person, and very, very helpful to me in those early

days. Like some of the young folks of the time, I felt things moved too slowly in the union. We didn't understand why some things were as they were. And Tony would try to explain and he would spend hours trying to help me understand how things had come about.

Barnard: Was there anything specific that you thought the union was moving too slowly on at that time, in the International?

Ephlin: Oh, right off the top at the moment I'm hard pressed to give an illustration, but why the system worked the way it did. The Regional Director in our area at that time was not one of my favorites. Tony worked for him.

Barnard: Was this Charlie Kerrigan?

Ephlin: Charlie Kerrigan. Charlie had his own weaknesses which were pretty well documented. But Tony, and several other staff people who worked for him, did an excellent job. So I learned about union politics a little bit. We used to say, "We're voting for Tony, not for Charlie".

Barnard: Had you met Irv Bluestone by this time?

Ephlin: I may have met him, but it would have been only at an educational meeting or something of that sort.

Barnard: You didn't have any continuous contact with him.

Ephlin: No. We did not have any working relationship back at that time. I knew of him, and I had met him, I believe. But Tony played a key role, and later on he comes into my life again. Was a very large help. Again, I guess we all look back, there were some good things in the good old days. Like Tony assumed that part of his responsibility was to teach young people and train them and prepare them. He was rough and coarse, but very intelligent in his way. Prophesied some things that came to be later on. I was the president, and a fellow named Ted Barrett was the chairman. Sometimes we would spend hours in Ted's house drinking coffee, four-five-six hours at a time. I can recall Tony saying, "I'm bringing the two of you along, and one day I'm going to have a problem". He was right on that one!

A couple other tidbits of his wisdom that I've never forgotten over the years. In looking at the plants, he used to say, "Somehow we're going to have to find a way to use the equipment in these plants, the heavy capital expenses, more than forty or eighty hours a week. It just doesn't make sense to have all this machinery and equipment sitting idle so much". And the other thing which he said, he came out of the bearing division, New Departure Bearing, and at that stage the UAW was raising the rates in the parts plants up to the same as the auto assembly plants. Tony said, "We're creating ourselves a problem, because we will not be competitive, and one day we're going to kill all these plants".

Barnard: You wouldn't be competitive with the independent parts plants.

Ephlin: Right. The bearing business in general is pretty well shot these days. But what little

bearing business General Motors has left, they're trying to sell. So he was pretty wise in his ways. He imparted a lot to me of what the union was about and helped shape my approach to things.

Barnard: To go back to the situation in the plant for a moment . You mentioned some strikes and near-strikes. Did the local try to deal with the situation? Did you try to change the behavior of the GM management people?

Ephlin: Well, we had many, many efforts. Some people on the management side were victims of this. For example, at the plant Mr. Dobos became the plant manager. He did not like the man who was the Personnel Director. So he sent him to Detroit; he got them to swap him for a fellow in Detroit. And a man named Bill Worsnop came as the Personnel Director. It happened that Tony DeLorenzo and him had worked together years before at New Departure. Tony said, "Bill is a wonderful, very honest guy, and we'll be able to deal with him".

The system destroyed this Bill Worsnop. He eventually quit the corporation, and died. But he almost had a mental breakdown, I think, before he left, because the system just destroyed the man. The manager took all the authority away from him, and as the way things would work out, when you had a dispute, the central office in Detroit would send somebody in. Who did they send in but Mr. Cy Young, who had been the personnel guy that Dobos had shipped out in the first place.

So we would be fighting with management. On one night, we took a recess at management's request. We sat around for two or three hours waiting for them. Finally, we sent out scouts to go looking around. There sat Mr. Young in an office playing solitaire by himself. They wouldn't let him in the management meetings; that's how terrible it was. So Tony or one of them went over to Cy and said, "What's the story? We've been waiting three hours." And he said, "I don't know how to tell you, but Dobos took all his people and went home". He left Young and us sitting in the plant. He was a total dictator. Bill Worsnop was a decent man; he broke his spirit completely. He was just as mean, or perhaps more so, to the salaried people and supervisors as he was to the hourly people. He played no favorites.

Barnard: He didn't pick on you.

Ephlin: No. He was still the manager at the plant, when I left to come to Detroit. He and I did not speak to one another at that stage of our lives. I've seen him subsequently, but that's how bad it was. The chairman of the committee had gone on the staff before me, and the manager used to brag, "It's a good thing they put him on the staff because I was going to fire him". He would brag, "Even if two or three years from now, I've got to put him back; I don't care", but he would break spirits. So, what he was doing in the plant was devastating. We lost some good union people, committee people, because we were not able to solve all the problems during that period. We'd have a strike, and make a settlement, but the day you came back, you'd start all over again.

Barnard: Was there a lot of turnover in the plant?

Ephlin: Yes. For political purposes I used to try to keep track of the membership. While initially there were a lot of local people hired, over a period of time a lot of them left, and we were drawing people from twenty, twenty-five miles away. People from the city of Boston, people from over towards Lowell, the textile areas where there was a lot of unemployment. Ever expanding circle because people wanted to get out. Even though it was better money than anything in the area, the system was so brutal in those early days that people just couldn't hack it. So, I got a great deal of experience. And being the president of a GM local (under the GM system the president has very little role in the plant) I devoted some of my energies outside the plant to organizing other plants. We built up an amalgamated local union with a number of electronics plants, and a plant that made hypodermic needles, a plant that made fire alarm systems. But electronics was an area that we were focusing on. So we were building the local up in that fashion. As the president, I became full-time president, and I served sort of as the business agent representing those outside units.

Barnard: These other units were all brought into your local? Into Local 422?

Ephlin: Yes, right.

Barnard: Were you trying to pick on UE at this point?

Ephlin: No. There were a lot of unorganized plants in the area. As a matter of fact, I raised the question about making a run at the UE and the plant where my mother had worked, but the hierarchy said no, they didn't want to do that. I think I might have been able to pull it off.

No, there were a lot of unorganized plants. A lot of growth in the electronics industry during that period. A person from MIT had started an electronics plant. It was then bought by American Standard Company, and we organized it, and had a contract. Subsequently, it was bought by Northrup Aircraft. Northrup is one of the only unorganized companies in the aerospace business. But we went to that company before Northrup got there and said, we wanted an agreement, that they were taking over the agreement or else we were going to strike the plant now. We got such an agreement. Matter of fact Northrup is still there and has a contract with the UAW all these years. I got involved with them a few years ago, strangely enough. It's the only Northrup plant with a union. Right after I left the local, for obvious political reasons the regional director removed many of those units from Local 422 and put them in a different local because with the GM population and these outside plants, we had over half the UAW membership in Massachusetts. I think people were a little concerned about our political activities, so they broke it up.

Barnard: Kerrigan was still director at this point?

Ephlin: Yes. They put it in other locals. The only units left in 422 were auto warehouses; GM, Ford and Chrysler warehouses. The electronics plants they took out, even though I had organized many of them, working with the international. Working with Scotty Hill, who I mentioned had helped organize my plant, and working with a man from Detroit named Mike O'Connell. So, when I got the chance to come to Detroit in 1960 Mike O'Connell had come out of

Local 600, and he said, "I still own a house in Dearborn that's going to be empty, if you have an interest". So I rented Mike's house the first year. I was here in Dearborn, and he was back in my hometown working.

In 1960, I received a call from Leonard Woodcock asking if I'd be interested in coming on the staff. It was to work on the Board of Review Umpire Staff. I pointed out to Leonard that I had been the president of the local, and not involved in the grievance procedure directly.

Barnard: It was all through the chairman.

Ephlin: Yes, the committeeman and the chairman. Leonard said, "Well, we think we can train you, if it's necessary, and that you can handle it". So I thought about it some. Again, I had by then a two-family house, and my mother and brother lived in the other half of the house. Leaving her behind was very, very difficult. Once again, she, in her own inimitable fashion said, "This is what you have to do".

Barnard: She didn't try to keep you there.

Ephlin: Oh, no. She was always made it easy to make the tough decisions, and encouraged me to go ahead and do my thing.

Barnard: What kind of contacts did you have with Leonard Woodcock prior to this?

Ephlin: Well, as a member of the GM system, he was the director of the GM department starting in 1956. With all the strikes and things we'd had, I'd heard of him of course. He and I were not too intimate or anything. But a number of the GM department staff, Frank James, who was one of his assistants, and Turbiville and Zingaro and Hugh Gillespie. I had even got to know Pat Patterson. All had been in Framingham, involved in these controversies. They all knew me pretty well.

Barnard: They brought you to Woodcock's attention?

Ephlin: Oh, yes. I mean, Leonard did not know me personally well enough. As I experienced later on myself, it's impossible for the director to know people all over the system that well. So I'm sure that their recommendations were very important and critical. So in 1960 I did come to Detroit.

Barnard: The GM staff at that time had pretty good morale?

Ephlin: There were some political divisions in the department. Based on some staff groupings, really, rather than on Leonard's part. Who would get to be the administrative assistants and things of that nature. Some of it was a throwback to earlier days in the union, before I ever got out there. In fact, some of my friends back East said, "You're getting right into a hornet's nest. You gotta choose sides". I said, "I don't think so", and I never did have to choose. I had a good relationship with all of the staff, they were all very helpful. I never really had any political problems of that nature. And most of it that existed was over issues that were long since gone, but nevertheless it lived on in a way. A certain group would go to lunch together, and others weren't in

that group. I never had any difficulty with that. I had a good relationship with all of them.

Barnard: Of course by this time you felt fully committed to the idea that you were going to be working in the UAW?

Ephlin: I never really was one to say, "I'm going after that job", or anything. In our early days in the local union, we used to joke and, because I was into accounting, that someday I'd get Mazey's job. I never worked in that fashion. Somewhere along the line, I don't know where it came from, I developed the philosophy of "You take what comes along and you do the best you can". That's served me very well. I started in the umpire staff of the department, working with Bill Coldbath and some older folks that had been there a long time. Larry Carlstrom and Kenny Forbes. Kenny Forbes, incidentally, and I shared an office. Kenny was a Regional Director who was defeated by Leonard Woodcock. Leonard subsequently put him on the staff, and so Kenny was a very wise and scholarly gentleman who was very helpful to me. He would give me advice about people and about Leonard and so forth. He was unlike some of the others, and there were a number of the older staff people who were bitter that they had been involved in the early days and had not moved forward. Kenny, who had been up, and got defeated, was very philosophical about it. That was the game you played. Some you win, some you lose. He had nothing but the highest regard for Leonard Woodcock, who had defeated him, and then given him a job. He too was a good influence on me, I think, when I got there.

Irving Bluestone had moved soon after I got there, moved up to the President's office. I was there maybe two years when Jimmy Ogden, who was working in the Benefits area, was going to move up to the President's office as an administrative assistant. Jimmy I had known from Framingham days; he'd been involved. He came to me and said, "I think they're going to ask you to go into Benefits". Benefits area was not a popular area at that time. Jimmy said, "Let me give you a little advice. Working for Leonard, if Leonard offers you a job, he will never insist that you go. But if you say you don't want it, he'll probably never offer you anything again". So, sure enough, Leonard said, "I'd like you to move into the benefits area", working with Landum Huff, who was a senior fellow who had been there and had helped start it. The Benefits area was just developing and growing, and he said he would like me to work, move over there and work for Landum Huff. Landum was very colorful, kind of controversial guy, who was one of those kind of disappointed that he had not achieved higher things, but was a wonderful trade unionist and did a marvelous job handling benefits. Heeding Jimmy Ogden's advice, I told Leonard if that's what he wanted, I'd be glad to try it. That was the first of any number of times I had to come to grips with that same question. But it was good advice, and it was great experience for me.

Barnard: Well, you were getting experience in a lot of different areas of union activity.

Ephlin: Right. Up to that stage, the General Motors department really had two major functions: what we called Service Staff, who went around to the locals handling disputes and

problem areas, and the Umpire Board-of-Review types who handled the grievance side. Now the Benefits was coming into being as a third leg, really. So, I worked in Benefits for a while and that was a very unique experience. I was back to SUB, which was my first love back in 1955, the guaranteed annual wage had become SUB. So I got to work with that and with people who I thought the world of, like Nat Weinberg and Leonard Lesser.

Barnard: Some of the idea people.

Ephlin: Yes, and we became very close because Nat was a marvelous person anyhow. Because of the fact that I could make things happen with General Motors in that arena, he kind of adopted me in a sense, was very good to me, a very great friend. The benefit experience, too, was a unique experience. On the union side, and on the management side, it helped perhaps to change my thinking a little bit, in that the benefits administration at General Motors was altogether different than labor relations. Whereas in labor relations, you were constantly fighting and credibility was a major issue all the time, in benefits it was a much more honorable relationship. If you had a problem, you presented the facts to them, they checked the facts. If you were right, they paid it. I mean it was a much more honorable and direct relationship.

A man headed it up at GM by the name of Jim Gillen. He was the head of all their benefits. When I first got over there, I won a couple of SUB cases in arbitration, and that upset old Jim a little bit, who was used to winning all the time. He said I was a pretty good fellow but I was too technical, which meant I won. That bothered him. But at a social gathering I had occasion to talk with old Jim, and a little bit of philosophy that he had rubbed off on me. I said, "This is such a wonderful change from labor relations. We raise a problem with your staff, they check it out. If we're right, they pay", and so forth. And he said to me, "Donald", he said, "so you understand. General Motors spends millions of dollars on these benefits, trying to buy the goodwill of its employees. We don't want some clerk in Podunk cheating a worker out of five dollars. If he does that, not only that person gets mad at us, but he tells everybody else in the plant. So all this money we're spending on goodwill isn't paying". So, I still use that — the five-dollar clerk in Podunk — because it's a pretty good bit of philosophy, but quite different than labor relations. Because he did not want labor relations people to have any involvement in benefits, we were able to use that very effectively. There was Landum Huff, and a service staff member named Clodfelter who came to work with us in benefits. Each round of negotiations we would say to Gillen, "We want to make benefit administration subject to the grievance procedure". He would go into orbit, because he did not want labor relations people involved. So, each round of negotiations we were able to get from him improvements in the representation system. We built a separate process, using people that are called Benefit Reps, and today they exist in Ford, GM and Chrysler. But we got all of that out of Gillen, just so labor relations wouldn't get mixed up with it. Cloddy and I, in particular, plotted and planned how we're going to do this. That comes into play again a little later on.

Barnard: I'm sure that you were able to observe quite a bit of friction between different GM offices, with everybody trying to hold on to their own turf, and not wanting people to disrupt their operations.

Ephlin: Right. Starting in 1960, I worked very closely with the GM Corporation at all levels. I sat in national bargaining for the first time in 1961. I got to sit behind Walter in 1961 for the first time when he made his long, long speech to them, never dreaming I'd get to sit in the front row some day. Ah, but it was again a wonderful experience. I was very fortunate all through my union career of having opportunities to do a lot of different things, opportunity to observe people both on the union and on the management side. That was always very helpful.

Barnard: Wasn't there a feeling that to some degree the union was overly cautious about challenging GM? GM was too big, too tough, and it made more sense to go to Ford?

Ephlin: Yes, that existed but only among Ford and Chrysler people, not among General Motors people!

Barnard: OK.

Ephlin: I want to go back to some other things, but 1970 was a terrible year in many ways. When Leonard became President, and bargaining was upon us, that was a very prevalent thought. You know, "We ought to take on GM, by God. We've been afraid of GM". But Leonard Woodcock was not afraid of General Motors. When the GM strike was only a couple of days old, and those same people suddenly understood the magnitude of it, I heard some of the same ones saying, "What are we doing this crazy action for?" Because it cost us an awful lot of money, and the union had to make sacrifices. So it was from outside, and people who did not understand what it meant to strike General Motors nationally. Leonard understood it very, very well. But 1970 almost had to be, there was no choice, really.

Barnard: You people on the staff in the sixties, you didn't particularly feel that you were being passed over and ignored?

Ephlin: No, because we were having all these local fights. One of Leonard's most significant changes, when he became the GM director, was to empower local unions to carry on negotiations. In 1955 I mentioned I'm the president, and a member of my local was out here on the national bargaining committee. He called me and he said, "It looks like we're going to settle tomorrow, so you better get in there and get your best hold", because at the point they settle nationally, you're out of business locally. That's the way it worked back then. After Leonard became a vice president, he started authorizing strikes over production standards, and things of that nature. Made a major difference. He won over the local union people. They were very suspicious of Leonard when he became vice president; he was not from GM. But he won the local people over with empowering locals to do these things.

That changed the relationship tremendously. Starting in 1958, we would settle nationally

and have a lot of local strikes. So in between times we had production standards disputes, and this was a major change in our union. Local union people, leaders, suddenly had a great deal more responsibility, and it was not just "point the finger at Detroit"; they had to be in the front lines. They had to get approval from Detroit, but Leonard changed the union dramatically with his approach to things. So the General Motors workers were fighting back. We had more local strikes during that period in the sixties than Ford, Chrysler and everybody else put together. So, while they didn't understand it, perhaps, the outsiders, the people inside of GM came to think Leonard Woodcock was wonderful, because of the way he worked with and supported the local union. It became a totally different relationship involvement. With GM the relationship was bad, but nothing is more important to people than production standards and discipline at the lower level. Finally getting a chance to fight on those issues was very, very important to the local people.

Barnard: Some historians have argued that after World War II there was a trade-off between the union and the industry. The union said, "OK. We want money and benefits, but we're going to let you handle the production standard end of things".

Ephlin: No, not the production standards. Labor law is very restrictive about what you can strike over. The book, the recent Bluestone book, I think properly points out that in the auto industry in particular, but others too, they use money to buy settlements. Our first need following World War II was for money and benefits. The people needed money, and they needed health care benefits, they needed pension benefits. So, the first order of business is establishing security. But management also used it very effectively to block us out of other areas. Our law is the poorest labor law in the world in many ways, very restrictive about what we can bargain on. These other areas later on in history became very critical. In the early days management would not let us discuss them. If we raised them, they would say, "Legally we don't have to talk to you about them; we're not going to". So they in effect bought settlements to keep us out of these other areas. It wasn't that the union said, "You can do it"; it was we didn't know how to get around it. And we think the first order of business was security.

I point to the 1982 bargaining that we did at Ford as changing all of that, not because we were out to change it, but for the first time in our history, the companies could not buy a settlement. The companies had economic problems for the first time. So the quid pro quo was, while we didn't get any new money, (we didn't give up any either by the way) Doug Fraser and I at Ford got into a lot of areas that prior to this time would have been off limits. We established a lot of principles: the joint training fund. We started the so-called nickel fund at Ford. In many ways this is one of the most important and significant changes that we've made, I think. Earlier this week they had the opening of bargaining at the UAW-GM Human Resource Center, which was built out of that money. So in 1982 bargaining, bargaining changed completely from the company buying us with money to us getting into all these other areas. I got the right to speak to the Board

of Directors, which they wouldn't tolerate before. The Joint Training thing was critical. We improved on employee involvement, we set up the sharing of business information with the workers through a process. We negotiated some extensive job security, income security for longer seniority people, GIS we called it (Guaranteed Income Security). We established profit-sharing in the auto business, which is the way I describe it. Walter tried to get it started in 1955. I said, "I don't want anyone to think I'm trying to say we were better bargainers than Walter." The year we negotiated profit sharing at Ford they lost \$2 billion. Profit was the least of their worries; but that's the time to bargain. In the years since then it has paid off handsomely at Ford. But in other words, starting in 1982, what had been off-limits before suddenly is not off-limits.

As a matter of fact, the proposal that General Motors made to the union in 1982 to connect prices and wages, which Doug quickly embraced because of his sense of history and what had happened, was something that Walter had tried to do years before, and the companies adamantly resisted and they legally could resist. Now here they are, they are proposing it to us.

It didn't work, but nevertheless we talked about it. As far as bargaining is concerned today, there's nothing off-limits, as far as I'm concerned. The old slogan about the management prerogatives, I haven't heard that for years. So it wasn't that the union willingly did these things, or consciously did them. It was just working under the laws we had, and under the circumstances, solving the first needs of our members, and the companies had more money than anything else.

I was in Benefits in GM. In some of the years, I can't be precise, Leonard Woodcock had become one of the Board of Trustees at Wayne State. He was thinking of not running for re-election for the Wayne position because it was so time-consuming. As a result, President Reuther authorized him to have a third administrative person. As a vice president, then, he had two administrative assistants. So he was given a third administrative person to handle some functions, to help him with the time that he lost with Wayne. He again offered me the chance to assume a position which was rather vague. Other than that, what it would amount to, I would be on his personal staff, not in the GM department per se. While I would continue to work with the GM department on some things, I would be on his personal staff and do other things.

Barnard: You'd be available for other kinds of assignments.

Ephlin: Yes. So, that caused me to do all kinds of different things. It wasn't a major promotion or anything. I got a little bit more than a basic staff person, but I was not an administrative assistant. Again, anybody that wanted to get rich should not have gone to work for the UAW in the first place. But it gave me the opportunity to do all sorts of things. I represented Leonard in the appeals procedure, internally in the union. I would work with regional directors, attend hearings, and I would help write the cases, etc. I attended civic things on Leonard's behalf. The committee about bringing the Olympics to Detroit is one that sticks in my mind. There was a Southeast Michigan group trying to coordinate activities. I used to attend all sorts of functions in

Leonard's behalf.

Barnard: Community, as well as union.

Ephlin: Yes, because he was very involved in the community at that stage. As kind of an aside, one of my colleagues one day said, "You know, you're going to some of these meetings that you don't know a damned thing about". That's true. He said, "Aren't you afraid of them?" I said, "Yes, but", I said, "Leonard is sending me there to represent him. So if I make a fool of myself, it's more a reflection on him than it is on me. If he sends me he must think I can get through it, so it's no problem really". I did go to a lot of places that I'm never sure how I got in those predicaments. Leonard always sent you into things, partly as a learning experience. Leonard was the head of the Continental Motors Department because he came out of Continental Motors. So I became the assistant director of Continental and I handled that as a little sideline. I did any number of things. So I went through bargaining with them a couple of times. It gave me, again, opportunities to learn new things about the union, and about our role and function. I would jump back in and out of GM; when contract time came I would be involved, when something came along. Whenever Leonard and Ernie Moran called me into the office, I knew I'm off to some unknown adventure. For example, in 1965, they had settled up with North American Rockwell, in Aerospace. They called me in, and I, again, I knew something was coming. I was never sure what. The grievance procedure at Rockwell was in total disarray. They had 2,000 cases on appeal to arbitration! But there was no central authority in the union, as we had in the GM section. So Leonard said, "We want you to go out there. You will be in charge. You'll have full authority to screen the cases, to decide what cases get heard, so forth. We want you to straighten out that procedure". I'll never forget: He said, "I figure it will take you a year". This is 1965. After they settled with Aerospace. So right after Thanksgiving that year, Ernie Moran took me out to California and introduced me to the group. When Leonard gave you a job, he never asked you anything about it, he just expected you to do it. On that one, I used to commute back and forth from here to Los Angeles principally. I still had other jobs; this was just part-time. But along the way, they kept telling me, "You gotta hear the N-10 case, the N-10 case". I had no idea what the hell the N-10 case was. The N-10 was the guidance system for the Minute Man missile, and the people doing the final check-out of it, they used a computer to test the on-board computer. Well, this was pretty technical stuff for an auto worker, but I went to school with the guys for several days to understand it. Ultimately we heard the N-10, and eventually we got a decision, getting over half a million dollars in back pay for people who were mis-classified. That's the first time Leonard spoke to me about the job. It was almost three years later. He said, "When I told them you would straighten out the system, I'm not sure that's what they had in mind," that was his comment. Typical Woodcock understatement. So by 1968 that job was done. We had twenty cases on appeal, and I went on to different things. But that was typical. I got all kinds of things.

In 1967, bargaining with GM I'm in this grey territory here. Leonard was not too pleased about the settlement reached at Ford.

Barnard: Because of the cap on COLA, or other things?

Ephlin: Well, a number of reasons. He and Ernie Moran attended the Ford Council meeting and they brought back material. The next morning Ernie gave me some of the literature, and I was studying it, and now we're going to go to GM. Now, at this point as I mentioned, I'm ten dollars a week more than the regular staff guys. I had no title. Out of the clear blue, Leonard said to me, "Do you understand that Ford settlement?" I said, "I think so". He said, "Well, you're in charge of all economics at General Motors, and I want you to track the Ford settlement. Not a penny more, not a penny less". Walter had joined us by this time. So they created two sub-committees. Leonard had half the people and some issues, and Walter had the other half and the other issues. But seeing as I had all economics, I was involved with both of them. Needless to say, these were very exciting moments for me. I had never had a chance to sit with Walter at the bargaining table, in a small group, where I'm carrying the program. We were fighting over the scope of the bargaining unit at that time, and Walter was sitting in that group, but he obviously didn't know all the things we had done. We had a session one night to plan our assault for the next day: Leonard and Ernie and some of the other staff, myself. We had a big agreement on how to do this the next day. I think I was up half the night trying to memorize my lines. In the morning Walter came in, and Leonard was outlining to him what we had planned, and he then told me to run through it, so I did. Walter kept nodding in agreement. Now we go into the table, and I'm nervous as can be. Now's my big moment. The meeting opened and Walter took off, did the whole thing. I never got to say a word, after spending half the night trying to memorize my lines. But it was a wonderful experience.

Barnard: Did he get it right?

Ephlin: Oh, yes. Oh, he was a quick learner. Some of it was exactly opposite what he had said the day before. He quickly jumped in and was wonderful. To show how these things all tie together, I mentioned in 1964, or in my early days, Clodfelter and I worked to improve the benefit representatives. So we had a thing going with GM on the side. Nobody had asked for it but us.

Barnard: Just you staff people.

Ephlin: Yes. And what we were trying to get was insurance committeemen, to handle disputes over insurance. So, I'm in charge of all economics, including the benefits. So Leonard wanted to know, where we are and what's open. I mentioned that one. He says, "What's that?" I said, "Cloddy and I have been doing that". He says, "We're not going to get hung up over that, are we?" I said, "No", and we broke through, and we got that. That spread to Ford, Chrysler and others later. Benefit representatives. But there was no hue and cry from the rank and file for it, or anything, although they certainly endorsed it afterwards.

Barnard: Once it's in place, people use it and recognize its value.

Ephlin: Oh, yes. And, it creates a lot of jobs for our people handling this. So, '67 was another tremendous opportunity for me to do things that I had never had to do before.

Barnard: How did you compare Leonard and Walter at the table?

Ephlin: The style was, of course, totally different. Walter was such an articulate speaker. He loved to relate to something that he did years before. He liked to talk. If Walter was in, even if you were in a caucus when Walter was in the room, you knew he was there. Even if you were discussing sports or whatever, he would be right in the middle of the discussion. Leonard is the exact opposite in many ways. Leonard is very quiet, thoughtful.

Barnard: How did they compare as bargainers, as representatives of the UAW at the bargaining table, dealing with corporations.

Ephlin: Oh, I think Walter, having served so long, had a unique role. He was on a pedestal, first of all. He was not as close to the people as Leonard was, because over the years he played this major role, and he was all over the nation and involved in so much. So he had a unique status. Leonard, in the GM job, had become close to the local union people. I think they looked upon him quite differently than they looked upon Walter. Altogether different, but yet I think both had tremendous respect from the rank and file. Leonard's presidency, first of all, was only seven years' duration. He took over when we were just preparing for this fight with General Motors. It probably would have happened even if Walter had lived. I don't know if it would have been any different. But the union was in financial difficulty when Leonard took over. So, Leonard had a tremendous task of rebuilding the union, in a sense. By the end of that strike, we were bankrupt. So, he had a tremendous task, whereas Walter had been the President during the wonderful days, the glory days of growth and rich settlements. So they were altogether different, but equally wonderful in their own way.

Sometime in 1965, as a matter of fact, Leonard had given me an assignment to carry out with North American Aviation, handling their arbitration as part of my duties. So, during the next three years I had commuted back and forth from Detroit to Los Angeles quite often. At that time, North American was a very large employer on the west coast with probably 30,000 hourly workers in a number of locations. We were bargaining with Rockwell in 1968 when Leonard advised me that he had promoted me to administrative assistant.

Barnard: That was the largest UAW local on the west coast, wasn't it?

Ephlin: At that time it was the largest local, yes, Local 887. Leonard had given me the special assignment to try to straighten out their arbitration procedure. We had reduced the number of cases pending arbitration considerably. Rewritten the grievance procedure in 1968. So, in effect I had worked myself out of that job, I had completed that. But during those negotiations, Leonard advised me that he had promoted me to administrative assistant. So for the next couple of years, as

Leonard's AA, it gave me the opportunity to continue to be involved in a number of activities with Leonard, General Motors to some degree, where I still had a role to play in the benefits administration, particularly, and in other things. 1970 rolled around, I was working for Leonard, we attended the convention, and were preparing for bargaining when the terrible tragedy of President Reuther's crash occurred. It was a particularly difficult year for me in many ways, but as a result of the death of President Reuther, Leonard did become President. Irving Bluestone, who had been an administrative assistant to President Reuther, was to take over the General Motors department at the union. Ernie Moran, who was Leonard's number one assistant, moved to the President's office. We opened bargaining at General Motors right after the Fourth of July, as I remember it, and opening day Leonard announced that I would be moving from the General Motors section to the President's office, as an administrative assistant to the President. Because he and Ernie were going to be so involved in bargaining, I assumed many of the administrative tasks in the President's office at that point. One of the chief ones was to complete the construction of the Family Education Center at Black Lake, which was almost complete but not yet finished. Starting in '70 I then was in charge of the operation of the Family Education Center for the next seven years. I'd only been there on one occasion, prior to President Reuther's death, only very briefly.

Barnard: So, you hadn't had any connection with the Black Lake Center before?

Ephlin: No, none whatsoever, other than a visit, a brief visit with the GM sub-council meeting, I believe it was in the spring of that year. There were many, many loose ends to bring together, as the construction was winding down. There was still some uncompleted contracts. We encountered very serious financial problems in the union, partly because of the General Motors strike, but also because of the heavy expenditures that we had incurred in constructing the Family Education Center. So, it was a real challenge, working with Brendan Sexton, who Walter Reuther had placed there. During that winter we did lay plans for opening the center in 1971.

Barnard: You were more concerned with the business side of the operation, and completing the construction. Sexton was working on the education program.

Ephlin: Sexton was there full-time on the education portion of it, and I had the business part to content myself with; but also to work with Brendan, because I was there as Leonard's assistant, so I had some responsibilities overall. We engaged during that period the Sheraton Corporation to run the housekeeping and food and beverage part of it. As I say, completing the construction, and then preparing to open in early 1971.

Barnard: There were some doubts among some of the UAW people from, shall we say, outlying areas, far away from Michigan, as to whether all that money should have been put into a rather remotely located center. You coming from Massachusetts, how did you feel about it?

Ephlin: Right. As a matter of fact, in the early days of the discussion of constructing this center, there was discussion about building several centers around the country. In fact, I think,

some UAW people had looked at some land in New Hampshire, for example. But then, because the expenditures at Black Lake were so much greater than initially planned, the idea of having multiple centers was eliminated. But this gave me extra problems in planning how we would open the center. We had to have a system that would give every section of the union equal access to the center, so we developed a plan for the Family Education Program. The germ of that program had been developed between President Reuther and Sexton earlier on. We had to flesh it out and determine how we would operate. So we came up with a scheme that was started in 1971 with a twelve-day program. We established quotas for every Region in the country. From a business standpoint, I had to figure out how to arrange transportation for all these people from all over the country into this remote area, turning that group over every couple of weeks, as well as on the in-between weekend using it for Michigan groups.

Following the '70 strike, the union had serious financial problems. We had a very large layoff of staff, and we were still laboring with this serious problem. Myself and Regional Director Brad Young, and another young staff person who worked in the President's office for us, had come up with a proposal as to how to finance Black Lake, which we took to President Woodcock. He was very appreciative that someone else was thinking of the problem and working on it. The upshot of it all was (he changed it somewhat), we held a special convention at which we proposed to the delegates that 3% of the dues allocation that was currently going to the local unions would be allocated to the Family Education Center Fund. That convention was very memorable to me, for so many reasons. I was so intimately involved in planning for it, and so forth. The highlight of it was, Leonard presented the fact that we had a serious financial problem, we had this wonderful facility, we have to figure out how to use it, we have to figure out how to pay it. The cause of our problems is really not very important now; it's what we're going to do about them. We need help, and here the local union delegates voted almost unanimously to give up 3% of the dues, which was going to their treasuries, for this purpose. So their response to Leonard's appeal was remarkable, and I know that Leonard was overjoyed by the reaction of the people. This, of course, gave me some real serious problems. Leonard, coincidentally, Leonard and I both had a little bit of an accounting background. He said to me, "I want a plan to show how we can operate the facility with this money. What are we going to do with it, and so forth". I had to develop a budget showing how we could run the family program all summer, run some other programs, and pay for it out of this 3%. In addition, Leonard made a commitment to that convention, that when we complete the capital expenditures at Black Lake, we will reduce this to 2%. Well, this was obviously a very difficult assignment to try to make estimates on how many dues we would have, what the dues level would be, and therefore what would 3% generate. Then, what would it cost us to bring in people from all over the country every couple of weeks during the summer, families and all. It was a very difficult chore. In fact, some of that I had completed during the winter of '70. I

had to have some surgery performed early in 1971, and I was on the phone from the hospital to Ernie Moran, my colleague, about some of the details of it. Fortunately, it worked out very, very well.

Barnard: How much money did the 3% produce?

Ephlin: It was a considerable amount. At that time our membership was still well in excess of a million people, and so it did generate quite a bit of money. Leonard then assigned me the task of in effect completing the major part of the original plan that had not yet been built, a children's camp. So he assigned me the task of building a children's camp and somewhere along the way Leonard had decided that we should have a campground and trailer park, so he assigned me to build the, quote, "children's camp and trailer park", which for a semi-city boy was quite a task. I had never been to either a children's camp or a trailer park! So it was quite a learning experience through all the years I worked for Leonard.

During that period, Mr. Maxon, who had owned the property, passed away. The architect I had engaged to design a children's camp saw the hilltop property where Mr. Maxon had lived, and said, "That's the ideal spot". So, I had the task of convincing both Leonard and the rest of the leadership to spend a little more money buying the rest of the land. It turned out to be a very fine investment. So we did construct the children's camp on Hilltop, and built the trailer park. Both have worked out very, very well over the years, I believe. So this was some more of the exciting assignments that I had working with Leonard.

Barnard: You say that he asked you to do these jobs even though you didn't have any particular experience in these areas. What that suggests to me is that he had confidence in your ability to do something and do a good job of it even though you might come to it without a lot of background in it. Was this his way generally with people? Did he tend to judge people on the basis of their potential?

Ephlin: Yes. In fact, when I first went to work for Leonard, when he called and offered me a job in the GM section of the union, he mentioned that it would be in the umpire section of handling arbitrations. Well, I had been the president of the local, but not a committeeman. I had not handled grievances and the like. So I told Leonard of that, and he said, "Well, we think that we can teach you, and you can learn it". That was one of his traits. He would give you an assignment that was very challenging, but he wouldn't give you a lot of details. He never told you exactly how to do anything. He gave you the assignment, and...

Barnard: ...turned you loose.

Ephlin: Turned you loose. He didn't question you a great deal about it. Because of Leonard's style, there's no question that he seriously impacted my way of working. Like on Black Lake. We had an understanding. He wanted to know, obviously, about any major policy questions, any political impact type thing, any capital expenditures, but not the day-to-day

operating details. Leonard was a marvelous head for figures, but he liked brevity in reports. So, whenever you went to Leonard with a problem, you also had to have a proposed solution, and if possible, both the problem and solution, if you could get it on one page, that was better. But you always had to be prepared to answer some very difficult questions as to what was behind something. If it included any numbers or anything, he was very quick at digesting that kind of material, and would ask some tough questions. I learned to try to be very brief, not to bother him with a lot of details, but to make sure he was made aware of the important things. Sometimes deciding those was not always the easiest thing. It changed my work habits, I'm sure, and influenced the way I did things later on. His system of giving you a job, and then expecting you to do it without a lot of follow through and a lot of instructions, no question impacted the way I tried to lead when I assumed higher authority later on.

Barnard: Did this approach work pretty well with the staff people across the board? Everybody responded reasonably well?

Ephlin: Well, I think those people who succeeded with Leonard did. There were others who didn't quite like that approach, so they didn't fare as well over time. If somebody wanted to stay on one position and so forth, then Leonard would leave them. He used this other approach with people who seemed to enjoy it and take to it. All the staff, everybody in the union that worked for Leonard, I think, had very high regard for his intelligence. Leonard had an aura about him that elevated the office, and I think he used the position very effectively. Again, a style that I think is very important. The presidency of the UAW is a very high position, in my mind obviously, and Leonard had always acted very much in the role that he was assigned to play, and very effectively. So I think most all of the people had very high respect for him. His intellect, I think, was scary to some people. When you had a discussion with Leonard, you had to be prepared to answer some difficult questions because he probed. He was easy to work for in one way, and yet hard to work for in that he expected a lot from you.

Barnard: Would you say that he didn't suffer fools gladly, or was sometimes a little impatient?

Ephlin: Very much so, and in fact he one time used that very expression to me. I was having a little difficulty with somebody, and he told me that I did not suffer fools gladly. I wasn't sure what he meant, in fact. But he had such an aura about him that staff and others didn't bother him with petty things. I think he used the prestige of the office very effectively, and I think that was very good, the way he managed it. During the seven years I was his assistant, while he was President, he gave me an awful lot of very difficult jobs. While I worked very hard at times, I enjoyed it very much, because it was always very challenging, and the fact that he did have some confidence in me, obviously, made me feel very good.

As we approached the convention of 1974, Ernie Moran was Leonard's number one

administrative assistant, even though there were no official titles or designations. He was very, very effective in General Motors and in Aerospace, and was very devoted to Leonard and the UAW. The job was Ernie's whole life, and he did a tremendous job for Leonard. But he had some personal difficulties. His wife passed away unexpectedly, and Ernie's eyes were troubling him, and so as we approached '74 he was planning to retire.

My very dear friend Tony DeLorenzo was the Regional Director back in my home region, 9A, from which Irving Bluestone also came. And Irving and Tony and I had talked about looking to the future. Somebody had to get in position to succeed Tony, who was suffering from lung cancer. Also, that Irving would not be around too much longer. Tony had proposed to me that I come back to the region as his assistant following the 1974 Convention. So we talked to Leonard about it, and Ernie was leaving. Leonard said, "I only have one more term, and I would like you to stay here and finish it out with me". So I agreed to do that, instead of going back to the region in '74. I stayed in Detroit as Leonard's assistant, and Tony appointed a man to the position who was already in his sixties, so that down the road a little there would be an opening. Ernie left, and Leonard took great pains to let me know that there was no Number One in the system (he had appointed another fellow as an administrative assistant, Hank Lacayo), and that we were all the same. Nevertheless, I moved into Ernie's office, and carried out the role pretty much for the next three years with Leonard. Over the years that office had been occupied by a lot of very fine people, so it was a source of great pride just to be in it, succeeding Ernie, but Irving Bluestone had been there. Jack Conway and Doug Fraser and Leonard Woodcock. It was a very wonderful office.

Barnard: Big shoes to fill.

Ephlin: Yes. Over the years it had been a very important position. The workload didn't lessen at that stage. I kept most of the responsibilities I had as a second or third AA, and assumed most of Ernie's on top of it. I continued to handle Black Lake, I continued to deal with the Staff Council, I represented Leonard in bargaining with the staff. Somewhere along the line I had even assumed the Director of the Information Systems department, the computers operation. One of Ernie's very major responsibilities at that time was an effort to organize the engineers in North American Rockwell Aviation. I took over that responsibility. While I sat in the President's office, I had to commute back and forth to Black Lake, and I had a staff person working for me in Los Angeles, organizing engineers, so I had to do some running back and forth there. In addition, of course, as Leonard's AA I got to participate in bargaining in all the auto companies in 1976. I went with Leonard to Ford, GM and Chrysler. We had a strike at Ford in 1976. We did negotiate the paid personal holiday plan, which was an ingenious scheme as a way of reducing working time, following a brief strike. Then, as I say, we went to General Motors and to Chrysler. So it was a very exciting opportunity for me to work in all of them.

Barnard: It's about the last time that the Union made a breakthrough in new gains.

Ephlin: In principles, yes; 1979, by which time I was gone, in that year it was a rich settlement, but there were no new principles established. They added some to the paid personal holiday plan. So, the years as Leonard's assistant were obviously very exciting.

Barnard: Did the problems with Black Lake clear up after you got over those initial financial hurdles?

Ephlin: Oh, yes. First of all, my budgeting worked out reasonably well. For a number of years it was the only part of the union, really, that ran on a budget. Leonard liked that approach. I knew the parameters in which I had to work and what I could do, and the program was very successful. Brendan Sexton did not stay with us too long, and we engaged Bill Goode, a former UAW guy, to be our person at Black Lake.

Barnard: There were some differences between Leonard and Sexton, weren't there?

Ephlin: I think there were some political differences going back to earlier days. When Walter died, while there was not a long and prolonged political campaign, there was a campaign by Leonard and Doug, and Brendan and some others were kind of vocal about Leonard, I think, which left some bitter taste. Even though it was all done very quickly, and it was all over before most people knew what had happened, really, nevertheless it did leave some scars, I think. Curiously enough, Leonard, I believe, had given up any thoughts that he would ever be President because of his age.

Barnard: So close in age to Walter.

Ephlin: Yes. If Walter had not had that untimely death, Leonard would not have been President. So when Walter did get killed, at first Leonard had no thoughts of running for President, I believe. Some people really convinced him that he should, that he had a contribution to make, and obviously I was very pleased that he did.

Barnard: Were these staff people? Regional directors? Both?

Ephlin: Well, a variety of people, yes. Ernie Moran, and I worked through Ernie a great deal, but Ernie did everything he could to encourage him, I know, as did others. The Board, Pat Greathouse, obviously, who had not been real close to Leonard, I don't think. He played a role in helping, convincing Leonard to run and supporting him. They became very close as a result of that. And so it was, I think, for the time that Leonard did a wonderful job for the union. He rebuilt it in many ways financially, and the solidarity of the union, put it back together. The election did not cause any great divide inside the union in general. Rebuilding it and overcoming the financial difficulties that we had, the effects of the GM strike, and the like, I think Leonard's very businesslike approach to things was valuable, and his willingness to make very difficult decisions. The staff layoff was very difficult. Very difficult, but rather than prolonging the agony, what has to be done, do it. The special convention for getting the people, the locals, to help finance Black Lake. All of those things, I think, were major accomplishments. Before Leonard left, we had

completed building the Children's Center, and the campground, they were both up and operating. True to his word, he proposed to a convention that we reduce the 3% to 2%. Subsequently people have been critical of that move because the operating expenses have increased, the dues level is down, etc. Many people question the wisdom of that action, but Leonard had made a commitment that we would do it. And we continued to operate for some period on the 2%, so it was only later that difficulties followed.

Barnard: As the membership fell off.

Ephlin: Well, I'm not sure of all the reasons. By then I was out of it also, I mean I had moved on to different things. So, all of the contributing factors, I can't really say. But during that period it worked. That's all I can testify to.

That was very consistent with Leonard's very businesslike approach to things. He was very effective in many, many ways, and so I think made a great contribution to the union. I did work for him for a total of 17 years.

We had been holding two-year conventions. The Constitution was changed to go to three-year conventions, which would allow Leonard to participate in '76 negotiations, and then have the convention the following year. Again, which was, I think, very beneficial to the union, rather than have a convention in the spring of '76 ...

Barnard: And then have negotiations right after.

Ephlin: Right into bargaining would have been rather difficult. So, as we approached '77, once again, we discussed my returning to the Region. It became obvious very soon, early, that Doug would be the next president. Doug and I had some discussion about my continuing as AA, but I told him about my arrangements with Tony, and Doug (as only he could do), said, "I understand the options, because I made the exact same move from administrative assistant to the president to the region". He said, "If you want to be more than the AA, that's what you should do". He gave me a lesson in personal traits, I guess. At that point I said, "Well, I love this job, being the AA, and if you think I can make a greater contribution to the union by being here, that's all right with me. I don't need the title and so forth". I said, "I don't have any ego problem". He said, "Yes, you do". He said, "I held this job, too. It's a very powerful one, and you like the power that goes with it, and that's ego also". And I said, "Well, I never thought of that as ego, but I guess you're right". I did enjoy it; a very difficult job with a great deal of responsibility, but obviously one that I enjoyed tremendously, and Doug understood that fully well, but he did suggest that if I wanted to be more than an AA that I should go back. So, right after the convention, Doug became President, and I went back as a staff member, then the Assistant Director quickly. By the fall of that same year, Tony resigned and I was elected as Regional Director. Without a contest. That was pretty good after having been gone from the Region for seventeen years.

Tony DeLorenzo was one of my dearest friends in the union, and did a lot of wonderful things for me. Certainly he was instrumental in my future, my being involved in the first instance. Here, at the end of his career, he had lung cancer. In fact, he passed away not too long after he helped me become the Director. So he really played a major role in my union career, and was a very wonderful person in his own way.

Barnard: As you say, this was without a contest. There just wasn't anybody else?

Ephlin: Oh, there were a number of people who had aspirations, but I had Tony's assistance, and some of them understood that I at least had hopes not to be there too long. So, a staff member who had worked in the Region for a number years, who had come out of my plant, and was chairman of the committee when I was the President, wanted to run. There was another young man, a local president, who had run against Tony, in fact, at an early time, who had ambitions. Well, neither one of them ran, or decided to mount their contest against me. Both of them have since become the Regional Director, following my departure, but there was no contest at that time. Made it very easy.

Before I leave that period as Leonard's AA, one of the key things that happened. Early in the seventies, I don't remember how exactly it came to be, but the U.S. Labor Department was running a series of seminars on new work organization, etc. Talking primarily about what had happened in Sweden. As far as I know, there were three of us from the International Union that attended: Doug Fraser, Irving Bluestone, and myself. And I developed a keen interest in changing the way workers performed.

Barnard: How did you happen to be chosen to be one of the UAW people?

Ephlin: Well, because I already had an interest in this direction. Irving and I had had discussions about it at an earlier time. I'm not sure whether it was before those meetings or shortly thereafter, I got an opportunity to go to Sweden with an International Metalworkers group and see the way they were doing things in Sweden, which made a great impression on me.

Barnard: This was using some kind of team approach?

Ephlin: Well, with the union playing a much different role. They were doing some work in teams, changing the work cycle, giving the workers more opportunity to make decisions. In 1973 bargaining, was when we for the first time negotiated the Quality of Work Life Letter into the Ford, GM and Chrysler national agreements. At a dinner following the conclusion of negotiations, I was there again as Leonard's assistant. Irving Bluestone asked if I would work with him in this program. It called for the establishment, at the corporate level, of a National Committee to Improve the Quality of Work Life, with two UAW people, two GM people. Of course, I was very tickled Irving asked me and was delighted to serve. So Irving and I became the UAW members of the first Quality of Work Life Committee at General Motors.

Barnard: The General Motors people were not particularly eager to move into this area,

were they?

Ephlin: Well, they were moving into it prior to the bargaining. They had some research done, to some degree had seen the need for making change. They had assembled a number of industrial psychologists, organization development people, and were doing some work. But when Irving approached them, they had first said that this was none of the union's business.

Barnard: The old reply.

Ephlin: Yes. Irving obviously disagreed, and by '73 we put it in the agreement and made it our business. So they were doing it; they were not too anxious to have us in it. Some of them, the GM members of the committee, were Steve Fuller, who was new to GM coming from Harvard Business School, and George Morris, who was the vice-president of Labor Relations and a very traditional guy. George really didn't think this would amount to anything anyhow, and certainly didn't want the union involved and the like. Steve Fuller, on the other hand, was much more supportive. Nothing much happened at either Ford or Chrysler in that period. GM did engage in a number of experiments, small scale, but it was a beginning. Some very exciting things started to happen at GM, on a small scale.

Barnard: Pilot program type things, more or less.

Ephlin: Yes. And so, obviously, my involvement and participation in that program only tended to enhance my view of what should be done. It was another unique opportunity. In spite of all the duties I had working for Leonard, I used to seek out additional jobs. I read in the paper that Ken Bannon had made a settlement with Rockwell Automotive Division, that they would establish a new plant in Battle Creek, Michigan to experiment in new methods of work. So, I called Ken and said, "You know, I have a keen interest in this subject, and I would like you to keep me advised to what happens". Well, in his typical wonderful fashion, Ken says, "No way. If you want to know about it, I want you involved in it". So, with all the other things I was doing for Leonard, I got very involved with Rockwell in their experiment in Battle Creek, which was a very far-reaching experiment. Probably the most extensive thing that existed until Saturn came along years later. Again, Leonard...

Barnard: Was it in your judgment a kind of a pioneer for Saturn?

Ephlin: Well, no, there is nothing quite like Saturn, but all these are pieces that helped to go to make up the mosaic later on. There's no one thing, it was a growing process. I became quite a student of this. In fact, in those early days, at one point it was called Humanizing the Workplace. That term infuriated Woodcock, among other things. He said the work had always been human. Somebody would say, "Well, how come Don Ephlin is doing these things?" Leonard would say, "That's Ephlin's folly". Leonard's approach was to want to know what was happening, to want to know about all, anything that impacted on us, without necessarily being ready to buy in. So, a kind of unspoken agreement. I did things as an individual, with Leonard's tacit approval

obviously, to try to learn more about what was happening, and to be involved, without Leonard as the President being committed to support of these. But people sometimes could not understand the arrangement Leonard and I had in that regard. He gave me a great deal of freedom. He gave me a pretty heavy work load, and beyond that anything I wanted to do. He was very good about it. So I had a lot of opportunities to find out what was going on, and visit with others, and be involved, so my interest in this field continued to grow.

Barnard: Who would you say you learned the most from on this? Bluestone, of course, was involved in it, but also there were outside people.

Ephlin: I worked with so many people. I don't know as there is any one person I could point to. Irving obviously was not only an influence, but a supporter. People at General Motors like a Dutch Landon, who was their in-house psychologist. When I worked with Rockwell, they had a young man who was a psychologist from the outside. Going to Sweden, obviously, was impressive.

Barnard: The U.S. Labor Department was involved too, to some degree.

Ephlin: To a minimal degree. But I did work with a man whose name escapes me at the moment. Ted Mills was a leader in the field. So almost any high level meeting that was held on the subject in the country, I had an opportunity to be involved. Jack Grayson, who started the National Productivity Center, I worked with him some. Worked with Ted Mills, and other companies and unions were starting to go forward, I got to work with them. AT&T, I attended a high level meeting of their management and union folks to help convince them to get started. So I helped launch AT&T in this effort.

Barnard: Were academic sources of much value?

Ephlin: Well, at the beginning as a matter of fact, the academics upset me greatly. One of the first meetings I attended, these Labor Department meetings, there was a man there from UCLA, whose name will come to me in a moment, Lou Davis, his name was. When he is describing this new socio-technical system, I asked him what role he saw for the unions. He said, "None. The unions have had their day, and now the social scientists in this field of organizational development are going to have a great deal more influence". I said, "Well, I don't think so". So, some of the academics thought they were going to take over, in a sense. This man, Lou Davis, a little aside, years later I was in California with Irving, and Irving went to speak to a program that Davis was running. Some of the management participants come over to me afterwards and said, "We learned more in a couple of hours from this guy than we did all week here". Irving was, obviously, marvelous and very articulate. Sometime later Davis asked if I would come to California and speak to his group. It was very difficult for me to do so, but I did it just to make the point. He said we had no role to play; now he was paying my expenses to California to help.

Barnard: He ran an institute of some sort, didn't he?

Ephlin: Yes. He was very knowledgeable about some areas, but the role of the unions was what nobody could really cover. So, I met all these academics, and because we were more involved than anybody...

Barnard: Than any other union?

Ephlin: Yes. I got invited to all sorts of sessions, got to participate a great deal, during the time I was working for Leonard, and during the time I was Regional Director, even. Back east I continued to work in this direction, in a sense, learning more about it all the time. So, many people helped influence me. I had a call just Thursday or Friday, from a man I haven't talked to for eight years, a man who had worked for AT&T. He quit them eight years ago, and has been doing consulting ever since, very much in this field. He called because he had the opportunity to visit Saturn, and saw my name there, and said, "God, I got to call Don and tell him it's the greatest thing", and so forth. We'll talk a little more about Saturn. I made many contacts in this arena over the years, and quite a network of people. Old Dutch Landon left General Motors as a consultant, and he's still a very dear friend. Any number of people played a very key role.

Barnard: Were you involved in particular projects that were undertaken, like at Tarrytown?

Ephlin: Well, at the time Tarrytown originally took place, I was then working for Leonard and I was not directly involved. But when I became the Regional Director, Tarrytown was in my region. And I was involved, to a degree, from the National Committee level. Irving and General Motors agreed to run a couple of top-level seminars, to which all the members of the International Executive Board of the UAW were invited, and General Motors executives. I played a role in those first two executive-level seminars. The Tarrytown people were there. I put on a presentation about the Battle Creek thing, with Rockwell, that I was involved with at the time. So, again, I was involved at GM, thanks to Irving, as well as outside. Many many things; I learned a great deal as I went along.

Barnard: What did you anticipate would be problems with this approach? Obviously it's something that has stirred some opposition within the UAW.

Ephlin: Well, because it was a change! The union is a bureaucracy as much as a corporation, and we're very traditional, and any change in roles is difficult. We didn't choose the role, but we had been placed in this very narrow role, of bargaining for wages and benefits, and handling grievances. But having no direct involvement in the way work was performed, how it was performed, and the decision-making process. To me, all of this was what we were about all the time. I had recalled hearing Walter Reuther say so many times that "We have a need to be involved in the decisions that affect our people, before they are made". To me, this was a logical extension of the union's responsibility. As Irving had pointed out when GM said it was none of our concern, anything that deals with the welfare of our people or the way work is performed is just as much a part of working conditions as fans and air conditioning or anything else. And so,

whenever you're trying to make a dramatic change, you encounter opposition. One of our problems, the union and the management, we had had such a long successful run at the end of World War II, in this narrow role that had been assigned to us, more or less, that many of our people thought that's all the world was. I didn't share that view.

Barnard: Now, by 'our people' do you mean staff people in the UAW, or rank-and-file, or local, or the whole bunch?

Ephlin: The whole bunch. And just like management's weakness, in General Motors for example, they're products of their own success; they're victims of their own success. Well, the same thing applied to the union. People had worked their way up from the shop floor to staff or even leadership positions, because of their skills in handling grievances or in being adversaries. So any change was threatening to them. You know, I got here with these skills; now you want to change the name of the ball game, the rules of the game. I might not be able to play in these new rules. There were some people who had, I guess, real beliefs that it was philosophically wrong.

You know, these old terms about being in bed with management, and all this kind of nonsense which had grown up over the years, was very significant. But most of it, I think, was a cover-up because of the fear of change. It's much more difficult to be a union leader in the new mode than the old. You need far more skills; you have to work much harder at it; you have to be a leader. Looking back, the old system was really pretty simple. We sat back, waited for management to do something wrong, and they accommodated us. They gave us plenty of job security that way, and then we ranted and raved about what they'd done wrong. But it was usually too late to fix it. But we didn't have to offer solutions, anyhow. All we had to do was say what they did was wrong. So, with the benefit of hindsight, the old system was really pretty simple. By now, we had become very bureaucratized. Being a local union committeeman, for example, in a General Motors plant, was a very lucrative position. We had heaped all sorts of benefits on being a member of the shop committee. There were loads of chairmen from GM plants, who made far more money than I did as a Vice President of the International Union. So, anything that was a threat to these positions, politically, was dangerous. Partly because we did not devote the energy to it, we had no game plan, or we couldn't say, "Here's where we want to be", and so forth. You did it on the go. You took advantage of opportunities.

Now, there's no question of the wonderful life I had in the UAW. My timing has been extremely poor, at times. Being elected a Vice President of the Union in 1980 was obviously a high spot of my career, but it's also when the auto industry was going down the tubes. It was not the greatest of times to move into that role. I was elected in 1980, along with Owen Bieber and Steve Yokich as Vice Presidents. Ray Majerus was Secretary-Treasurer. We'd had some turnover in the Union. Leonard had left. But in '80, we had Ken Bannon leaving, we had Mazey leaving, we had Irving Bluestone leaving early, and so it was one of the biggest upheavals in our

leadership. At the Convention, I assumed I would become the Director of the General Motors Department of the union. I'd spent most of my life dealing with General Motors; I came from GM. Never gave any thought to anything different. The night before it was to be officially announced, we had a big dinner at the Convention, and following the dinner Doug took me aside and advised me that I would not be going to GM. To say I was upset would be an understatement! I didn't sleep a wink all that night.

Barnard: Did he say it would be Ford?

Ephlin: Yes. I thought of quitting, I was so upset. I thought it was a terrible put-down, in a way.

Barnard: Did he talk about his reasons for this?

Ephlin: No, not really. What reasons he did give me were, I didn't think, very important. I assumed one thing, I was correct on, that any chance I ever had of being the President probably was ended with that decision, because GM was the biggest. I looked on it as a put-down, in a sense.

Barnard: You felt totally unprepared for this.

Ephlin: Oh, I was shocked! Yes. I hadn't even given it a thought. And nobody had, that I know of. I mean, it was just assumed. In fact, some other officers of the union had said to me, "You know, you'll be going to GM".

Barnard: You had taken it for granted.

Ephlin: Yes! So I was totally unaware, and very very upset. My wife and I were staying on the *Queen Mary* during the Convention.

Barnard: At Long Beach?

Ephlin: Yes. Our hotel room, that we were assigned to, had a strike. Couldn't stay there, and at the last minute we ended up on the *Queen Mary*. So I was awake all night, and in the morning I met with Doug again. We were due to have a press conference, and we had a little discussion.

Barnard: Did you make a pitch?

Ephlin: Oh, yes; a very strong one. He finally advised me that he was the President, and it was his responsibility, and I said, "I understand that". So, I had a couple of very difficult days following that. Then I just, well, decided, "Well, I guess my job is to be the Ford Director, and I'll do what I can with that job". Ken Bannon was a very dear friend of mine. Ken has always told me that he urged Doug to put me in Ford, so at least that part pleased me. Because I had been involved at Ford in '73 and '76, a little bit as Leonard's assistant, and none of the newly elected people were from Ford; there was no logical Ford person. So, Ken at least wanted me there, so that made me feel a little better, that at least from Ken's point of view it was not a put-down. It was what he wanted. To this day, Doug and I have never really discussed it. On occasion when he and I and

Ken are together, Ken will say, "Don's still mad at us for that", but once something is done, it's done, and so be it. As it turns out, being at Ford was a marvelous three years for me. I enjoyed it tremendously; it gave me unique opportunities, and it was a very rewarding experience. It wasn't all negative, for sure; it was great.

Barnard: For some of the things that you were particularly interested in, like employee involvement, Ford was a little more receptive at this time.

Ephlin: No, at that point they were not. Ford had never done anything with it, except in 1979 bargaining, they had changed the language of the agreement from 'quality of work life' to 'employee involvement', to make it different than GM. There were a couple of little things started. The most important thing: Henry Ford II had gone outside the company and employed a new Vice President of Personnel, Pete Pestillo, because Henry saw the need for Ford to change. Sid McKenna was very traditional. So that when I got to Ford, they were in very deep difficulties, financially and business-wise. They were receptive to most anything at that point. But they had recognized that they had to change. So, we did set about, very quickly, to spread the employee involvement process across the system. We used quality as a major issue. Ford was the third in quality, of the Big Three, at that time. In very short order, they came up first. So they became very receptive, but it was a very trying, very difficult time. Prior to '79 bargaining at Ford, we represented 200,000 people. By the early eighties, we were down to 95,000. Over half were gone. We were really facing a major crisis; Ford was bordering on bankruptcy. So, like I say, that was not the greatest time to become a Vice President. But it was a unique opportunity, and it gave me the opportunity to spread employee involvement across the system.

Barnard: Not much had been done in Ford; Bannon had not been particularly aggressive on this, and management was not interested?

Ephlin: Ford management was not, Ken had not been in the early days. Seventy-nine, they started to change, and had a couple little things underway, but very little. But it was ripe, there was no question that the serious difficulties they were in made it easier to do. But we were able to make great progress in employee involvement, and in changing the relationship and changing the role of the union. So, when you talk about this whole arena, people say, "How did you have the vision to design this and that?"; I didn't. In the union, you are always reactive, in a sense, and you take advantage of opportunities. So, while I had all these difficulties, business-wise there, it also presented us with opportunities to do things that I had always wanted to do, but never had the opportunity presented in quite the same fashion. So, Ford lent itself to doing a lot of exciting things. I spread the EI thing, quickly across the system.

All we were hearing about is the Japanese from everybody at that stage. One of the first things I did at Ford, I convinced Ford to take a group to Japan, and I selected six local union leaders from six different types of Ford plants, and along with some Ford management, Pestillo

and I led this group to Japan. I think this was the first joint group; and we visited a lot of plants. It served us a wonderful purpose. As we visited plants, like when we went to the stamping plant, we had a fellow named Joe Domico out of the Ford stamping plant in Cleveland, be our lead person, and I would say, "Look around, Joe. How would you compare the workplace, the work pace, to yours? How would you compare the degree of automation?", and so on. Much to the surprise of a lot of people, the work pace was not a great deal different. The level of automation was not a great deal different. Some areas that we did manually, they had automated, and vice versa. But this was six local union leaders saying these things. So, we came home, convinced that there's no magic over there to what they're doing. They're not doing anything that we are not doing. They're doing it very well, however. The quality levels are great. The way they were working was better than the way we were doing things. So, it was a marvelous experience. These six leaders helped spread the word through the Ford system. Look: We can beat them; there is no reason that we're losing, when we see what they're doing, except they are doing it better than us. We gotta do it better. Peers are always more influential than other folks, and so they were able, at sub-council meetings and other gatherings, to talk about what they saw, and answer questions. It was very helpful.

The Ford membership was a very intelligent membership. I got Ford to share a great deal of business information with them. Phil Caldwell had become Chairman succeeding Henry Ford. In speeches he used to cry a lot those days; it was pretty bad out there. He'd say, "My God, Donald, don't the people understand how bad it is?" And I said, "No. How could they? You never told them anything about the business before". So, suddenly I got Ford to share all sorts of business information. One of the things was kind of unusual. I went to Caldwell on one occasion and said, "Phil, we don't want to hear any more about the Japanese cost advantage over us. All these numbers your folks throw at us, we just don't believe them. Now", I said, "if you're interested, I will hire an outside consultant to do a comparison of Ford and Mazda, not for public consumption. We'll just share the data, we'll both have the same data base". And, somewhat to my surprise, he agreed. I already had lined up a management consultant who happened to be from New England, and whom I knew.

Barnard: Who was this?

Ephlin: A man named Ira Magaziner, who is now working in the White House. I had already talked to Ira about this. I had been with Ira over to Volvo.

Barnard: He was involved in that?

Ephlin: Yes, he did a lot of work for Volvo. And while I was in New England as the Regional Director, I worked with him on a campaign in Rhode Island, a political campaign and so he had agreed he'd do this study for us. The only caveat he had is I could never tell management how much I paid him. He charged them much higher fees than we paid him. Ford did give him access to the numbers. Along the way Caldwell said, "We'll pay for it". I said, "No, I can't let you

do that". I couldn't tell him why. They gave Ira access to all the damn numbers, and the result didn't come out until I'd left Ford, really. While the overall number of the difference, the cost differential, was pretty accurate, Ira did a remarkable job of pointing out what constituted it, and whereas all the blame was being heaped on hourly workers' pay and productivity, by Jim Harbour and others, Ira's study demonstrated how much of the difference was due to overhead, and things of that nature.

Barnard: Other items.

Ephlin: A lot of other items; Ford had a lot more bean counters, lawyers, all kind of people. They had downsized, but had not downsized the bureaucracy quite as much. Caldwell used that very effectively in trimming their white collar work force. In fact, later on, years later, Doug Fraser and I were in New York at a speech Caldwell made, and he said, "That study was better than anything we had internally". And it showed us we had a piece of it, we knew that, but it was far less than they were heaping on us. So we had the opportunity at Ford to do all sorts of things that we couldn't have carried off under the old system.

The Ford workers, and we became concerned that they were outsourcing a lot of work. Bard Young, the Regional Director on the West Side of Detroit, had a number of component plants. He was my greatest ally, because they were losing a lot of people there. So, he and I advocated opening the agreement with Ford early so that we could do something about that issue. The first time I proposed it to the Union's Executive board, we lost 24-2. Bard and I were the only two in favor of it. A few months later, GM made a proposal to the UAW privately, to Doug and Owen, which caused them to decide they wanted to make a run at GM. I was aware of the proposal. Doug and I and Owen and a few others had met and discussed it. So, we went to the board, and now we got approval to open the two agreements early. The talks at GM failed after a short time while we continued to talk at Ford.

Doug was very disappointed by that, and he went off for a week or so to the Chrysler Board meeting, I think it was. When he came back, he and I discussed the merits of trying to do something at Ford. He said if it failed at GM, why do it again? I said, it's different, and we had quite a debate. Finally, I took, in a sense, quite a gamble. We went to the glass house, Ford World Headquarters, where the national bargaining committee was assembled. Mike Rinaldi, the President of Local 600, was the chairman of the group. I laid it out to them. I said, fellows, Doug and I have been discussing whether or not we ought to try to proceed here at Ford, and I told him I thought we could get an agreement here. But, I said, "We would like to hear from you". Now this was a big roll of the dice, because Mike Rinaldi was not always the most predictable person. On the committee, one fellow was openly in opposition to the administration from one of the Cleveland plants. Mike started it off, and every member of that committee, including Ernie Lofton who is now the Vice President of the UAW at Ford, every single one of them said that we had

been working together, we think we can do some good, and we would like to go forward. So Doug said, fine, if you want to give it a shot, we'll try it. It was probably the most unique negotiations I've ever been in in my life.

We had priced out for the guys the cost of various options. You know, Ford is looking for relief, what can we do? I had a menu for them to pick and choose. They then empowered Doug and I to go see what we could do. We had a meeting with Pestillo and one or two other people; that's all. We had no deadline, there was no great bunch of proposals from anybody. Pestillo and I agreed that, hey, if we can't do it in a couple weeks, we'll forget and come back in the fall. Then, I don't know exactly, but in two weeks or less, we fashioned an agreement that I think was pretty revolutionary in many ways. We gave up no wages. The only economic item we did give up was the paid personal holiday plan that we had started at Ford some six years earlier. That was the easiest thing to give up because there was no reduction of anyone's standard of living with it. We delayed some cost of living payments, and agreed that there would be no general increase in the next couple of years. Some people said we gave away the annual improvement factor. Well, we didn't have one. All we had for the future was whatever we could bargain. But we got into some new areas: we got profit sharing for the first time; we expanded employee involvement; we got the head of the Ford department of the union the right to speak to the Board of Directors whenever; we started a program under which Ford management would share business data with the local union people on a regular basis. One of the most important things, perhaps, was we instituted the Joint Training Fund. It was called the Nickel Fund then; it quickly got to be a lot more money than that, but started at a nickel. So, it was a great round of bargaining.

We were going to have a meeting of the Ford Council, which is the first step in the ratification process, in Chicago a few days later, and as always we tried to keep the details quiet until we go to the people. But there's always some leaks, and the papers were playing it up, obviously, about concessions. We got to Chicago, in the Hyatt Hotel. The pickets outside had signs condemning me and Doug, in general, about concessions and blah-blah. Obviously, I'm pretty nervous; this is my first settlement at Ford, and under these conditions. I was very apprehensive, obviously. Incidentally, the pickets were mostly either from Canada or from General Motors; they were not from Ford. Danny Forchione, who was my administrative assistant, opened up the meeting and went through the business at hand. Then he introduced me, and I got a standing ovation before I said a word. That had to be the warmest feeling I ever enjoyed in my years in the union, because I was a nervous wreck. This was going to be difficult, and their reaction was just so marvelous. We had no trouble getting approval.

Barnard: What sort of commitment did you get from Ford on the out-sourcing?

Ephlin: For the first time we got a commitment on no additional plant closings. We got a provision that for the first time gave us some input in out-sourcing decisions. Before work was

out-sourced they would advise us; we'd have a chance to try to demonstrate how we could do it effectively inside. This was really the first time we had any input on out-sourcing of production work. Skilled trades work, sub-contracting we had; but nothing on production work, and they proposed no further plant closings. So, we had no problem ratifying it. One little aside demonstrates the power and influence of our involvement. One of the plants at Ford that was already announced to be closed was in Northville, Michigan, a very small plant. The president of that local is on our bargaining committee. So what we're saying to him, we got a commitment — no more plant closings but those that are already announced, like yours, Norm that's gone. So this Norm was a big man, a very fine guy, and he said, at the end, "I'll support the agreement, if you, Doug and Don, will do one more thing for me. Would you go to Don Peterson, the president of Ford, and make one more attempt to have them look for something to put in the plant? But, either way, I'll support the agreement", which was pretty darned good. So Doug and I went up to see Don Peterson. We made a run at him, and we told him, "We've got a deal, no matter what, but we would like you to just tell the guys that you'll see if you can find some way to keep the plant open". So, Peterson came down with us to the bargaining room, and told the committee he had no idea whether they could, and he couldn't make any commitment to keep it open, but they would re-examine it and see if they could find something to put in there. That's settled, and I'll come back to that. The ratification we got an overwhelming vote from the people, and this reinforced what Leonard had taught me way back. If you give the people all the facts, they make good decisions. And, we should not ever try to buffalo the people. The leadership and the membership are much smarter than a lot of people give them credit for, *if* we give them the information. You can't ask people to make good decisions though that don't have it. So, our efforts at Ford of making the membership more aware of the problem, obviously helped considerably.

To go back to Northville, it's kind of a funny story. After we had settled, Doug went to General Motors with Owen Bieber, and they were in bargaining. GM had announced a number of closings also. I don't know what I was doing, but Doug called me, and asked, "Has Ford done anything yet with Northville?" I said, "No". He said, "If you could get them to announce that they're reopening that damn thing, it would be very helpful to me here at GM". "Let me see what I can do." So, I went over to Ford, and I said, "What about Northville?" They indicated no decision had been reached on using the plant. I said, "I need it, today". So after much to-do, I got an agreement out of them that I could announce that the Northville plant would be re-opened, but there would be no announcement as yet as to what the product would be. They didn't know what it would be. So, I called a press conference in the Northville plant. I got hold of this old president, Norm, and a number of the laid-off people, they all lived in the Northville area. Some of them came over to the plant, and I held a press conference in the plant, announcing that the plant would reopen. It happened to be St. Patrick's Day, and I had a big green carnation. So, this press

conference got some publicity. The way things happened, I even got a lot of criticism that I was upstaging Owen over at GM, because people didn't know that the reason I was doing it was because this is what Doug wanted me to do! And Doug then parlayed that at GM into forcing them to keep several plants open that they had planned to close. A lot of times, people don't know why you do things, but Doug knew very well how to take advantage of those kind of moves. This was part of what happened at Ford, and now they've already announced that they're keeping it open. Roger Smith made some very caustic comments about this. But it was indicative, though, of the relationship we had established at Ford. Ford started running the first commercials featuring workers. "Working together with the UAW, through the employee involvement process, we have achieved these great improvements in quality". That campaign is still going on, ten years later, eleven years later.

Barnard: Did that start while you were Ford Director?

Ephlin: Oh yes, I was very involved in it, insisted that there had to be UAW logos in all the shots, etcetera. So here we are now in the ad campaign. We used to have an input into how the ads would be done. They were in magazines, television, the whole shot, and they turned out to be very effective with the people. Ad agencies, as you well know, do surveys, and they found the ads played well with the public. A by-product, which none of us had anticipated: when I toured plants, where they had filmed commercials, they had signs up, and the committee would say, "You got to meet our movie stars". They'd take me down to the area; these are the folks in the commercial. It played very well with our people, because suddenly we're getting some of the credit for making things happen. The people really ate it up, and it's still going on, and it's wonderful. I was never able to get GM to go quite as far.

Barnard: No they haven't. Chrysler has done some of that, but not as much as Ford.

Ephlin: No. Ford, to this day, has done the best job, of the companies, of taking advantage of the changes that occurred, and spreading them totally across the corporation. GM had pioneered so many things, but never spread them across the corporation the way Ford did. So, the three years, although I was heartbroken at being sent there, turned out to be a wonderful experience.

Just about then Ford's fortunes started to turn upwards. Along came the 1983 Convention, and Owen was going to become the next President.

Barnard: Let me ask you a question before we go on to that. This relates back to the Ford discussions that you had. Since the early eighties, or maybe even going back a little farther than that, Ford seems to have taken the line that the one way to survive in this competitive world is to use an awful lot of overtime, and not to hire new people. Of course, in a sense the official purpose of the paid personal holiday was to try to encourage them to deal with the unemployment problem and bring in people. There must have been some regrets at seeing that go.

Ephlin: Well, not only the paid personal holiday plan, but, both Ford and General Motors

closed a lot of plants during the early eighties. General Motors reopened most of them. Ford never reopened anything that they had closed. They made a decision to go with this much lower capacity. The impact really wasn't felt till after I had left. They were still having trouble using what they had open when I was still there, but production was coming up. Subsequently, it became a very serious problem for us, and it is an issue that will be discussed in this round of bargaining. Our problem, and we have a lot of problems, but reduced work time was costly, at the time when we were trying to be competitive with the Japanese, who had at that point a major edge and the Europeans, also had a decided cost advantage over us. So, reducing our cost some was a major requirement. That's of course changed a great deal. The problem with overtime is magnified by the fact that the old time-and-a-half and double-time, which were created to deter companies from working overtime, is no longer a deterrent. What Ford has done, I think, has been socially very irresponsible. In some years during the eighties they ran the whole place at 120% of capacity. Now, in spite of that, they lost a lot of sales that they could have had.

Barnard: Because the capacity wasn't great enough?

Ephlin: Yes. Lincoln Town Cars, for example, started selling like crazy. They made at least ten thousand dollars per copy profit. They couldn't build any more. So, it's not all a plus for them. I see even now there's a debate about them taking over some GM plant. But Ford made a very conscious decision, and that's one that has had serious consequences for the union, and I expect that they'll try to deal with it at this time. But that really came into being later. And it wasn't just the paid personal holidays. It is the cost of fringes that had gone up. Health care is continued for a period after layoff. If you come back to work at all, and you renew that, so the cost, as opposed to paying the overtime, is minimized. It's much more efficient, at least on a temporary basis, to work overtime. So that's a serious problem that we are faced with as a union.

Barnard: Did you encounter much questioning among rank-and-file people about taking steps that would encourage the employment of more people, and might reduce overtime?

Ephlin: The union has two positions. Ford workers made a heck of a lot more money because of the overtime. Like all of us, you quickly adjust your standard of living to the new higher rate then, so you hate to give it up. As individuals we like it; as an organization, as a group, we oppose it. We do have an ambivalent stand on it, no question. It's a serious social question. Now, the answer to it, of course, is legislatively... that's how we got the 40-hour week. We created a deterrent to try to share the work. Now, what we tried to do in later bargaining was to increase the penalty on overtime, but not to give it to the worker because the individuals already want it. So, for example, we require an additional contribution into the SUB fund, and the joint training fund now gets significant money at Ford out of overtime premiums. Again, to try to deter them without making it more desirable for the individual to work it.

Barnard: Yes, creating an incentive, to try to get more overtime.

Ephlin: Yes, right. So, we made some efforts at solving it, but we haven't solved it yet.

Internal politics. In 1983, as we were approaching Doug's departure, there were at least two major groups among the Board members. Ray Majerus, who was the Secretary-Treasurer, had made no secret of his intentions to be a candidate. Owen Bieber, Steve Yokich and I together had kind of a pact that one of us should be the President, and we would work together to defeat Majerus. Majerus announced his candidacy. I won't give you a lot of details, but suffice it to say Owen and Steve were reluctant to get together with me to make a decision early on, so I announced my candidacy so that Ray wouldn't have the field all to himself. Ray was a very astute politician and had a number of votes committed to him. After a while Owen, Steve and I did get together. I was not able to convince them they should support me, so eventually Owen became a candidate. On the Board, which was only acting as a political caucus, as I think you understand, the group that was supporting Majerus included many of my friends because Ray was out there first, and among other things had talked about changing the age 65 rule, that was very astute. So that when Owen declared, Owen had a certain following, and Ray already had a following. Most of my closer friends were with Ray. In a three-way contest, I was a dead duck. I could have defeated either one, perhaps, one on one. I tried to convince each of them that they were going to lose, trying to get them out, but that didn't work. So I was not actually a candidate; I announced before the vote that I would not be a candidate. In our political caucus as you know, the Board votes and makes a recommendation to the Steering Committee. I had discussed with Doug how do the caucus rules apply if somebody abstains. He said, "Whoever gets the majority of the votes", you know. And so I was contemplating not voting for Owen because I was a little upset with him. But I was committed not to vote for Majerus. So, at the last minute, under those circumstances, I voted for Owen, and on the first ballot it came out a dead heat. I didn't know that, of course, but if I had abstained, as I thought about doing, Majerus would have been the nominee. On the next ballot some people switched and Owen won.

Owen and I have been friends for years; I dealt with him as a staff member at Black Lake, in the early seventies. He was the staff member and I was the management in the bargaining, so I'd known him for a long while, and always considered him my friend.

Barnard: What role did Doug play in this? Any?

Ephlin: Strangely enough, both Doug and Leonard had somewhat the same approach, which always bothered me. Neither one of them wanted to try to pick their successor. If people asked them what they thought, they would tell them. But they would not try to badger people into going a certain direction. There were many Board members who were begging Doug to do that, and who would have done whatever Doug asked.

Barnard: And this included people who were committed to Majerus, or both sides?

Ephlin: Both ways, yes. The Board has always held our President in pretty high regard,

both Leonard and Doug certainly, and either one of them could exert great influence, if they had tried. For whatever reason, neither one of them wanted to do that. So, Doug was kind of the honest broker, talking to everyone. Doug was supportive of me, in a sense, but would not try to prevail. And so, some of those who were voting for Majerus, several of them, had said, "If you can show us that you got a real shot, you know, we'll switch. But if it's between Owen and Majerus, we're going with Majerus". Well, as we got closer and closer to the voting, it was obvious from what Doug was telling me, that I couldn't get there with the three in the race, so I was just not a candidate.

Barnard: What was Majerus's appeal to people? I've talked with Marc Stepp so I know what his point of view was.

Ephlin: Marc had ambitions to be the Secretary-Treasurer. No black had achieved that before, so the three blacks on the Board were committed to Ray for that purpose. I mentioned that Ray was quite a politician; some of Ray's people were offering me that job! I don't know how many times they were trying to sell it! My successor from my Region, Ted Barrett, was supporting Ray, and as late as the night before the vote, was trying to convince me that I could have whatever I wanted if I would just go with Ray. Way back I had grown up with that idea that if you make a commitment to do something, you've said you're going to do, and I finally said to Ted, "That would be wonderful". He said, "We got a deal?" I said, "No, the price is too high. I can't do it". So he said, "You're so dumb, I won't support you". He was going with Majerus anyhow.

But Ray worked very hard at politics. The black contingent, that was one thing. The age 65 thing was another thing. He used the powers of the Secretary-Treasurer's office very effectively to be nice to people...

Barnard: Regional Directors?

Ephlin: Yes. So, it was a combination of those kinds of things. Some of the people that didn't want Owen to be president, it was kind of a negative thing. To some Owen was much too conservative, and slow and plodding and so forth. And there was a little bit of the idea that permeated the Teamsters Union, of control; how much power did the Board members have versus the Officers. And I think Ray was promising to let everybody do their own thing, and he worked very hard at politics.

Barnard: How did you feel about other leadership qualities? You had reservations.

Ephlin: Well, Ray had done some things which came to light, about which I knew earlier, of kind of using the union to his own advantage, which I disagreed with. Health-care plan in American Motors, I think it was. A guy got paid so much a member for having introduced Ray to the fellow at the plant, this kind of thing. I used to say, "Anybody's got a health care plan they want to sell to GM, my door's open". Tell me what it is; if I like it I'll go with it. Nobody has to get paid to introduce him to me. It was things of questionable ethics.

Barnard: Borderline things.

Ephlin: Yes. Ray abused the union to his own advantage, the power and so forth. While I mentioned that Leonard raised the aura of the office, and he did it to help the union, Ray used the power of the office to help Ray, and I disagreed with that approach. To put it bluntly, I used to say, "He's in the wrong union; he should have been a Teamster". And so, plus his bargaining background.

Barnard: He didn't have any experience with one of the major car companies.

Ephlin: He didn't make a good impression on people as a speaker. So I just did not think he would make a good leader of our union. While I had reservations about Owen, between the two I had no qualms. If I had the same choice tomorrow, I'd do the same thing again. If I'd known Ray wasn't going to live very long, I might have done it differently.

But I had concerns about Owen. Never anything about his honesty or integrity, his commitment to the union, or anything of that nature. He works very, very hard doing what he thinks should be done, and I have no question about that. He used to describe our differences as, "Don and I agree where we want to go. We disagree on how to get there". I guess that's about as good a way as you can say it as any.

I recently got an example that points out the difference between us, more vividly than anything I could say. The chairman of my plant back in Massachusetts was a very colorful character called The Arab. His name was Baheege Byck, but he was nicknamed The Arab for years. I've known him for over forty years. A very strong, rugged individual. The ultimate of the old type chairman. He got there by being the toughest guy in the plant. So as time has passed, I tried to convince him to make some changes, but they wouldn't do it. The plant closed. So, on his retirement, which is two or three years after the plant closed, he finally retired. He was interviewed, and I only got this within the past few weeks. He said, "Oh yeah, Don tried to talk us into doing things". But he said, "Don was ten years ahead of his time. He never said either you do this or they're going to close the plant". Well, of course I couldn't do that; I didn't know what GM was going to do. I just told them, "This is what you ought to do". But then there's a wonderful irony there that really struck home. He said, "Don couldn't convince his boss that this was the way to go; why should I pay attention to him?" So, my influence with the people was diminished greatly because of Owen's ambivalence about what we ought to be doing.

Barnard: About the employee involvement type of thing?

Ephlin: About anything! Owen is as traditional as they come. He's a very hard bargainer. Can squeeze the last penny out of a settlement, but doesn't like change. He doesn't want to do anything different than we did it last time. Of course, I think that these are times that call for dramatic changes, and so we disagreed on the speed as well as the direction. I found this a very, very discouraging way to work. Having worked for Leonard, having served under Doug, both of

whom were very easy to work with, I could go into a meeting with Doug, as we did at Ford, without ever talking about something. If a question was posed, I never felt any hesitancy about speaking out, because I understood where Doug would be, and we would play off one another. All my years of representing Leonard, I always knew what the union's position was. With Owen, I didn't have that comfort level, because while something would sound very appealing to me, and I would want to go forward, I knew I would have problems with Owen. So, as the Arab story illustrates, it hampered my effectiveness in dealing with the people themselves.

Barnard: You felt you didn't have the support at the top.

Ephlin: Right. I was a product of that political system. I mean, that's how I got there. I loved the UAW. I didn't want to do anything that would create a problem. I couldn't live with it the way it was, I couldn't effectively change it. The only honorable thing I could do was get out. Very few people have left early. Two that did it for the same reason are Irving Bluestone and myself. Irving never said much about why he left. Publicly, I always used Irving's speech: "There are many things I want to do, and you're never sure at this age how long you'll be able to travel". So, as I've always followed Irving, I just piggybacked on that. I never publicly indicated any unhappiness, because I do love the UAW, and certainly didn't want to cause damage. It was a very, very painful decision; I hated to leave, 'cause I loved it. I loved being the Director of the General Motors Department. So, it was a very, very difficult decision. I miss much of the role, although I have no regrets over the decision. I'm enjoying myself considerably, and I think it's been better for everyone, even though it hurt.

But anyhow, in 1983 Owen became President, and so once again there's the debate about who gets assigned where. Owen had the responsibility of assigning us to our new jobs. A number of the leadership people thought I should get back to General Motors. Owen wasn't too disposed to do that; he was going to assign it to Steve, I think. He said, "Well, you said you like being the Ford Director", and I said, "Well, I do. What do you think I'm going to do? Say to the world that I don't like being the Ford Director, at this stage?" So I said, "I will enjoy either one of them. You do what you want", because by this stage I was not prepared to try to bargain with him. I was resigned. He's the President, whatever he wants it's his to do. By now I was enjoying being at Ford, and I said I would like being at GM, so either way, I'd be in good shape. He did assign me back to General Motors, at the last moment. It was the day before the Convention ended that he finally decided to do it. But as he was doing that, he took away all my other activities. I was the Michigan CAP Director, and that had traditionally been held by the GM Director; Irving had it; Leonard had it.

Barnard: Because of all the GM plants in Michigan.

Ephlin: Yes, well, it kind of went with the territory for years. Although I had it as the Ford Director, it was kind of a consolation prize in my case. But he said, "I'll take everything else

away”, and I said, “Well, I have no control over that”. He did. Others had much larger assignments.

In any event, I went back to GM in 1983, and although they had duplicated our joint training program at Ford in ‘82, they really had not done very much with it, so I quickly kicked that into high gear. We reached agreement and went forward with constructing the now-famous Human Resource Center in Auburn Hills. Before Owen left, there were discussions under way relative to the creation of NUMMI, the joint venture between GM and Toyota. Again, Owen was being rather difficult, again a lot of ‘what-ifs’ and so on. I took over those responsibilities and Bruce Lee, the Director from California and I consummated an agreement with Bill Ussery, who was representing the joint venture, and that allowed the creation of NUMMI.

Very early on my arrival back at GM, Al Warren said to me, “We have a group of engineers working on a project called Saturn to see if we can build a small car competitively with the imports. Would you be interested in exploring, starting with a clean sheet of paper, and redoing the whole structure?” “I’d love to.”

Barnard: The NUMMI agreement was a modern agreement in a sense.

Ephlin: Well, not at that stage, not at that stage. In ‘83 all we negotiated then was a memorandum that they would hire the former GM people, because there was nobody there. They had not yet hired the first one.

Barnard: The plant had been closed?

Ephlin: For a couple years.

Barnard: The Fremont plant.

Ephlin: Yes. So, at Saturn I quickly agreed because GM had designed another car to try to be competitive with the imports, and then had it built by Isuzu over in Japan. I had seen that, and so the idea of starting over again, and so forth, had great appeal to me.

So we ended up appointing a joint committee that became the famous Committee of Ninety-nine People, a majority of whom were union people. But it embodied everything from a plant manager to some shop floor workers. Local union leaders, a few staff, a few supervisors, personnel, and so forth. Their task was to prepare a document, a study committee report, for me and Al Warren of General Motors, outlining if we were starting over again, how you’d do it. In 90 days they produced such a document. It was rather far-reaching, to say the least.

Shortly afterwards, they presented it to me and Al, and a few days later the GM Executive Committee went out to the Tech Center to hear the same presentation. I was present, and at the conclusion Roger Smith said to me, “What do you think?” And I said, “Well, I’m ready to sign if you are”, rather facetiously. They continued the plans, developing the car and the plant, and we entered what we called Phase 2, using our Joint Training Program as a vehicle. We had a number of our people continue to work on, if we were to do this, how would we do it, and so forth.

During the bargaining in 1984 at GM, Owen was there as the President, and I went up to visit Roger Smith along with Al Warren, the Vice President, and we said to Roger, "We want Saturn built in the U.S. this time". After a rather brief meeting, really, he finally said, "If you will, negotiate a labor agreement involving the principals of that study committee report, I will go to the Board of Directors and try to get the money to build it". Initially, we were talking about \$5 billion, which is a pretty big roll of the dice even for GM.

Well, the '84 agreement was finally reached, and it was very noteworthy. We had agreed that we would try to achieve some measure of job security, and so Steve was discussing it with Ford while I was talking to GM. Then he and I and Owen got together and compared notes, and while we named dual targets, Owen came to GM because we were a little further along. We settled in '84. The first real job security in the auto industry, saying that no worker with a year's seniority would be laid off because of out-sourcing, introduction of new technology, or agreed-upon productivity improvements. These three areas are all matters within management's control, so being steeped in the traditions of the UAW, you negotiate dual-purpose things: one, to provide a benefit to people who get impacted in the wrong way, but two, to try to deter management from doing the wrong thing. Make it costly for them to out-source, and so forth. So we reached that agreement with GM in '84.

Once I got that behind me, early in '85 we sat down to negotiate Saturn. Not really to negotiate it, because our agreement was to fashion an agreement consistent with that joint study committee report. So, both my staff and GM's Labor Relations staff gave us some problems because they kept wanting to write a new version of the GM agreement, and we had to keep telling them, "That's not what you're here for". The upshot of it was, we produced a very brief agreement, it's only 27 pages long, that to say the least was a little controversial. Not only did it cover working conditions, hours, wages, so forth, but it also covered how the plant would be managed. And for the first time the union is a partner in the operation. Has equal voice in most of the decisions that get made. It provided (bear in mind this is 1985) for the first time that there would be no layoffs, period. There was some little problem. We had that, for the top 80% of the employees, and so it looked like two classes of employees, we had to go back and fix that up. Any job security plan usually has a buffer to give you some flexibility. Owen insisted that we had to have this agreement ratified by the total Executive Board because there were no members. I went through some very difficult times with the Executive Board, and with Owen about, "This is too far out, blah blah blah". But, eventually they agreed to it with a couple of little modifications.

Barnard: You felt it was essentially what you had arrived at?

Ephlin: Yes. I thought it was a pretty good deal. Only one Board member voted against it, eventually. The rest supported it. There was a big hue and cry from some of the opposition that had been opposed to everything we ever did, so that didn't bother me too much. Once we did that,

we announced where Saturn would be, and it's up and running. Today there are some seven thousand UAW jobs at Spring Hill, Tennessee that would not exist otherwise. Just last week, in the J.D. Powers survey, the top five cars, only one was a U.S.-built car, and it was Saturn. Saturn has more GM-built components than any other car made.

Barnard: I didn't know that.

Ephlin: One of the reasons it does is because the UAW had a voice in the sourcing. I had veto power over all sourcing decisions.

Barnard: So you went to UAW-represented suppliers.

Ephlin: Whenever I had a deal in effect, one of my staff participated. But whenever the item they were going to purchase, there was a GM supplier that was involved, if he didn't get it they automatically put a hold on it, and let me get involved. I had a couple of big fights with General Motors management over it. But the upshot of it is, Saturn has more GM components than any other car. Saturn has more North American content than any car built.

Even the construction project down there. I raised hell, with Tennessee being a right-to-work state, there had been a big hue and cry when Nissan built their plant; they threw rocks at the building trades. I got them to work out an agreement with the building trades unions that is probably more revolutionary than the Saturn agreement. If a non-union contractor got the bid on the job, he had to pay union wages, all hiring was done through the union halls, they never lost a day to a stoppage during that huge construction job. So, I am extremely proud of Saturn. I think it is one of the greatest things we've ever done.

Barnard: Do you think that it would be possible to extend the Saturn principles throughout the industry?

Ephlin: Some pieces of it, yes. It would be hard to take the whole thing and impose it on existing ones. But a piece at a time, you can, if they were given leadership. To me, it typifies what I thought the union was all about, that we should have input into decisions before they get made, that impact our people. We do have at Saturn, for sure. We have, in the agreement it spells out that all decisions are made by consensus, and anyone on a committee can stop a decision, but he must then propose an alternative solution.

Barnard: That's the basic ground rule.

Ephlin: Well, you've got to run the place. It has worked extremely well, in my judgment. They're now running three shifts.

Barnard: They say it's profitable.

Ephlin: Just. One of the reasons they've had trouble making it profitable, during the course of construction GM ran into cash constraints. They only built it about half the size they originally started to build, so that they only have capacity for a little 250,000 cars a year. Originally it was supposed to be 500,000. The amount of overhead is almost as great at 250 as it would be at 500,

so it's very, very hard to be profitable. That's why they're running three shifts now to try to crank out production. That hurt it very much.

But aside from that, just as the Japanese had done to us, market penetration at the low end is critical. If you get a first-car buyer into a U.S. car, and it's a good one, chances are they stay there. So I think Saturn is playing a vital role for GM, even if it wasn't profitable per se. But now it is. I think it's done more for the American auto industry than any other product, and being viewed as 'America can do it'. It being the high quality that it is, and it's just magnificent.

I mentioned this fellow calling me last week. Here's a guy had been in this field for his whole career. Went down there and said, "I've never seen anything like it in my life". Irving Bluestone, my wonderful friend, when he and his son were down there preparing their book, they couldn't believe it, and spent a lot of time there, and so forth. On my retirement, they were nice enough to name the highway after me down there, and that's what this gentleman who called last week had ridden down: Donald F. Ephlin Parkway. Well, there are even a few cynics that wanted them to take that sign down, and so forth.

Those things don't bother me too much. Pettiness has never been one of my problems. It bothered me when folks are petty. To me, the greatest thing I ever had going for me in the union was the people who went ahead of me. And having had the chance to be around when Walter was still there, and to have worked closely with Leonard and Doug and Irving and Ken Bannon, was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. And so, whenever possible I wanted those people around. I liked to say that I'm following what they did; I'm very proud of everything they did, and I'm proud to have been close to it. Where some people want to make believe the past never happened, and because they have not achieved things themselves, they want to tear down what others have done. I never let that bother me too much.

There are people who have asked if I was in difficulty and that was the reason I left. One of the examples that I used to point out: The 1982 agreement at General Motors, and the 1984 agreement, which I negotiated, which I thought was a pretty good one, were both ratified by 52%. That's pretty close. Between '84 and '87 we did a number of things, but among them was creating NUMMI, Saturn, and all the other jointness that I advocated.

The 1987 agreement at General Motors. First of all at the GM Council Meeting, which is the 500 top leaders, where we've had some that went on into the night and endless debate, normally what we do is present the agreement, start the debate, then before we take a vote the President speaks. Well, in 1987 I opened the meeting and made my speech, then called on a number of my staff to present different parts of the agreement, then I took over the chair to open the debate. I took a quick look around and I said, "I don't see any hands; does that mean you are ready to vote?" They hollered, "Yes"; I said, "All right. On the question of the ratification of this agreement, all those in favor". I took the vote without one speech being made, passed

overwhelming margin. Then I called on Owen to make a speech. It was ratified by the highest percentage in our fifty-year history of dealing with General Motors!

So when people say, you know, was I in difficulty, I said, "I wasn't. No difficulty with GM membership, that's for damn sure". After the four years before that agreement, the things that we did obviously played well with the membership. The highest ratification ever. The 1990 agreement, which was a very rich one, was not quite as good. It was good, but not quite as good. One of the things I did at GM following '84, I came to the conclusion that one of our problems, the reason we're not getting good ratification is the GM leadership, and the membership were not as well in tune with the problems of the world as they were at Ford, for example. So, under the Joint Training Fund I instituted what's called the PEL (Paid Education Leave) Program, an education leave.

Al Warren, my counterpart, at first opposed it, and he said, "Why the hell should we pay to train people to file grievances?" I said, "Al, you don't understand, we already know how to file grievances. That's not what this is about. This is about getting people to understand us. During the life of the agreement now, I'm with you all the time, and you're forever telling me how terrible things are, giving me all kinds of numbers, comparing them, etc. During the sixty days of bargaining, you bury me with data about comparative costs and so forth. It's on the basis of all that we make a decision. But the day after we ratify this, I then have to go to the five hundred people (the leadership in General Motors union) and say, 'Here's what's in this very complicated agreement' (which we always had to do), but now I've got to explain why it's good for them, under the circumstances. But they don't know all this background that I know". So I said, "I want them to understand the business better".

So we created this PEL program. It's all taught by outsiders. They spend a week here in Detroit. People from Wayne, from Michigan talk to them. They go to Boston for a week. People from MIT, from Harvard, Barry Bluestone talk to them. They go to Washington for a week. And they come back to Detroit for the fourth week. They understand what foreign import's about, what market share means, what are comparative costs, all these other things.

Barnard: How many people go through this program?

Ephlin: Well, when I started it out, I was sending twenty-five at a time, but I had limited it. They had to be members of the bargaining committee or the local president. I said, "That's the group I've got to get to first". So now, this is eight years it's been running; hundreds have gone through it. In addition, these local union leaders are pretty sharp. The minute they come back, they said, "I didn't like what I learned, but I'm glad I learned it". But they saw that now they were in the same boat I had been in, that their people didn't understand. So we instituted what we call local PELs. We do a one-week-long version, in locations where plant people can attend, and thousands have now been through that.

Ford and Chrysler followed along after a fashion. Ford changed it. Half the people at Ford who go are management people. Well, Al who had opposed it originally wanted to start sending more management people, and I said, "Fine. Put more money in the pot. This is the union's training fund. I'm not opposed to training your folks, but you've got to pay for it". I think that program had a tremendous impact.

Again, I had a problem with some of my colleagues who don't believe in telling people the facts of life; I do. That's part of my heritage, the way Leonard and others taught me. You tell the people the facts, and lay it out the way it is, and give them the options, and then give them some leadership. You get good decisions. I think this helped turn things around at GM. To go from 52% to 81%, from one agreement to the next, is pretty dramatic. And it was in a period when I was doing all these very controversial things. When I left, I felt very, very comfortable, and had great support there, and no concerns in that regard. I was concerned more with some of my colleagues than other things. The membership was much more prepared to deal with the world in which we live than some of the leadership.

Barnard: How did you look on those parts of GM, some of the locals, like in Pontiac and some other places that became very critical of the jointness programs?

Ephlin: Well, most of them were in opposition to everything. Pete Kelley had opposed every agreement Walter ever negotiated. I felt I was in good company. If he supported me, I'd have been concerned. There were a few others. Donny Douglas, at Pontiac (you mentioned GM Truck and Coach) came to me. He's now ceased being opposition, incidentally.

One of the keys is that none of the joint programs that we instituted have been eliminated. None. Some differences in degree. The quality network at General Motors. I was the co-chairman, and I again thought the union is getting some recognition and yet an opportunity to discuss any issue we want. Nothing is off-limits in the quality area, and I'm the co-chairman now. At the bargaining table, if I raised the same question, they'll tell me, "Well, we don't have to talk to you about that". But here they can't do that. Every opportunity to move in on the management, I think we should press, and I think we could be doing far more.

The '89 Convention, at which I retired, the opposition was running against jointness. Owen made the best speech opening the convention on the subject that he's ever made. And while I was never allowed really to speak my piece much, every issue that came before the Convention on jointness passed by at least 90% of the delegates.

Barnard: Do you think that Owen was too sensitive to this opposition?

Ephlin: Yes, no question. He's always been concerned about the loud ones. You can't let a few loud ones run the place. You've got to speak for the majority, and leadership means being in front, and telling them what you think. Now, at that convention, for example, when he spoke out he did a great job, got overwhelming support.

None of these programs have been eliminated. For a brief period, Jerry Tucker was on the International Executive Board. I had known Jerry for years, and I liked him as a matter of fact, but we got in political difficulties and he was the one who opposed jointness. He sat next to me on the Board during that brief period he was there. So one day, I had the opportunity, and this is a part of the records; the Executive Board keeps minutes. I said, "Jerry, you've been very critical of the joint programs I have at General Motors. Which one would you like me to eliminate? Health and safety program?" He said, "Oh, of course not". Steve Yokich jumped in and helped work with me. So we went down the listing of programs, and Jerry said, "No, I agree we should be into all the quality", and so forth. He ended up saying, "I'm opposed to jointness with a capital J". And I said, "Well, I don't know what the hell that means. So," I said, "I've got all these programs going, and if there is any of them that you don't think are working in the best interests of our membership, you tell me about it, and if there's a real problem we'll either fix it or we'll eliminate it". I never heard the first one yet.

So, it's great just to play fast and loose with this sleeping-with-management, and all this kind of nonsense. But again, as long as I've got 80%, that doesn't bother me too much. If you're going to be out front, you have to expect that. The day we dedicated Saturn down in Spring Hill, we had a big ceremony in a tent out in front of the Civil War mansion on the property. And my wife was sitting with me, and Skip Lafauve, who was then the President of Saturn and his wife, and the Governor of Tennessee was holding forth, Lamar Alexander, a Republican, but a very articulate guy. And he's holding forth, and he's comparing us, those of us who created Saturn, to the pioneers who went forth from Tennessee to conquer the west. This is great! I told my wife, "Now listen, he's talking about me". About the time I got her attention, Governor Alexander then said, "Of course, you understand many of them pioneers got shot!" So that goes with the territory, and a few critics.

I instituted another thing in the GM system. We have twelve sub-councils that meet three or four times a year. Leonard never attended sub-council meetings by the way. I made them hold them all in one town, at the same time, and I set it up so one morning we would have a joint session, bring them all together. So again, I've got now maybe six, seven hundred people from the leadership all across the country. I would give a report on what's happening in GM, and say, "Now the floor is open for questions, criticism". And, man, when I started that, they were lined up at the microphone, giving me hell about all the terrible things I was doing. I just stood up there and defended myself, best I could, and each meeting I'd get better and better responses. The last meeting I had of that kind, it was so wonderful I couldn't believe it. There's a fellow from the GM Tech Center, the chairman of a major unit there. He got up, and said, "Brother Ephlin, I want to apologize". I said, "Oh, you don't have to apologize for anything". He said, "No, when I criticized you, I did it publicly. Now I want to admit that you were right and I was wrong. I want to do that

publicly". And he said, "I finally tried what you said, and it worked, and it's helped our membership", and so forth.

There was a woman was elected president of the Electromotive local in LaGrange, Illinois, with the support of Victor Reuther, yet. And as she says, she got elected by Ephlin-bashing. Her name is Carol Travis. Her father was very famous in UAW annals.

Barnard: Bob Travis?

Ephlin: Yep. Carol's a very, very bright lady. And man, she was beating up on me pretty good. After she got elected, that plant was in big jeopardy. Me and my staff worked with the local union to try to save the place. Carol played a key role. When she found out what we were doing, she became a major booster, and at every meeting she would stand up and say, "I got elected by Ephlin-bashing. Don Ephlin's doing the right thing". Over time, we won over a lot of them. I had no problems in the GM system. The people, the membership is ripe and ready if you give them leadership. They're great. I think the degree to which they have embraced a lot of the joint programs is clear evidence of that.

I have so many, many wonderful memories of it. I'm very proud of my life in the union, and that's what made it so difficult to leave, because I could no longer do all those kind of things, which I am now doing outside. I'll be speaking to a union and management group tomorrow down in Kentucky, from the aluminum workers. In the last four years I've done work with the Steelworkers, the Electrical Workers, the Machinists Union, UAW, CWA, people who build washing machines, refrigerators, all sorts of things.

Barnard: Since you've gone into this, since you left the UAW, going out and speaking to other union leadership, how do you compare them with the UAW's membership and leadership? Are they less responsive to needs for change? The auto industry's been under such pressure for the last 10 or 15 years.

Ephlin: One of the most encouraging things today, a lot of people are doing wonderful things who are not under the threat that we were. I had a dealing with a chemical company, they asked me to come back down to Alabama, Ciba-Geigy Chemical Company and the Chemical Workers Union, a going concern, doing fine. And that's encouraging. Initially, we in the UAW were without question the leaders in this area.

The Steelworkers have done a lot of wonderful things. Len Williams is a staunch advocate of these efforts, done some great stuff. In an industry probably even more troubled than the auto industry! I think it's too little and too late, for steel, in many ways. The Communication Workers and AT&T; we helped launch their efforts. The former president, Glen Watts, copied the 1982 things we did at Ford. He said this to me, I mean I'm not saying it, he said it. The training, and so forth. Then when AT&T got broken up they had a set-back. But now they have a program for the future. They're working very closely together doing some remarkable things. Some older unions,

like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Jack Schenckman and them, in their own way have been doing some great things for many years. Jack has been very supportive of these efforts.

Some unions like the Machinists where the leadership were outspoken critics in the beginning. They are now doing a lot of the very same things. So, the opposition has melted and today a number of unions are much more in the vanguard than the UAW. Steelworkers had a convention resolution that this is the way we're going.

Barnard: So, they even have a more positive commitment at this point.

Ephlin: Right. CWA was having so many difficulties with AT&T following the break-up for a while, their convention passed a resolution, no more joint programs, to hell with AT&T and so forth. Their most recent negotiations, they adopted a... I forget the exact title now, but the 'Program for the Future' type thing. At the convention, they unanimously withdrew the old resolution! That's leadership. They've done a heck of a job of getting out there. Twice recently I've been on programs with the Vice President of AT&T, and a Vice President of the CWA. So, some wonderful things have happened. The UAW and Ford are continuing to work very well together. Ford learned their lessons well in the early eighties. GM, there's still some good things going forward. Chrysler is now doing some great things. What I like to point out to management groups, in the auto industry at the moment, Bill Hogle is now number two man at General Motors; he was the President of Saturn. Jack Smith, who's President of GM, comes from Framingham, so he's got a good background. At Ford, Pete Pestillo, who's helped make a lot of good things happen at Ford, is now an Executive Vice President. I don't know of any Labor Relations guy who ever achieved that level in the hierarchy. Pete has done that, a great job for Ford. At Chrysler now, the Executive Vice President in charge of all manufacturing, is a man by the name of Dennis Pawley, who was the plant manager of the Fiero plant in GM. Very much a people-oriented guy. The new Jefferson Avenue plant is marvelous, team concept. So, these ideas are spreading all across...

Barnard: ...and beginning to have an impact in the very highest corporate levels.

Ephlin: Yes, and spreading across any number of industries and unions. In the four years since I've been out, I've been involved with I dare say twenty different unions. Many of them don't have the resources that the UAW does. Many of them don't have the central control and staff that the UAW has that made it better for us, we could do a better job. Paperworkers, as an example. There are a lot of wonderful things happening in the paper industry now. The union does not have strong control, but a lot of great stuff going on. And so, it's very rewarding to me now to go out.

Just about two weeks ago the UAW reached a new agreement with Rockwell International, and they made major modifications in the agreement dealing with employee involvement. I had a little hand working with the parties, and to see that happening at Rockwell is wonderful. I'm on

my way to Boston, tomorrow night I get there. I'm involved in a study of the aerospace industry, started by the Air Force, wanting to copy more of the auto industry stuff. I made a presentation to the group, along with Tom Kochan; they were not going to have any union involvement in the study. As a result of our participation, they invited the UAW and the Machinists Union to have members participate, and Carolyn Forrest has accepted. And they invited me to serve on their committee for the three years of the study. So, the things that we've done are catching on.

Barnard: I can understand why you feel somewhat optimistic, but what do you think of Caterpillar? Here you seem to have a company that is determined to block the union.

Ephlin: Oh, Caterpillar, unfortunately, was starting to do the right thing. First of all, we had a strike in Caterpillar a few years ago, which was not a very good strike. But in spite of that, they were starting some Quality of Work Life efforts. Bill Casstevens, in fact, was talking to me about going down to Caterpillar to speak to the management and the union.

When this man got elected, Mr. Fites, who seems determined to try to destroy the union, and under our crazy labor law, with the right to hire permanent replacements and so forth, he's had some measure of success, although I think he's destroying the company in the process. It's shades of what happened at International Harvester a few years ago. A man named Archie McArdle practically destroyed the company, took a big golden parachute, and took off with millions. Mr. Fites appears to be headed down the same track. It's a long, very difficult fight, and Bill Casstevens is a stubborn son-of-a-gun, and he's hanging in there, and I think the union will prevail.

But I think this is a weakness in our system. We are now in a competitive world, whether we like it or not. There's a wonderful book written by my friend Lester Thurow, MIT, called "Head to Head". You've got Europe, you've got us, and you've got Japan. We're all building the same products. The old things that used to give you a competitive edge — natural resources, capital, new technology — none of those give you the edge anymore because everybody has them. You can ship capital around the world, and so they can build a new plant in Thailand as well as here. Lester's conclusion is, the winner in this contest is who can build things best. That's people.

And so, I look at this as the greatest opportunity the labor movement has ever had, not only to rebound, but to play a more important role than we've ever played in our country, in revitalizing industry and making it happen. Our government, I'm not sure how strong our support will be. The new Secretary of Labor seems to be saying the right things. Clinton and Gore have not been too involved in this process, although Gore was down to Saturn a few weeks ago, finally. It's in his state; it took him a long time to get there. He was there the day we announced it, but I don't know if he's been back since.

There are people in Congress, Dick Gebhardt for one has been to Saturn many times, thinks it's the greatest thing in our country. I think if our labor movement would get up there and

show some leadership and get way out in front, we can be competitive with anybody in the world. We'd change some of the crazy laws that we have, and show what we can do, and show how we can win. I think the labor movement can be more powerful than ever in our history. So, I see it as a golden opportunity at the moment. But it takes leadership.

I don't know how many times people have said to me, "What do you think Walter Reuther would be doing in today's world?" And I say, "Well, I had the opportunity to hear Walter talk about the future when it seemed like an impossible dream, the things he talked about. Many of those we've achieved now. In today's world, with the opportunities facing us, my view: Walter would be so far out in front, that we would have more things on our plate than we could possibly cope with", which is great.

The 1945-46 strike at General Motors was over an issue that they proposed to the union in 1982: tie wages and profits, and then get to prices. So, Walter was way out there. And Walter used to say, "We should have input on decisions, before they get made". At Saturn, we have them. I don't mean we've achieved everything; we've just scratched the surface. There's people saying, "Where does it end?" I said, "God, I have no idea where it ends. I just take it one step at a time, and we'll see where it leads". We're always going in the same direction.

My view of Walter would be, really, having a wonderful time in this environment. There's a vacuum there at the moment that we could fill. I think Perot's acceptance is evidence of that, because he's talking simple terms that people understand about creating jobs, and the cornerstone to the American standard of living is the high-value-added jobs in manufacturing. Mr. Perot said to me over the telephone (I know him from General Motors days, and I don't agree with everything Perot advocates, obviously, but I do agree with this), he said, "All these other programs, they're wonderful, but they all cost money. The only way we generate money, the only way we preserve our standard of living, is by putting people back to work in high-value-added jobs, creating wealth". That's what happened following World War II, when we had all those wonderful years, and people seem to forget that's how we got here. So, I just think the labor movement is missing a golden opportunity at the moment. I don't think Walter would have missed it.

Barnard: It is a tough situation to deal with, politically.

Ephlin: I don't think so. I think it's so easy. I was way out in front, and while I got a few bruises and stuff, none of them were fatal.

Barnard: I meant in the sense of national politics. It's hard to get the national politicians focused on something.

Ephlin: Well, you've got to be focused first. You've got to be focused first. Every Sunday I watch David Brinkley, "Meet the Press", etc. I don't know when the last time you saw a labor leader on one of them, but I can't remember. Walter would have been on one of them every Sunday.

Barnard: He was.

Ephlin: Damn right! And today he'd be out there, and he would be advocating things that create jobs for people. He wouldn't need someone like Perot to be kicking hell out of the Free Trade Agreement the way it is. I'm talking about high-value-added manufacturing jobs to preserve the American standard of living. You know, I'm glad Northwest and the unions have reached a deal so they don't go bankrupt. But that's another step backwards! We're going downhill, our standard of living is. Instead of fighting a rear-guard action, you've got to do what you've got to do to stay alive, but we also should be out in front leading the charge, and it's not happening. Sure, it's difficult, but it never was easy. I don't know as any political leaders ever agreed with everything Walter advocated back then. They did some good things, but none of them bought our program lock, stock and barrel. That's all right. We ought to have our program, and be way out in front. As the advocates of change and social justice. As Walter said, "We cannot profit at the expense of others, we can only make progress as the total community does". All of that's got lost in the shuffle, as everybody struggles to stay alive, and it's every man for himself.

Barnard: Short-term objectives.

Ephlin: Right. And I think if we were out there, leading the way, then politicians would react differently. Because labor was silent, Clinton didn't have to worry about labor. He knew where we were; we had no where to go. So he could play for the middle ground. I think if we were way out front, we would have pulled him along in that direction. It is a golden opportunity today, because Americans are coming to understand things better, and they want jobs.

Receptivity, I think, is great at the moment, if we'd get out there. While I lost the wonderful platform I did have, I've been very fortunate that I have a lot of others, and I get to speak to a lot of groups, labor and management together, students at MIT who are tomorrow's leaders, many of them. I'm working with a program called "Leaders for Manufacturing", graduate students who get a Masters in Engineering and a Masters in Management. I'm involved in the auto study, I'm involved in the aerospace industry study. So, on a smaller scale, or on a different level, I get to go out and advocate these things. It's rewarding also, but it's not the same as being a Vice President of the UAW.

Barnard: At least you still have your voice on these things.

Ephlin: Aside from other things I lost, I participated in any number of national and international studies, and committees. The Council on Competitiveness — I was a founding member of it. The U.S.-Japan Auto Study, which is an ongoing thing, I was involved. Unfortunately, on my retirement, the UAW removed me from all of those. In many cases they don't send anyone now. I think this is unfortunate, because it is another opportunity to have meaningful input at higher levels. The Presidential Commission on Industrial Competitiveness only had two union people: myself and Howard Samuels. There were many non-union management

people, but we were able to get them to advocate improving labor-management relations, and so on. The Council on Competitiveness, Howard Samuels and I helped start, then Len Williams and others became members. So, I relished those opportunities the UAW gave me, too, and I obviously hated to lose all them, because they did give me an opportunity with a lot of different audiences. And I made a lot of wonderful friends over the years as a result. I do miss some of those things, but just as Irving and Doug and others, we're trying to still have a little impact in our golden years...

Barnard: Oh, yes, I think it must be the case that former UAW officers are more active in areas of their interest, after they have retired, than probably those of any other union. Maybe this is owing somewhat to the 65-and-out rule. You can go out while you're still energetic.

Ephlin: The former president of the Amalgamated before Schenckman, Murray Findley, was at the University of Virginia Business School. He used to say, "I'm acting like a UAW retiree", teaching. A wonderful guy too. And so, the fact that Irv is so busy is wonderful, and Doug. I followed Irving my whole life, and so I love to see those two still going strong. Gives me strength!

Barnard: Leonard was, too, very active, although he went in a somewhat different direction.

Ephlin: Yes, well that experience in China gave him a whole new career, and he still goes back and forth a couple times a year. He's called upon as an expert in that arena, and helped sell them a lot of American cars not long ago. Oh yes, I haven't seen him for a few months, but still so alert and such a bright man.

Barnard: That's where the UAW has historically been very fortunate, in that it had a succession of leaders who could take a long view.

Ephlin: Of course, Leonard and Doug and Irv were all products of the same school. I was kind of an in-between generation. I got to live with them even though I came late into the game. Now, there's nobody left in the leadership that was a part of that. That's unfortunate. The current leadership, Owen's Presidency, he's been struggling since the day he got elected just to survive. It's fighting a defensive battle, rather than an offensive one. Some of that he can't control, but some I think he could play it differently.

Barnard: Well, there are some new people coming on.

Ephlin: I don't know. As a retiree, we all have the same problem. We're worried about the future. Obviously these young folks are not going to be near as good as we were, I thought, but somehow they are. The students I work with are an inspiration to me. Every time I come home, I say to my wife, "In my old age you get to be rather pessimistic about things. Being with these young folks, they're so confident in themselves, in their ability to change the world. They're not afraid of a damn thing; they're raring to go. 'Turn me loose!' " " God, they make you feel good, just

to be around them: their enthusiasm, and their confidence, and they are bright, bright, bright in a way that, you know, they have advantages none of us had, obviously. So there are a lot of encouraging things. It never moves fast enough to suit me.

Barnard: Events often outpace the efforts of human beings to try to keep up with them.

Ephlin: Right. So, it's been a wonderful life in the UAW. I made a few decisions along the way that may have changed the course of my life, but if I could do it over again, I don't know anything I could do that would be more rewarding than my life in the UAW was. Very few people are that lucky.

Barnard: One of the things that Walter said was, about himself, was that he thought he'd been one of the most fortunate of human beings because he'd been able to live what he believed.

Ephlin: People used to talk about the job, and say, "You really like it?" And I said, "I'm doing what I love, and they pay me, too!" That's kind of incidental, in a way, you've got to live. It's not a job, it's a way of life. The people and the organization that Walter and others had created had a dynamism that went with the organization. It wasn't just the people anymore, I mean the whole organization moved.

Barnard: A culture, everybody got caught up in it and carried forward.

Ephlin: What is it when you add the pieces together are greater than the sum of the parts? Synergism. That's what the UAW was, for a long, long time. We were blessed with a lot of great leadership, and it built a tremendous movement. Like I say, I would like to see more vitality today.