Mary E. McGough

1970 Interviews

for the
Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

Mary Ellen McGough. Photo courtesy of the author.

(Author Cheryl Carlson for the Ramsey County Historical Society article.)

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Intro – Mary McGough

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Thanks are due first of all to Mark McGough, who inspired this project through his chance meeting with writer Cheryl Carlson. Her Ramsey County Historical Society magazine article follows the "Family Memories" section.

Encouraged by Mark's interest in their great-aunt, Jane McGough located on-line mention of a 1970 interview done with Mary McGough when she was 85 years old. A transcript (and presumably the original tapes) of that interview are housed in the Reuther Labor Library at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI.

The transcript of the interview was scanned from a printed typescript draft, then edited and re-formatted for easier reading.

Mary Ellen McGough Sweeney, Mary's niece and namesake, was generous in providing photos of Mary with her mother, Catherine, and surviving siblings. These pictures were taken between 1945-47, when Mary was about 60 years old. Mary Ellen Sweeney is sure she has seen a photo of Mary as a young woman, so perhaps the remaining nieces and nephews might find such a photo in their collections and send a copy to Jane McGough.

Ellen McGough Michael contacted Dan Golodner, archivist for the American Federation of Teachers materials at the Reuther Library, and he had the interview transcript (typescript with handwritten notes and corrections) photocopied (about 100 pages) and sent through inter-library loan to Ellen at the university in Pennsylvania where she then taught. Dan Golodner was generous with his time and attention, and his one request is that, if any family member has a photo of Mary McGough as a young woman, he could get a copy for the archives at Wayne State.

The tedious task of transcribing the 1970 interview from tapes had obviously been done by more than one person. It is understandable that Minnesota and North Dakota references during the interview might not be clear to a transcriber in

Michigan, as well as references to teachers active in the labor movement in the 1920's, 30's and 40's. The chronology of the tapes was also apparently unclear to the transcribers. Ellen Michael put the transcript in the order made apparent by the text and made some editorial cuts and/or additions as follows:

- Some extraneous and/or confusing dialogue has been cut, e.g. "Jim, would you mind getting me a napkin?" Cuts are indicated by ellipses …
- Suggested insertions of omitted words or information known to Mary's family but not to the transcriber are in brackets [ ]
- Spelling of Minnesota and North Dakota town and county names has been corrected from maps of those states
- Parentheses ( ) indicate Mary's own parenthetical comment

When these editing tasks were completed, Jane McGough took on the major task of formatting the transcript and related genealogical documents found on the internet or gathered from family members.

Jane also enhanced the narrative by adding photos and web links reflecting her research on names, places and events Mary mentioned.

Jane's suggestions for navigating the links are below:

- Holding the computer mouse cursor over a photo or link (blue text in the interview) shows the Web address.
- Control + click brings the reader to that link (a hyperlink), if the reader is online at the time.

  Note: Many hyperlink addresses have been shortened in the text [i.e. page 51: the link printed in the box - http://books.google.com - has the full address of http://books.google.com/books?id=fmcVeBnZh_oC&pg=PA102&lpg=PA102&dq=abe+lefkowitz+aft&source=bl&ots=4rjrhUonvr&sig=vvPO9-en_K8MgoSQ5M_fNd2SZ90&hl=en&ei=JwYeS_2sHoTqsQPbnsGBCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CAwQ6AEwAjgU%23v=onepage&q=&f=false#v=onepage&q=&f=false.]

- If the source could not be linked, the Web address is noted. Readers who do not have access to databases (typically a university archive) will not be able to read the full article.

Source material that is copyrighted could not be linked or copied. If permission to reproduce those materials can be gained in the future, an Addendum will be distributed.

Ellen Michael: Most of my memories of Aunt Mary have little to do with this narrative; but I do remember the sound of her voice (which DID carry) and the rhythm of her speech, which is reflected in the transcript of these tapes. I also remember that when I first looked for a teaching job in St. Paul, the name "McGough" was in itself a reference, once it was determined that Mary was an Aunt.

Since this project was started in 2008, several of Mary's nieces and nephews have verbally shared anecdotes about Mary to Jane or to Ellen. It is our hope that these stories about Mary will be written out, sent to either Jane or to Ellen. Jane has promised to send out an addendum with stories and any photos that you might have of Mary, especially as a young woman.

Ellen Michael 197 Woodside Drive Washington, PA 15301 emichaeluce@gmail.com	Jane McGough 500 Robert Street North #315 St. Paul, MN 55101 janemcgough@yahoo.com

Mary's Siblings

	Birth/Death	Spouse	
			Children
Mary	1885-1978		
Peter	1887-1962	Rosalie	(dates may be approximate)
			Charles 1919- Leo 1920- Rosalie 1922- Mary Ellen 1924- Elizabeth Ann 1927- Lawrence 1929- Gregory 1931- Thomas 1934- Peter 1936-
Sarah (Sadie)	1889-1978	John Flynn	
			John 1918-1942 Charles 1919- Mary 1920-1977 James 1921-1979 Edward 1923-1979 George 1925-1984 Joseph 1927- Patricia 1929-
James Richard	1891-92		
John	1893-1981	Grace	
			Patricia 1924- Joan 1927- Kathleen 1930-
Michael James	1895-1988	Julia	
			Michael 1924-2008 Jerome 1926- Mary Rita 1928- David 1929-2001 Ellen 1933-
Henry	1897-1912		
Edward	1899-1969	Helen	
			Mary Helen 1932- Jeanne 1934-
Joseph	1901-02		
Ambrose	1903-04		

Front row:

John **Catherine (Mother)** **Pete**

Back row:

Ed **Mary** **Sadie** **Jim (MJ)**

Photo supplied by Mary Ellen Sweeney.

Mary E. McGough in the print dress, left of center.

Not known who everyone is.

Mary (right) with sister-in-law Rosalie

Geneology

McGoughs and McGues in the 1900 Census of the United States

Geneology Internet website

By Hugh McGough

The 1900 census is the only available federal census that provides the month and year of birth of the person enumerated. The other US censuses include only the age in years. The 1900 census is also the only census to record the number of years couples were married, the number of children born to the mother, and how many were living at the time of the census. This census was the first to indicate how long an immigrant had been in the country, whether a home or farm was owned or rented, and whether the owned property was free of a mortgage.

[From an article on Ancestry (www.ancestry.com/) published on Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet: http://www.cyndislist.com/]

This page is designed to be used with my other pages covering McGoughs in the US censuses for the years 1790 through 1880, and I intend to add cross references to and from my other pages as time allows.

Entries for Pennsylvania are on a separate sub-page: McGoughs, McGoughs, and McGues in the 1900 Census of the United States—Pennsylvania.

Brooklyn Borough, 24th Ward. Census of 1900.

Ellen Michael's note:

(Parentheses) indicate comments by Hugh McGough, the website creator

[Brackets] indicate additions by contemporary grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

Paul J. McGough (David's son) contributed content to Hugh's website, as noted below. Paul was the family genealogist.

- (1900) James McGeough, age 36, born in July, 1863, in Ireland, married 15 years, emigrated in 1887, 13 years in US, naturalized, bricklayer, on St. Mark's Avenue (roll 1062. page 273). (Brick contractor, 774 Park Place). [This is James Bernard McGough who was born in county Monaghan, Ireland, in 1863, and married Sarah Catherine Beagan in county Monaghan on January 8, 1885. He died in Benson, Minnesota in 1903. See Ancestry.com Family Trees and the note under Swift county, Minnesota (Benson, 1st Ward), below.]
  [N.B. Name is spelled McGeough until at least 1900; perhaps changed when the family moved to Benson?]
- Catherine McGeough, age 36, born in August, 1863, in Ireland, married 15 years, 8 children, 7 living, emigrated in 1887, 13 years in US.
- Mary E. McGeough, age 14, born in October, 1883 [misprint; actually 1885, according to Mary's own account given shortly after her 85th birthday in 1970], in Ireland, emigrated in 1887, 13 years in US, at school.
- Peter T. McGeough, age 12, born in November, 1887, in New York, at school.
- Sarah C. McGeough, age 10, born in December, 1889, in New York, at school. [Sarah Christine McGough, born December 24, 1889, in Brooklyn; married John Francis Flyyn [Flynn?] in 1916; and died in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in 1878. [actually, 1978] Ancestry.com Family Trees.]
- [James Richard, probably born between Sadie and John, ca 1891; according to M.J. McGough, James Richard was named "James" after his father; James Richard died before M. J. was born in 1895, so M. J. was named Michael

James, so the father's name would be carried on. M. J. was called Michael until his father died, then gradually was known as Jim or Jimmy, then, after going into business, M.J. Since James Richard was not yet born in 1890 and had died by 1900, he does not appear in either census, except indirectly when Catherine McGeough is listed as having eight children, seven living in 1900.]

- John J. McGeough, age 6, born in June, 1893, in New York, at school.
- Michael J. McGeough, age 5, born in January, 1895, in New York.
- Henry F. McGeough, age 3, born in May, 1897, in New York. [Harry – died of infection – tetanus? - from a rusty nail about 1912.]
- Edward V. McGeough, age 1, born in April, 1899, in New York. (1900).
- [Two more sons, born ca 1901, 1903; both died in infancy, the last child around the time of James Bernard's death in 1903. James Bernard, Harry and the two infant sons are buried in Benson MN. Are Catherine and Mary E. also buried there?]
- MN - Swift County
- Benson, 1st Ward
- (1900) James Bernard McGough, born in county Monaghan, Ireland, in 1863, married Catherine Beagan in Aghabog, county Monaghan, Ireland, on January 8, 1885, and died in 1903, in Benson, Swift county, Minnesota. The family moved from Brooklyn to Benson, Minnesota, sometime after June of 1900.

  [According to Mary McGough's account, the family moved to Benson in 1902, just in time to celebrate Mary's 17th birthday. James was diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) in Brooklyn; the "cure" at that time was fresh air and rest, so doctors recommended the family move west. Since Catherine had a brother in De Graff, Minnesota, that's where the family headed. In Minnesota, James continued to work as long as he could, but died of TB.] James and his family are listed in this 1900 census in New York, Brooklyn, 24th Ward, above. Below is the listing of his widow, Catherine, from the 1910 census of Benson. [Much of the other information is from a posting under Del L. Johnson Genealogy on OneWorldTree on Ancestry.com. James McGogh is listed above in this census in Brooklyn Borough, 24th Ward, Kings county, New York.]
- [Paul J. McGough, grandson of M.J. McGough, in a message of February 20, 2000, to Al Beagan's "Genealogy Notes," says:]

"My great grandmother, Catherine McGough, was actually Sarah Catherine Beagan, but used Catherine (or Kate in the Beagan family) as her common name. I was surprised to see she had a sister called Sarah Beagan. I wonder what her middle name was. ...

- Catherine Beagan and James Bernard McGough (who assumed his middle name after their marriage) were married on Jan. 8, 1885 at the Aghalog [I assume this is Aghabog.] Catholic Church, Clogher Diocese in County Monaghan, Ireland. They came over separately to Brooklyn. James first to establish a residence on April 17, 1887, and then Catherine and their young daughter Mary Ellen boarded the Circassia, an Anchor Line steamship at Londonderry Ireland. They traveled 3rd class passage to America, landing at the Port of Castle Garden New York on June 1st, 1887.
- See Paul McGough's note: McGoughs, McGeoughs, and McGeoghs in the Baronies of Dartree and Monaghan—Civil Parishes of Aghabog and Killeevan—under Killyfuddy. The townland of Killyfuddy is in the civil parish of Killeevan on the western boundary of the civil parish of Aghabog, near Rooskey Lough.
- Catherine Beagan McGough's brother, Thomas Beagan, is listed in the 1900 census of Kildare, Swift county, Minnesota: age 46, born in August, 1853, in Ireland, married 23 years, emigrated in 1870, 30 years in the US, a farmer who owned his farm subject to a mortgage; living with his wife of 23 years, Johanna [Reardon] Beagan, born in July, 1853, in Canada, to parents born in Ireland, who was childless.
- [Paul J. McGough says in his email to Al Beagan: "Catherine's brother, Thomas Beagan, came to America around 1870. He found work on the railroads which he followed westward to Minnesota. In 1876, he found himself working out of Joliet Illinois where I have been told he fell in love with the mayor's daughter, Johanna Reardon (I have not researched the Reardon family line yet to see if it is true). They were married on Dec. 13, 1876. They moved west to Minnesota in early 1877. He went to work for James J. Hill's St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, and arrived in Benson Minnesota in 1878. At that time the tracks ended in Benson Minnesota. He helped build the stone abutment for the railroad bridge across the Chippewa River at Benson. While working in Benson, he became aware of the Irish settlement Archbishop John Ireland was setting up in neighboring De Graff. They decided to take up a homestead and settle near De Graff. Thomas Beagan

farmed the land they homesteaded but he also continued his craft as a stonemason by building the dam at Swift Falls Minn. and helping build the stone railroad depot in Benson."]

- (1910) Catherine McGough, age 45, widow, married 25 years, born in Ireland, emigrated in 1887, no occupation, owned house subject to a mortgage. [Listed as Katheryn McGough, age 55, in the 1920 census of Benson City.]
- Mary E. McGough, age 24, born in Ireland, emigrated in 1887, teacher, public schools. The IGI lists James McGough and Catherine [Beagan] McGough as parents of Mary McGough, born in Clones, Monaghan, on June 21, 1865 [according to Mary in her 1970 interview, her birthdate was in October, 1885. Possibly this reference is to another family, or either the historian or Mary got the dates mixed up. The father is probably the James McGeogh who held land in the townland of Killyfuddy in 1860.]
- Peter T. McGough, age 22, born in New York, bricklayer. [Of McGough Brothers Constuction Company. See the note under Michael J. McGough, below. In the 1920 census, Peter T. McGough, age 32, a bricklayer for a general contractor, living with his wife Rosalie Benoit McGough, age 25, born in Minnesota, to parents born in French Canada, and a son, Charles Peter McGough, age 11 months. Peter T. McGough was born on November 2, 1887, and died in Ramsey County, Minnesota, on June 28, 1982. <I think Peter actually died in 1962, about ten days after his sister-in-law, Julia Hoban McGough, wife of M.J. McGough. His (Peter's) son, Charles Peter McGough, was born on February 10, 1919, in Benson, Minnesota,> (Is this the correct date of Charlie's birth? M.J. McGough spoke as if Charlie was born during WWI and Peter was overseas when Charlie was learning to talk; M.J. might have been confused) < and died on September 24, 2000, in St. Paul, Ramsey county, Minnesota. Minnesota Death Index, 1908–2002. > Peter and Rosalie had eight other children: Leo, Rosalie, Mary Ellen, Elizabeth Ann, Laurence (Larry), Gregory, Thomas and Peter.
- Sarah C. McGough, aged 20, born in New York, a teacher in public schools. [Sarah Christine McGough, born on December 25, 1889, in Brooklyn, married John Francis Flynn, who was born in 1885 in Minnesota, gave birth to Charles Michael Flynn on December 24, 1918, in Medicine Hat, Saskatchewan, Canada (who [Charles] died in January, 1998, in Minneapolis, Minnesota), and who [Sadie] died in 1978 in Moose Jaw,

Saskatchewan.) <This is confusing. Sadie had eight children. The oldest was John, who joined the American army during World War II and was killed at Iwo Jima. Catherine, the oldest daughter, was severely crippled by polio. There was one other daughter, Patricia, and four more sons. Didn't Sadie's husband, Jack Flynn, die ca 1962, the same summer as Peter McGough and Julia Hoban McGough?>]

- John J. McGough, age 16, born in New York. [age 26, a laborer, ditching, living with his mother, in the 1920 census of Benson City. John later returned to New York and worked for the Internal Revenue Service. He and his wife, Grace, had three daughters: Patricia, Joan and Kathleen. John was the great storyteller in the family].
- Michael J. McGough, age 15, born in New York. [Michael J. McGough, was born on January 31, 1895, and died in Hennepin county, Minnesota, on February 14, 1988. Paul J. McGough, in the email to Al Beagan, referred to above, says: "My great grandmother was Catherine (or Kate) Beagan who married James Bernard McGough. Jack Beagan worked for my Grandfather Michael James (Big Jim) McGough and his brother Peter of McGough Bros. Contractors in the 1930's. (In the 1920 census of Brooklyn, District 585, is Michael J. McGough, age 25, born in New York, to parents born in Ireland, single, a contractor and house builder. Living in a lodging house on Flatbush Avenue.) In the 1930 census of St. Paul, Ramsey county, Minnesota (on Jefferson Avenue), is Michael J. McGough, age 37, married at age 29, born in New York, to parents born in Ireland, the proprietor of a building contractor; with his wife, Jule H., age 37, born in Minnesota, to a father born in Ireland, mother born in New York, and their four children, all born in Minnesota: Michael, Jr., age 6; Jerome H., age 3; Mary Rita, age 1 year and 6 months; and David A., age 5 months.]
- Edward McGough, age 11, born in New York. [In the 1920 census of Benson City, Ernest McGough, age 20, a printer for a newspaper, living with his mother. Unknown who "Ernest" was. Edward also became a partner in McGough Bros. Contractors, as a field supervisor. He and his wife, Helen, had two daughters, Mary Helen and Jeanne.]

[Unless the same birth and death dates appear consistently throughout the census reports, the facts are probably victims either of census takers' misunderstanding or error or of the "secrets" of those giving the information. Errors in recorded death

dates are noted above. In a longer-running error, Michael J. McGough, for example, appears in the 1920 census as 25 years old, which is consistent with the 1900 census listing his birthdate as 1895. In the 1930 census, however, he is listed as being 37. A possible reason for this is his marriage to Julia Hoban, who was about five years older than he. According to M.J. McGough, explaining some date inconsistencies to his children after Julia's death, Julia was embarrassed by the fact of being this much older than her husband and made him promise never to reveal her real age. For the 1930 census, they perhaps decided to split the difference, both logging in at 37. On their children's birth certificates, they are listed as being the same age.]

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Interview

Interview with Mary McGough

St. Paul Federation of Teachers

October 1970

St. Paul, Minnesota

Donald Haynes and Dennis East

for the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

Jim Robinson, Executive Secretary

St. Paul Federation of Teachers in 1970

From the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Transcripts of consecutive taped interviews when Mary McGough was 85 years old

M (Mary E. McGough)

I attended more delegate assemblies than anybody else. I joined when I was nineteen, was out of the state for a little while but got right in again when I came back. We didn't have the Federation then, you see; and we used to just wait until after the general convention's meeting in the Fall … to conduct our business. Very few people would remain. I always remained. I never felt that being a dues paying member was being a particularly good member, you know.

H (Donald Haynes)

When did you start attending those MEA (Minnesota Education Association) conventions?

M [In 1904.] I'm 85 now – celebrated a week ago.

H Happy Birthday!

M Thank you. And I really celebrated!...1904…

H 1904! And the last one [MEA convention] that you attended, roughly speaking?

M Well, let me see. I was a member through 1960. For the couple years that I was out, I was out of the state; I went into war work in World War I, down in Washington, D.C. I wouldn't do it now because now I know that it is more important to stay at home and keep the schools going. But I had three brothers in the service, you know, and my thought was that we should all pitch in and get this thing over as fast as possible. So I qualified and went down and worked in the Adjutant General's office – so we could win the war. And I taught out on the West Coast for one year at Aberdeen, Washington. That was a move for health and it didn't turn out right, and I couldn't coax my family west, though I loved the west. So I decided to go [back] east, and along the way I stopped off to visit some people in North Dakota. But then we teachers in the western parts of Minnesota used to go into North Dakota in the summertime to teach. It was our way for making extra money, for one thing, and for another thing – believe it or not – in some of the rural parts of North Dakota, that was all the schooling some of those children got…

H You were in the process of giving us some of the background about teaching in North Dakota then.

M Now what do you really want?

H Anything, really, that comes into your mind. We want to get some background information about you, and how you felt about education, as a person, how you got into education and then we're going to look for some information about your responses to people…give us a little of your personal background.

M Fellas…what a lot of it will have to do with is the Communist takeover of the American Federation of Teachers.

H But could we go back and begin with you?...Where you were born? And where you went to school? And what it was like to be a teacher in 1900.

M Well, I was born in Ireland October 17, 1885. My father came to the United States in April of 1887, and then earned enough money to bring my mother and me out here and we arrived in June of 1887.


The Circassia – Anchor Line steamship[1]

H In the Twin Cities [Minnesota] area?

M In Brooklyn, New York. That's where I grew up – the Borough of Brooklyn. At that time it was the City of Brooklyn and as I recall, since I had my grade and high school education there, it was very proud of the fact that it was, in its own right, the fourth largest city in the United States. I used to be taught that; but before I left the grade school, the Greater New York was born and the City of Brooklyn became the Borough of Brooklyn. And so I finished the eighth grade - as a student, that is – in the Borough of Brooklyn.

I am a Catholic. I had my elementary education in Catholic schools, all the rest in public schools. As you can surmise from my description of my father having to earn the money to bring my mother and me out, they were not moneyed people. In fact, from the tales my mother told me – she is now deceased – they knew what real persecution meant. In fact I remember, years later, sitting at a long table with a group of people here in St. Paul; we were having lunch, and I startled and partly offended some of them by saying that, if Hitler really wanted pointers on how to get rid of people, all he had to do was make an intensive study of what happened in Ireland during the time of the persecution of the Irish Catholics. And

that was considered an awful thing to say. But my mother told me that up to the day that she left Ireland, there was a curfew law – 9:00 o'clock curfew law – apparently just for Catholics. I suspect they needed it because rebellion was always going on, you see.

And I do know, from various tales she told, that our own home was a center for some of the activists, so to say. But the Irish Catholics were not allowed to have any shades on the windows – no window shades, no curtains, nothing – and she said it was a common experience, as they sat around the hearth, to look toward the window and find a face pressed against it, with the eyes cupped by hands, and the members in the room being checked over to see if they were all in. If any member of the family were missing, they would come up the ramp way, rapping on the door and demanding to know where that individual was, and the answer might be that he went to bed, and that person would have to show. So that was the atmosphere in which my folks lived, and it meant, of course, that there wasn't very much that they had in the way of worldly goods.

H What kind of work did your dad do in Brooklyn?

M My father was a construction worker; he had been in business. He was a very smart man. I pick my ancestors well; both my parents were.

H My mother used always to say you can choose your friends but not your ancestors.

M They were both quite intelligent people. Actually, the first chance I ever had – the only chance – to revisit Ireland, I was told by these two sisters of his in New York City, to check on the Presbyterian meeting house when I got to the city of Monaghan, in the county of Monaghan. Originally it was one of the nine counties that was in the province of Ulster that was retained by the British from the separation that took place when the Irish Free State was set up. But later, three of those counties – Monaghan, Fermanagh [?] and I forget the third one [Donegal?, Cavan?] – were able to demonstrate through actual votes that there were more Catholics than non-Catholics, and it was on that…they were turned over to…the Free State; and six counties remained with England, as you know from the recent affairs that have been going on there. I have relatives living on both sides of the line, nephews and

nieces of my father and mother. When I was back in ’51, as I say, I had the pleasure of visiting both of my parents’ homes. Of course, both of them are still in the hands of nieces and nephews who had acquired ownership. In the days of Cromwell, all that land was forfeited and turned over to the noblemen – absentee landlords – and they had their bailiffs, you see, who used to collect rent and so on every year. They paid tithes, in other words…a proverty [property?] tax, and tithes. I believe that word is still used in the British Isles – tithes – one tenth of their annual income in support of the Anglican church. Many people used to be critical of old Irish people because they were illiterate. That was a matter of choice with them. The only schools that were permitted to run were schools in which the Anglican religion was taught, and their parents would not have them attend.

H What brought your dad and your family into this Twin Cities area?

M Well, I haven’t answered one of your earlier questions as to how I happened to go into teaching. I entered school…in Brooklyn, and my parents told me that when I came home that first day, very enthusiastic, I told them that when I grew up I was going to be a sister and teach school. I didn’t know the word “nun”. But this wonderful creature, you know, everyone called her “Sister,” oh, and I was entranced! I was going to be a sister and teach school and I used to repeat that. You know how folks ask a little child, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” My answer was always pat: “I’m going to be a sister and teach school.”

And when I got to be at least thirteen, the questions changed a little bit because I seemed to be growing into a reasonably attractive-looking girl, whether that’s easy now to believe or not.

And the questions would be teasing ones about how the boys must like me quite well, etc. But I still would adhere to my original purpose and, by then, my folks felt that I was a little silly about it so I withdrew into a shell on that subject. But up until I came west, I still had that in mind: I was going to become a sister and teach school.

H Did you know Margaret Haley? She was another pretty little Irish girl.

M Who?

H Margaret Haley – out of Chicago.

M Haley! Yeah. She's in the story of one of the movements that arose at the time of the founding of the American Federation of Teachers. But you asked how we happened to come west. First I have to tell a very interesting experience because I think this is what makes people.

In spite of the fact that there was this marked tension between Catholics and non-Catholics in Ireland, when my grandmother died, my mother's mother…the Protestants, that is the Presbyterians and Methodist, were subdued, not as bad as Catholics but they were kept in the background too; but those belonging to the Anglican faith were then placed together as what they called the "Orangemen" in commemoration of the battle when the Prince (Duke?) of Orange defeated…the Irish who had risen to support Charles the Second when he was trying to make his comeback to the throne. And nevertheless, when an Irish family noticed that some youngster in the family seemed to be showing unusual promise…they would manage to get that child spirited out of the country to Paris to be taught; and they might be taught for the priesthood, if that were their vocation, or they might be taught as schoolmasters. They were what you called the head schoolmasters. Then they would come back into Ireland and as peddler/priest they would come around, or as head schoolmaster they would repetitiously [surreptiously?] teach.

My grandmother had great skill, it seems, in taking care of people who were ill. Because …she and my grandfather …went to live with an uncle…who was [had been?]…sent to Paris, but he was trained in medicine. And he was retired and he was a doctor, and my grandmother used to help him in whatever he'd do. And she, it seems, became so adept that if a neighbor sustained a broken bone – and it made no difference to her what [religion] the neighbor was; in her philosophy they were all neighbors – she might set the bone, then say, "Now you'd better go to

Irish Hedge School[2]

the doctor…" And they claim that the doctors would say, "Who set that?" and when they'd say "Ellen Beagan," then they [the doctors] would reply, "I don't need to see it then; if she did it, then it's done right."

Well another thing my mother said about it was that she [Ellen Beagan] slept in a bed that was close by a window…and they never knew in the morning whether she'd be there or not. They might find her gone because during the night someone would come and tap on her window, and say, "Ellen, so-and-so needs you," and she was up and gone, and she mid-wifed practically all the babies in the neighborhood. I had the interesting experience when I did visit Ireland in '51, of meeting the son of the man who was headmaster – they called him Master of the Orange Lodge – and I told him the story my mother had told me, and he was so pleased his father had been remembered…[The head of the Orange Lodge]…his father…called a meeting for the Orange Lodge, it seems, and then the day of the funeral he and two of his Lodge mates came to my grandfather and said, "Tom, Ellen was everybody's friend, and so your Orange neighbors are asking for the honors of carrying her to her grave." They didn't have hearses; they have the same sort of thing in Rome when I was there. They just have a kind of flat wagon and (the) coffin is put on it and a black drape…then [they] walk in back of it and so on…And my grandfather said, "Well, I'll talk it over with my sons." Two of his sons are still living in Ireland; the other two have come out here to this country. So they talked it over then and…he came back and said, "Well, the Catholic neighbors are asking for the same thing. So we said her sons and I will carry her to the gate…and you and the Catholics arrange together to take your turns in the turnabout…"

And so the bier went empty toward the chapel or cemetery – probably about a two-mile walk, I would judge. Everybody walked and they used that [the bier] just for the children who might get tired, and they would boost them up on it, and they sat and…took turns in the [cart]. And my grandmother's neighbors, although she was Catholic and they were non-Catholic and there was still this bitter feeling, were carrying [her], and not just to this chapel gate – the Catholics were not allowed to use the word "Church", [but] they could have chapels by that time. They not only carried her to the gate of the church yard and the cemetery…but right into the church. And the people

said it was probably the first time since Cromwell that the Orangemen had been in a Catholic church. Well, that was the pattern of an atmosphere in which I was brought up.

My father didn't talk so much about his background. I suspect that he and a brother about three years older – who many people thought were twins, but I never saw it – had been quite busy pranksters when they were growing up. And my uncle would tell of their pranks but my father, I think, was a bit afraid. He didn't want his sons following in his footsteps in that line, you know. Well, at any rate, it seems he started in business for himself in Ireland and he had only been about …20 or 21.

H What kind of business, do you know?

M Construction. We're a great construction [family]. Three firms in this city are McGoughs, all related to me, all nephews.

Well, at any rate, I was told by his [her father's] two sisters in New York City on the way over in'51, that when I got to Monaghan to be sure to take a good look at the Presbyterian Meeting House. My father had been the one who had contracted for that job and built it, so I took a good look at the Presbyterian House which after all is just a very simple red brick building that didn't involve very much, I would say, in the way of skills; but it meant that my father, you see, had learned to lay brick so when he came to the United States he immediately set out to find a job for himself laying brick.

And he was fortunate enough the very first day to get a job, and later in the day the building inspector – no, the union inspector – came around. This was in Brooklyn, you see, and here was this new man and he wanted to see his union card and my father had no union card; but it had been arranged that the following Saturday night he was going to be taken to the union meeting and proposed for membership. Well then he had to pay five dollars toward what would be his union dues, as a token of good faith. He was (required) to do that or else stop working. My father didn't even have five dollars; he had spent his last five dollars paying a week's board in advance, and he was at a loss about what to do. Well, at that time, the foreman on the job had taken a fancy to him – liked his work – and he said, "I'll pay [for] this man." That foreman later became an employee of my father's – one of his foremen, you

see. Because when he was in this country – let's see, I was ten years old [and] I was eighteen months when I came here, so it would be about – eight years or so…my father had saved up enough, and my mother – between them – had enough so that they [he?] started up in business for himself contracting in New York City, and he had a nice business going there.

The Christmas season after I was sixteen years of age, he contracted a heavy cold. He had never been ill so, of course, he couldn't be ill; it was just something he didn't bother about. And even though my mother insisted that the cold was inherited [internal?], hanging on too long, he just wouldn't heed what she had to say. He had jobs to take care of and he was busy with them and he kept on going out. And if you know anything about New York winters, they can be devilish, you know. So sometimes it rained, it sleeted, it snowed – you never knew what you were going to get – and often he would leave and he would be drenched before he got home. They didn't have raincoats like those rain/shine things we have nowadays, so the cold kept getting worse. So the next thing we know, in January he was down in bed. He had to admit that he was [sick], and the doctors – oh, they said conjunction of the lung, inflammation of the lung, etc., and finally they decided that he had what they called "consumption". That would be in January of 1902. And they suggested that he go up to Libertyville in the Catskill Mountains where a number of people [went] whenever they felt consumption, as they used to call it. Well, he went there and he stayed three weeks [and] came home. And he said, in his opinion, it was a place to catch consumption, not a place to get healed, because he said everybody you met seemed to be coughing and spitting, and it seemed to him that the air must be full of whatever germs they had. Well the doctors conceded that was so, then suggested that if he could only get inland away from the ocean climate entirely, that that might be good.

Well my father knew nobody in the inland and he was perfectly willing to go alone, but my mother couldn't see it that way. There were two people in [this country] with whom she had kept up a regular correspondence: a first cousin living in Chicago – who actually had grown up in my mother's home…because she lost both of her parents while she was still in infancy – and my mother's brother who lived on a farm in western Minnesota, about

two… and a half miles north of De Graff, Minnesota…The county [seat] was Benson and was eight miles from [De Graff]. So my mother wrote to both of them and shortly, by return mail, there came a very warm invitation for my father to come West. Well, the doctor ruled out Chicago because it was on a great lake and it was …foggy and damp there, "But", he says, "that western farm sounds good."

De Graff 3

So my father left and he arrived, I think about the third of June, at my uncle's place; and the understanding when he left…was that, if he improved, then the family would come west. If he didn't improve, he said that he might as well come east and die there where the family would have plenty of relatives who would be interested in keeping an eye on how we got along. Well he improved, and by August he was superintendent on a job with contractors really crazy to get him because he had the techniques that they hadn't developed yet in the west…I remember he was running a job in [___?] Minnesota when we arrived, so the word came that we were to come west.

Well, we had our home; he had purchased our home…They told me that we started with two rooms that were family size. We built, we built more…but when I was fifteen, they purchased their own home – typical New York type: you go down three steps to the kitchen level, then you go up to the parlor…you know…I knew the word "porch" in reading but I never heard it used until I came West. We never used the word "porch" before, like they do now in New York; but at that time you had a piazza or a veranda. If you had what we call a "porch" here, well we had a "piazza". And the stoup – and the proper way of spelling that is s-t-o-u-p-that was the old… porch, you know, and the "rails stoup" would have a little bench inside where you could sit down. One of the larger places where we had lived as renters had a stoup…Then we moved from there to our own place and we acquired a piazza…

[ed. note: Today's dictionary defines "stoup" as the holy water basin at the entrance to a church; the first spelling given for the little raised porch to which Mary referred is "stoop", with "stoup" as a possible, but not preferred, alternate]

Well it was decided then that we would come west. We stopped a day or so and visited with this relative of Mother's in Chicago, and then we went on to De Graff, Minnesota…The arrangements were that my father was going to come down to St. Paul and meet us, but Mother hadn't arranged or understood carefully enough about mail deliveries, etc., so while we looked around anxiously in the old Union Depot in St. Paul, he was in [___?] ,forty miles from De Graff, and he got the letter there the day that we were in St. Paul.

[From what follows, when James McGough did not show up in St. Paul, the family apparently took the train on to De Graff].

Well he knew, of course, that he couldn't get down there, so what he did was to take a time off from his job and hire the delivery rig and drive directly to the [De Graff] farm. I think it was about forty miles. And he drove in there just as we were sitting down to dinner, and I want to tell you that it was the most joyous reunion that you could imagine

You see, we're a family that always did things together as long as I can remember. We'd go on picnics together. My family would read about someplace – a new development that was opening up – where there were lots being offered, so we would all go. We'd go with a picnic lunch, and my mother would go over the area and, if she liked it, she'd buy a lot and pay about a dollar a week. You'd be surprised …what she accomplished in the way of lot buying – she really did. And they came in very handy. They financed my father's trip west; they financed our trip west and, believe it or not, even after his death, she still had some lots left in what is now called Perona [sp?] in Greater New York just beyond, or just before, you come to Jackson Heights. But at any rate, we explored around there even as far as – I forget…if it was Little Neck or Great Neck along the …

H Did you start teaching along about that time or shortly after?

M We arrived in October, the week that I was seventeen years old…Our furniture hadn't arrived yet. My father…and my mother drove to Benson the next day to check about the furniture [and] said it [would] probably take about two weeks. So this poor uncle and aunt who were about in their mid-fifties and had no children, never had children, and we were a family. There were eight children at the time and the oldest was around ten…

[If Mary was 17 at the time, Peter would have been fifteen and Sadie 13; thus, only five of the children were under ten; perhaps Mary's factual lapse reflected how it must have seemed to the aunt and uncle.]

Here we were, moving in on them! You can imagine what an experience it was for them. Of course my mother, my sister – she's four years younger than I – and I took over the housework and we kept the children outdoors as much as possible, and fortunately the weather permitted it; otherwise my poor old aunt and uncle would have been laid low very emphatically, because we were an active crowd.

…Our parents drove to Benson and they found just one house – one only – vacant, and the rent was five dollars a month. But you know the average family in Benson at that time – that would be 1902 – was living on forty-five dollars a month. You see how money has changed! And if you had fifty, you were very comfortable; and as you went up from there, and ultimately we got up to ninety dollars a month and we were considered rich…but after all you could buy a loaf of bread for five cents. You could buy a dozen eggs for ten cents, and so forth and so on. That's how values were with money at that time.

So then my father and mother came back, and they…had arranged with the agent in Benson…to notify the agent in De Graff just as soon as our furniture arrived…my father said …in about two weeks, so "I'll be back in two weeks". But actually he had to come back a week later because the baby of the family died. And so, within a week of our arrival, we had a death in the family…The fact was that we had three deaths in the first fifteen months that we were in Minnesota, which wasn't too good an introduction to the state.

Well, when the rest of the family went to Benson, it was decided that I'd better stay on [in De Graff]. We were on a semester basis of education in New York at that time; we didn't know what it would be like in Minnesota, so we decided that this poor aunt needed a chance to recover, so I stayed on with them until Thanksgiving time. It was figured that I had only three years [semesters?] to go in Girls Central High School in Brooklyn, New York…And when I came in [to Benson from De Graff], my uncle drove me up there…and I remember looking in dismay at this house. And I thought, "How in the world are we all going to fit in?" Here we had been used to, I think, ten rooms, and this had two rooms, a shed in back attached; and it was just a shed, you know – no inside plaster at all – just a storage shed like for coal, wood or things like that, with an attic up above. That's all there was to it…But my mother had strung baling wire that you use to bale hay with, back and forth, and she hung heavy draperies which we had on each of our windows, and she partitioned them into rooms in that way. And believe it or not, that was the way we had to manage; there was no choice about it.

Benson 4

Well, then on Monday, Mother and I went to see the superintendent of schools about my entry [into Benson high school] and to my amazement he said, "There isn't a thing we can offer you." He says, "As a matter of fact, you covered, in the Minnesota curriculum, the first year of university work, all the first year of normal college work." They didn't speak then of teacher's colleges, but normal colleges. And he said, "That's where you should go – either to the University or to a normal college, if you want to go on."

H Is that a county normal or a state normal?

M No, state normal. We call them state colleges now. I think we have about five of them in the state…But then they were called normal schools. Moorhead (Minnesota) is the one in the west my sister graduated from.

Well, we didn't dare spend money to send me away to any school because we just had to hang on for a while until we would see how we made out. We said something to that effect. So the superintendent said, "You know, you say you were taking a teacher's course?" That's the course I was taking at Girl's Central in Brooklyn. I said, "Yes."

He said, "You know, we have a system of certification here in this state by which you could go out teaching. You're old enough now." So he told me about it. We don't have it any longer, but at that time throughout the state, once a year the county superintendents gave what they called the first certification for teaching in rural schools or small towns. If you made a grade of 75, you could teach in one of these schools – seven month terms the rural schools would have, the small towns would have a full year. If you made a grade of 85 – and that was comfortable [comparable?] as far as grading was concerned to what used to be the system of setting you up for entrance to high school in New York City – you could teach then in small towns. Those were then called first grade schools, the others were second grade schools. But to be qualified for the first grade school certificate, you not only had to have this percentage; you also had to be eighteen years old and have five months experience.

Well, that handicapped me in a way, you see, but I could go at once into teaching and I did.

Then the superintendent went on to say that in preparation for that, "we always have students who come in, and from now until the test in February, we teach the subjects on which the test will be." And I said, "This is what my parents want, so I'd better go for that and get something done instead of just being…a dead loss."

So I entered that high school in Benson, Minnesota, and the advanced work that they had…was a chemistry class being taught by the superintendent himself; and all of them were in the first term chemistry except one, and that one was the son of the local pharmacist, and he was doing advanced chemistry by himself under the supervision of the superintendent. And I said to him, "May I also go to that class? I've had chemistry and, as my credits show, I'd just as well like to keep edging forward a little bit." So during that

time from the Monday after Thanksgiving until February when these tests were given – rather until the first of March when I left to teach – I had one advanced course with this [name of pharmacist's son not clear] – the two of us working together being supervised by the superintendent, working alongside the other members of the class. But the rest, I was reviewing common school subjects.

Well, I passed without any difficulties, but I had no experience. I was seventeen years old, but there was four months [left?]. Usually, at that time, the farmers counted a lot upon…the help of their children, and they would try to arrange their terms in the country schools so, if possible, they could work as long as possible with the children, then have school, then take up work again.

H Schools ran about seven months then, right?

M Right. Seven months only in those second grade schools. So this particular school, in my uncle's district, had opened so late in the fall so the farmers' sons could help with the fall plowing, the harvesting, reaping and so on. They had three months [of school] which went into the winter weather, and then they were having that short vacation…through Christmas and January, and were going to reopen…the first of March. But the teachers who had been there weren't coming back – I don't know what the reason was – so my uncle put in a word for me and I was granted the school.

You know I had a great asset – my accent! We were kept talking continuously, every member of the family. People were not so mobile at that time, and most of those people in that little town of Benson and that neighborhood around there hadn't been as far away from home as the Twin Cities here. If you had gone to Chicago or New York, you were widely traveled. And here was an entire family plunked down right in their midst, you see, from New York City.

H From more than that! From Ireland.

M Well they didn't know that; but our accent was New York City. Mother's was a modification. But you know the north of Ireland accent is a very nice one. In fact, I remember reading within the last few weeks that now people

on the continent, even English people who want a real polish to their accent, go to Dublin and stay a while because they feel that the finest accents are in Dublin. Did you read that?

H I mentioned the name, Margaret Haley. She was a good friend of yours, wasn't she? The teachers' union was really organized by you pretty little Irish girls who perhaps took one look at these Anglo-Saxon Board of Education [members?] and you saw – what would you Irish girls see? Red, or what (laughs).

M: No, that wasn't how the AFT [American Federation of Teachers] was started at all…You know where, a year or so ago, one of the staff of the AFT [Pat Strandt?] did an article on me…and for the most part…it was accurately written. [Jane McGough has requested info on this article from the AFT.]

H Where did she print the article? In *The American Teacher*?

M Yes, in *The American Teacher*. She did that a year ago. It was the first year I didn't go to the AFT convention. It was down in New Orleans a year ago.

H I missed you.

M She was surprisingly accurate because, as far as I could see, she took no notes. She just came to me and said that the officers had told her they wanted her to do an article, in depth, about me. And so we arranged that we would meet that Saturday at 11:00, the Saturday after the convention was over, and have breakfast. The two of us sat there and chatted, and from eleven to one, I didn't see that Pat took any notes at all. She is inaccurate on one account, and seemed to think I began my teaching in North Dakota, but I didn't. You see…practically all my teaching has been in Minnesota;…I told her that in western Minnesota, we teachers would go up to North Dakota and teach in those little country schools in very rural districts. I went up to the northwest county of North Dakota in response to ads that would come down in the papers asking for teachers who would be willing to come there to teach children during the summer months

So I taught three months up there…and liked it so well that when the county superintendent asked me if I would take the village school, where I'd have

the four upper grades, I decided to stay…the pay was very much better than what I was getting [in Minnesota].

H And how much was that?

M Well, I know that my final offer there was eighty dollars a month. Minnesota paid – and I can recall because I taught there in my home town for three years – forty-five dollars a month…When I taught in Benson, Minnesota, I started in the sixth grade which, I had thought, had driven off the [previous] sixth grade teacher; so she left teaching and I started with forty-five dollars a month. But the youngsters and I hit it off quite well together. I have always in later years felt that, without my realizing it, this accent of mine helped decidedly… Then, after I had been in that sixth grade for about three months, the seventh grade teacher quit. She was Scandanavian. No criticism of the Scandanavians, but she was a Scandanavian who had not yet got over some of the pronunciations that would come natural to the Scandanavians…In that seventh grade, for example, one of my own brothers, James (we called him Jim but they called him James in school) but she'd give the "Y" sound for "J" in James, while, on the other hand, if she was using the word, "yellow", for "Y" she'd give the "J" sound…That I believe, in some of the Scandanavian dialects, is common. So the seventh grade just had a picnic with her. She was definitely afraid of mice, and the school building was over-ridden with mice. So they were always "seeing mice" wherefore the poor thing would jump up – you know those turned down seats at the front of the desk – would jump up on the desk and all of the class would be hunting mice.

Well, she resigned at Thanksgiving time and the school board asked me if I would take her position, and I said, "I will if you pay me her salary, and she's getting five dollars a month more than I." So they agreed; and I laid my plans very carefully so I was in the classroom far ahead of any of the pupils, and I had assignments written on the board, and as each one came in I said, "There's your assignment right there on the board. Go right to your seat and begin working." And as others came in, they looked surprised because everybody was working, and as others came in, they looked surprised because everybody was working. Everybody got the same treatment: "There's your assignment; go to your seat and start working."

And we just…got started that way, and everybody was working by the time the school was to start at the regular school time.

And they had a time once when a young boy, Harold Strand – I wonder if he's still living – I was explaining something to this group over here because I had the room divided up into sections, and as I was explaining, I could see his hand waving frantically. So I said to the group, "Excuse me," and I asked, "Harold, what's the matter?" and he said, "Teacher, there is a mouse right near the waste basket." Well, I could just see the whole group getting ready, so I tapped my finger and I said softly, "Keep still, Harold, and he won't bite you!" So that ended experiments of that kind. And then, at the end of that year, I had my brother in that class, and I also had a girl who is one of my sisters-in-law now, and was at this birthday party a week ago.

At the end of that year, the teacher who had the eighth grade in an off-site building resigned; she was going to get married. So the school board asked me if I would take the 8th grade. I said, "Yes, if you pay me the salary that you pay her." They paid her sixty dollars a month, and that was prime salary at that time, in the western part of Minnesota.

H Seven month's work, nothing when you are out of work. Is that right?

M Well, this was eight month's work. This was in town.

H Eight month's work – that's four months without work!

M That's right; that was the other four months. That's when I'd go to Dakota to teach, you see. Well, in this particular year [Transcript is unclear, perhaps missing parts of the conversation. It seemed that Mary was offered a year-round job in North Dakota at a better salary]. I notified my family that I wasn't coming back and I notified the school board that I wasn't coming back, and I got a very nice letter from the school board in Benson telling me that any time I decided that I wanted to come back, there was a place for me; and that was nice to know.

This little town, Noonan, had no Catholic church; the next town, Crosby…did have the beginnings of a Catholic church; and I had friends who had been…in [another, more distant?] community and they knew that I sang…and that I had taught catechism. So they invited me to come and stay

Theodore Roosevelt . Hunting Trips of a Ranchman. 1885. Paragraphs 37-39.

http://www.bartleby.com/52/104.html

These are the pocket-gophers, queer creatures, shaped like moles and having the same subterranean habits, but with teeth like a rat's, and great pouches on the outside of their jaws, whose long, rambling tunnels cover the ground in certain places…The cowboys are always practising at them with their revolvers, and as they are pretty good shots, mortally wound a good many, but unless the force of the blow fairly knocks the prairie-dog away from the mouth of the burrow, it almost always manages to escape inside. But a good shot with the rifle can kill any number…

with them over the weekend. Well there was a train; you know that old song about the slow train to Arkansas? Well, there was a train that went from the town of Crosby…so that going up there, I had to change trains in Minot to a train that took me to this particular little town where I would find a train waiting that would take me to the western part of the state… And I noticed that I seemed to be the only woman on the train. All the rest seemed to be men. And we went along, stopping here at this town and that town; and suddenly the train stopped, and I noticed all the men in the car getting up and leaving. And I looked around, and I didn't see any town, and I thought "Well, there must be a water tank here." I looked for a water tank; there was no water tank. Then I looked at the field and here the crew of the train and the men were all out and they were shooting pocket gophers. They all had brought along .22 rifles…That was a main sport up there. You know, I got to be a pretty good shot myself. We used to take our rifles – you know how pocket gophers would sit up on the edge of their holes – and before they popped down, we would try to get them. Well, that was my experience with slow trains…

Well, I used to board the train in Noonan…on Friday nights and stayed with these friends [in Crosby]. Then on Saturdays, I would practice with their choir, became their soloist there. And the upshot was, when they built a new church – their first church of which they were very proud – the upshot was that the Crosby school board offered me the principalship of their high school, one of those schools where they had one or two teachers, and I was promised the salary of eighty dollars a month. Now that was considered very

good money – eighty dollars a month – and I agreed on one condition: that they would also give a job to my sister who, in that particular summer, had graduated from Moorhead Normal School, and was ready now to teach first grade. So they hired the two of us.

Finally I went home to Benson, and I think it was… in July, my mother had a very bad gallstone attack. She'd had a couple earlier in her life, but she always put off doing anything about it until she got the family raised. Well this time the doctors told her she'd better get busy, and the local doctors didn't feel that they were up to performing the operation; so she and I went to Rochester, Minnesota, so she might have this operation performed. She was a woman who had grown corpulent, and when she came out of the anesthetic, I remember she asked the doctor if he had helped her by taking out some of the layers of fat that she must have had around her. And he said, "No fat! That's all good, firm flesh. But he cautioned her, because of the depth of the incision, that for three months she was not to do any lifting or pulling or anything like that. Well, when we got home, the family held a council of war. We knew my mother – a very capable, a very able, a very active woman – and we just couldn't see her obeying that doctor's orders. In fact, while we were talking about it, I happened to step to the back door and I looked out. We had by that time acquired in Benson a fourth of the block of land from the corner, and we raised chickens. She liked to experiment. She had a real green thumb; we raised about every kind of vegetable you could grow in Minnesota, and she was always looking in catalogs trying to get different things to do. And after her death, I came across a book she had kept and, to my amazement, she sold from three hundred to four hundred dollars of stuff a year off that place. Because people would call her up, you know; the store would call her up: "Do you have this, do you have that?" Yes, she had it. She had an enormous capacity…and in between time, she ran the parish. You see the kind of person she was. No wonder I'm so bold, too.

H With or without the priest's cooperation and agreement?

M Oh, he considered her his right hand. She had more schemes for running…

H Probably wouldn't have made much difference anyway.

M I don't know. I think she probably would have conjured him somehow or another into accepting her ideas. While we were wondering what we would do about her, I wandered to the back door…While we were in Rochester, one of the cows – we had two cows, one for Spring and one for Fall so we'd have plenty of milk – [had] a calf…, and the calf had been staked outside the fence along the alley where there was nice green grass. My mother had walked out there, and she'd decided that the calf had probably done as well as it could and she was going to move it to its mother. But the calf didn't want to move. So what I saw was my mother pulling and the calf pulling – - they were like this, you know – and each was determined not to yield! And here she'd been told not to do any pulling or tugging or lifting, not for three months! I was always considered fleet-footed, and I never traveled faster than I did that time. And I raced out there and I said, "Mother, are you a fool?", and grabbed that rope. Well, the family decided that someone would have to stay home with her, and that was all. And they felt that out of the group, I was probably the one who would be most successful keeping her in line. So I got in touch with the North Dakota group and they were very understanding.

H Had you worked there a year or had you not started the job there yet?

M You mean as high school principal?

H Yes.

M I had not started the job yet…and they scouted around and they got someone else for the principalship, so they released me. They did retain my sister, and then she met the man she married about a year later, and she's still married to him, living up in Canada. And in the meantime, I stayed home until the Christmas holidays. So then I decided I'd look for a job, so I came down to the Twin Cities to register with some agencies.

I had two brothers who were keeping house out in the Merriam Park area. One of them was attending St Thomas College and the other was at the University of Minnesota. And I, of course, bunked with them. They had four rooms there as I recall; and they got after me to apply here in St. Paul. Well, I had no desire to come to St. Paul. You know, in small towns you can have an awfully good time without really committing yourself…you can free

lance. And I was growing up and I found a young man who was getting interested in me and I wasn't interested in him; so I just stopped dating him and started dating someone else. That way you could have a good time and you weren't tied down…But I didn't know [if] I would find that friendliness in the cities. So the boys argued with me, and they said, "We'll never go back to small towns and the others won't stay there either." I had two younger brothers who were still at home in Benson. You might just as well decide on a place close to where the family [is] settled, and they seemed to like St. Paul better than they liked Minneapolis. So in response to their urging I went downtown, not too enthusiastically, and I was interviewed by an assistant superintendent who seemed to take a fancy to me and introduced me to the superintendent and asked me if I would be willing to substitute for a week in the St. Paul schools while they looked up the references that I had. I said, "Yes," but I'd never done substitute work before.

I started early Monday morning. I substituted five days in four different schools – two days in one school, one each in the other school – and I found out later from one of those principals, who later became my junior high school principal, that actually the principals were reporting on me. They didn't have the time to look up my references in those five days, you know, and it was on the report of those principals that I was hired. When we got to the question of salary, I said that I was about to get hired – I explained why I was not working up until that time – at eighty dollars a month for the principalship at a high school, and I would not care to teach for less than that. I'd go back to the principalship if need be. So the department agreed to pay me eighty dollars a month.

Well, the thing that sent the St. Paul teachers into the union movement was the establishment of Local 28, which was just the women's local originally; and it was established, as I recall, in June, 1918.

H What year was it that you came into St. Paul?

M January, 1915.

[Mary would have been 29 years old in January, 1915. She had been teaching 12 years, since she was 17. Her father died when she was 18 and she and her brother, Peter, became the primary breadwinners of the large

family until her sister finished normal school and the younger boys finished high school. She would have been 32 when the union local was started.]

The thing that sent them into unionizing was the fact that the local superintendent, E.C. Hartwell, who went from here to Milwaukee, I believe, wanted to establish a merit system of pay…As salary was being talked over at that time – I was teaching out at the old Ramsey school, which is now being used just for adult education – I was really chagrinned to find out that I was the only one in that building who was being paid eighty dollars a month. The nearest to me was a teacher who was getting sixty dollars a month, and the rest of them were getting forty-five dollars a month. And I worked closely enough with them so that I felt they were doing just as good a teaching job as I was doing. I couldn't understand, then, why there should be this difference in pay. But if the merit system were to be installed, I thought, that might be even worse because, human nature being what it is, the fellow who knows how to make the right contacts is the one who is always most "meritorious."

H How was this fellow's merit system going to work?

M He didn't explain that. He just said he would like to install a merit system because unquestionably teachers were not…The trend nowadays is to go toward team teaching. In a way, it is a variation of the merit system. If you have one person who is the head of your team and the others subsidiary persons, and…someone has to decide who is to be the head of that team and that is the person who is to be paid more than the others; so that is a variation of the merit system. I recall when I was teaching at the old Jackson School here in St. Paul. This school was laid out peculiarily. I had a room through which you had to pass – anybody had to pass – to get from some of the grades on this side to the principal's office and the nurse's office on this side. There was a lady right across from me and right next to the principal's office who was just the most complacent person. I would have to take the youngsters to the nurse's office, and I would see her sitting at her desk, busy at something or another – maybe writing a diary for all I know – while the youngsters in the room were caterwauling, and having little punching fights, and throwing spitballs, and what have you. And one day when I had to go out like that, it just happened that the principal was out there, and he was

saying, "But can't you do something to keep them more quiet?" And I could see her – I liked her personally, but this is what happened – she drew herself up to her full height, which is no taller than myself, and she said, "Sir, do you know who my brother is?"

H Who was her brother?

M One of the most influential lawyers in town. He knew who her brother was, and that ended that. And that's the danger very often in regard to the merit system. It's who or what...

H And even with these gross inequalities in pay, the teachers…sensed [how] it would work without the superintendent even explaining what his merit system was. What introduced you to the union?

M When I came to St. Paul, I was naturally an organization person, as you say. Because, as I told you, when I was nineteen I was teaching in Murdock, Minnesota, and that was in 1903. By chance, when I went home to Benson and picked up the weekly newspaper that we used to get from the Twin Cities – I don't know whether it was from Minneapolis or St. Paul – I read that there was to be a meeting of the Minnesota Education Association at Central High School in St. Paul on a date that would come between Christmas and New Year…I hadn't heard about the Minnesota Education Association [MEA], so I called up the superintendent of schools in Benson. I was teaching, as I said, in Murdock, but I called up the superintendent of schools in Benson and asked him about it. He knew nothing about it. I called up the county superintendent's office; nobody knew anything about it. Apparently nobody knew anything about it.

Murdock 5

I talked it over with my mother. I had some friends in St. Paul who had lived in Benson and been neighbors of ours and took a liking to us; and then they moved down here. And they had been periodically inviting me to come

down and spend a few days. So I said to my mother, "I'd like to go down and visit them and, at the same time, find out what that Minnesota Education Association business is." After all, I intended to stay in teaching.

Old Central High 6

So I came down, stayed with these friends, and went to the old Central High School gym – that's where the public safety building is now – and I went into this room. I know now that there were some women there, but at the time they were so few in number that they didn't register. Seems to me there were about seventy-five men, roughly speaking, and I was taken aback…because they all looked old enough to be my father or my grandfather. I'm sure the youngest one was older than my father had been. Of course, he was deceased at that time. Well, this man noticed this young woman hesitating on the doorstep and he came to me and asked if there was something he could do for me, and I said "Well, I'm looking for the Minnesota Education Association meeting. "And he said, "Well, this is it!"

"Well", I said, "I teach in Murdock, Minnesota; could I attend the meeting?" Well, I was literally taken to arms. They just thought it was wonderful.

H Who were they? Superintendents, principals?

M Superintendents for the most part. They just waltzed me right in and made such a fuss over me, so I just kept going down each Christmastime from Benson. Nobody else up there bothered, but I thought, "I intend to stay in teaching and I should associate myself with people."

H Did you attend the National Education Association?

M Yes.

H When did you make this next step?

M Now let me see – you're rushing me…

H (Laugh) I don't want to rush you.

M Well finally, then… I came to St. Paul. I told this bit about the MEA so you'll see that I was naturally a person who believed in organization. When I came in January, 1915, to teach in St. Paul, I found that we had a Grade School Teacher's Association, not affiliated with anybody. We had a Men's – I think the high school ladies called themselves a "club", the High School Teacher's Club, but no men were in it, although there were some men teachers – not so many, but some. Then we had another group that was composed of shop men for the most part.

I don't recall the names of any more, but at least there were those three, and they didn't know each other or have anything to do with each other.

Quincy School 7

While I was a grade school teacher, I came in at old Quincy that was later on demolished. I was asked…after this week of substituting, if I would be willing to take the four upper grades of that school. And then they said that that school was to be abandoned and that they would promise to put me in one of the best schools in the city after that. Well, I said that was OK, and I did that. And then I was sent out to Ramsey…the school that used to be at Grotto [Street] and Grand [Avenue], which was sort of the school of the elite. At Ramsey, I found that I was being paid more than the other people.

Well, I met some very wonderful people in that Grade School Teachers organization. One of them was Florence Rood. Now we do have, someplace or other, a book – a biography – that might help. I am not sure if she was one of the people who helped to form the American Federation of Teachers, but she was one of the ringleaders in organizing our Local 28.

H She was one of the more important people in the NEA, and she was a personal friend of Margaret Haley. And Margaret Haley nominated her for the chairmanship of the Department of Classroom Teachers of the National Education Association, and she won it…I think, in those days, it was an intention to bring that whole group into the union.

Ramsey School 8

M …Florence…and I became very close friends – so close that she and I would be the delegates going to the conventions…I must not forget to mention…Flora Smalley, who died not too many years ago. She and Florence worked hand in glove. But, as I got the story from Florence: sometime preceding the formation of the American Federation of Teachers, which I believe was formed in 1916, there was a convention of the NEA. I always associate Salt Lake City with it, for some reason or another…some place out there toward the Southwest. I'm recounting now what I understood; and it was felt, Florence said, that that group was so dominated by superintendents that teachers actually had little or nothing to say. And that, out of [their] resentment, three movements started: one was the forming of the Classroom Teachers Association…affiliated to this day with the NEA; another was the Margaret Haley [group], a union movement in Chicago; and the third was the American Federation of Teachers in 1916.

Now what Margaret Haley did, as I understood it from Florence and from Flora Smalley too, she went back to Chicago and decided that the teachers there should work with the local labor people…since after all, the public school system, whether the people like to admit it or not, did come into existence because of the actions of labor – about 1837…I think – because they realized that was the only salvation for their children: the public school system. But at any rate, she [Margaret Haley] approached labor men, and they were very glad, there in Chicago, to support these people…So she had a local affiliation with labor, and it was strong enough so that, after the American Federation Union was formed in 1916, it was a while before that

particular Margaret Haley group would come into the AFT because their local set-up was working so well. But eventually they did come in. Now that was the story as I understood it from Florence.

[An] act that antagonized the St. Paul Grade Teacher's Federation was [Ernest C.] Hartwell's meeting with school principles to put an end to what he called teachers' 'soldiering (loafing) on the job." …Hartwell visited a school to try to confirm his suspicions of teacher dawdling. Finding no evidence to substantiate his contentions, he insisted on formulating policies to increase supervision over teachers…he standardized penmanship instruction by adopting the exclusive use of the Palmer method. Teachers objected…it required (low-income parents) to purchase Palmer buttons, paper, manuals, pens, and diplomas for their children. Hartwell…threatened to fire (teachers) who did not meet the Palmer standard.

The Federation teachers viewed Hartwell's assault upon their domain as an attempt to relegate women to non-administrative matters, while subordinating them further in the educational hierarchy…In her [1918] presidential speech to the Grade Teacher's Federation, Flora Smalley told the teachers:

The struggle for democracy in the schools is nation-wide; the struggle is not ended yet and will not be until the happy day when the teacher has the right to make the course of study which she uses, to choose the textbooks with which she works, and to elect to office under whom and with whom she administers the school.

Smalley's address mustered the teachers to action…

http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.metrostate.edu/stable/1162901?seq=9&Search=yes&term=smalley&term=flora&list=show&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dflora%2Bsmalley%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DEducation&item=1&ttl=3&returnArticleService=showArticle&resultsServiceName=doBasicResultsFromArticle

H Forgive a question now from an Anglo-Saxon, but half of whose family was papist. Anyway, is Florence Rood another one of the little Irish girls?

M No. Now what did she tell me about her ancestry? She grew up on a farm. And she said that another thing was that her father claimed that farmers were the greatest of all gamblers – gambling with nature – the hope that they were going to get a crop, etc. I think she grew up in Iowa. Don't take that too positively, but that's my feeling. And she decided to become a teacher, and her folks liked that very well, too. In fact, I think there were several teachers [in her family]. Yes, her sister…taught with me at Central High School when I taught there…What was her sister's name? Well, anyway, she had a

sister who taught at Central High School with me; and the first treatise on supervision that was written in this city was written by another one of her sisters. I taught with another sister of hers at this Ramsey School I mentioned, and her name was Margery Rood. There was quite a group of them. I think she had four sisters and all of them were teachers as I recall.

H Florence was the one who introduced you to the labor movement on the city level?

M That's right. Well, when I came in there was just this grade school teachers organization – "association", they called themselves – so naturally I went into it. I was a grade school teacher, and she seemed to feel I was a person of promise because she sort of took me under her wing, and I felt kind of privileged, so to speak. She went to Columbia to take some work there and got interested in the kindergarten movement. And… I believe about 1895 – I think I recall the year – she succeeded in persuading St. Paul to set up its first kindergarten here in St. Paul. That was before I was here, you see. I think it was about that early; you see, she was quite a bit older than I… And she was made, eventually, kindergarten supervisor here in St. Paul…Then, when this merit system idea was proposed and Florence came out quite strongly against it… she was demoted – they didn't have tenure laws then – and sent back to teaching kindergarten.

Then when we branched out…[into] our pension system…she was one, I think, along with some others, who persuaded the teachers to establish a pension system. It was to be a pension of fifty dollars a month; and what actually happened was [that] each one of us paid in 1% of our salary, and we were the ones who were really paying the pension to retirees, hoping that when it became our time to retire…there would be enough to take care of us, and others would be taking care of us. But she succeeded eventually in getting the city interested, and we had a pension system that began to branch out to the extent that we needed a full time person…taking care of the pension. The teachers association decided that they wanted Florence, and that was how her career ended in St. Paul, as secretary of the pension system.

But the pension group, until they came here to their east quarters, always rented their headquarters from us, Local 28, The Women's Federation. So Florence kept in touch with us Federationist because she was Federationist even while she was doing an effective job as the secretary of the pension fund. Well, that was how I got introduced to the labor movement.

H In this opposition to the merit system, did the teachers really understand it, or was it…the influence of a person like Florence Rood?

M I think they understood it. I know in the building where I taught – in Ramsey – when we teachers got into a huddle again, I said, very apologetically, "I never thought about discussing salary before, but I'm getting eighty dollars a month …" And the next to me was getting sixty dollars and then [they] went down – fifty dollars, forty-five dollars – forty-five was the lowest. We were a close enough group so that we felt we were all probably doing a competent job, and we couldn't see why there should be these differentials.

I know that, in connection with that, one of the things that has in a way hurt me was that I am not a charter member of Local 28, although I was in on all the

…As an active and long-time influential member of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, Ernest Clark Hartwell typified a stalwart, modern-day, career-bound superintendent who consistently controlled school affairs during his administration. More than merely surviving as a school executive, he built an educational empire by aligning himself with managerial elites and fellow career-bound superintendents. In our study of this first-generation progressive, we show how he won the right to dominate the affairs of schools, systematically applied a business ethos to his work, adopted antilabor practices to dash militant teachers' hopes for democratic control, and enlarged a state-sanctioned school bureaucracy to shield himself from public criticism in different institutional settings.

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http://aer.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/1/22

ground work to get ready for it. And the reason I'm not is because I took a leave of absence to go into war work. As I said, I had three brothers in service – that was World War I – and I had taken a leave of absence; and as soon as school closed, I was on my way east. And it was after that, in June of 1918, that we actually organized. But in that preparatory work, we tried to get petitions to present to the superintendent to change his mind; and I recall I was assigned to the Lowry Building, which at that time was occupied…

Lowry Medical Bldg 9

H Florence told you this?

M No, this was my own. This was in 1918. When E.C. Hartwell announced that, as of the following September, he was going to establish the merit system. I was one of those assigned to try to get the petition to persuade him to change his mind. And I was assigned the Lowry Building which at that time was occupied almost entirely by doctors and dentists and lawyers; and I went into every office in that building with my petition, and I got very few signatures. The attitude of all those men was that they hired secretaries, [for] example, and they expected their secretary to do what they told them to do. If the secretaries didn't like it, they could get out. Or, if they didn't like what the secretaries were doing, they would discharge them. And they felt it was the same way with teachers. We had no rights, as far as they were concerned, and that was quite an eye opener for us. And then, not that we sought it, but because it was offered to us, we found out that the local labor people were interested; and they were the ones who were willing to sign petitions and go to bat for us.

Well, anyway, I wanted a leave of absence in order to go into this war assignment which was in Washington, D.C., in the Adjutant General's office. I would have liked to have gotten overseas, but that I didn't manage. The only reason I think I would have liked to have gotten overseas was because I had a couple of brothers overseas. I felt that if they were over there, that maybe that's where the action was. But at any rate, there was

work that had to be done in Washington, but I had to get a leave of absence…So I went down to the Department of Education the next spring to see if I could arrange a leave of absence. If not, I would have to resign. But the superintendent, who was B.C. Hartwell, who was proposing the [merit] system, said, yes, he'd grant me the leave of absence. But he said, "I've decided that I'm going to leave St. Paul, Miss McGough. You would have been one of the first people to profit by a merit system." I said, "I know something about how those merit systems work, and I don't care to profit in that way." So that was my last conversation with Mr. Hartwell.

As I told you, I was in on the groundwork of getting the Federation established and that was in 1918. Then I left for Washington, D.C.

H Okay, that's what I would like you to do now; go through this period from the founding of it to your first National Convention and then we'll talk about the National Convention.

M Ah! The actual formation of the unit (St. Paul Federation) occurred after I left the city.

H The name Al Smith, does that mean anything to you?

M As I recall he was one of the city councilmen.

H Union man too. Even then the city federation was holding significant political position in St. Paul.

M That's right, from the very beginning. There was one thing that you will have to keep in mind though and this is true always. We were members both of the NEA and the AFT for many, many years. For myself, since I had talked throughout the state, you see, I had begun in March of 1903 and had come in here [to St. Paul] in January of 1915. I knew the situation throughout the state that many of these city people didn't have and I felt that they [non-urban teachers] needed things done for them too. I also felt that you couldn't very well build up a strong teacher group and policies favorable to teachers in a community if the surrounding state were very much below it in its set-up. It would be like building a dam that might at any time break, and you would not have the state people raised to the level of the city group which had managed to do certain things. Instead you would have the city groups

pulled down to state level and that's taking place now rather curiously, if you are watching how things are going on.

H Even on a regional basis.

M Yes, that's right. Well, at any rate, I worked very hard as I say in both groups and so did Florence Rood and Flora Smalley; and when we organized, Mabel Coulter became – I think Mabel… no,she was our second president. A Miss Sprenger was our first president. Well, before I got back in she was no longer president; Mabel Coulter had become our president. While I was in Washington the Spanish flu struck that city and, well, it was terrible really. So many people were being stricken almost overnight and of course I was down there with a group of strangers. I knew no one, and Washington was so crowded! You would go into a restaurant – that was where I had to get my meals. I had the fortune very promptly, through a women's group that was organized to help people who were coming in to do more work, in getting a room not too far from the Adjutant General's Headquarters; but I had to eat at restaurants. And it got so bad that when you went into a restaurant you would wade through napkins thrown on the floor and debris, you know, almost like wading through the leaves that are lying on the ground nowadays. They didn't have the help to keep up you see because help was being stricken too. I thought to myself, well if by chance I should get ill here nobody would be interested personally and I do know, or I have learned, they carry on this same type of work that I am doing in New York where I do have many relatives; and I applied for a transfer. So I asked for a transfer to New York and was granted it and I went up to New York City.

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Two aunts, sisters of my father there, and an uncle, my father's younger brother, who had been the foreman for my father at the time my father was in business there, invited me. His wife invited me to go over to his place in Brooklyn, so I went over there. The next morning before reporting for work I was helping this aunt-in-law to get breakfast out of the way and all of a sudden she sat down and said,

“I can't walk another step.”

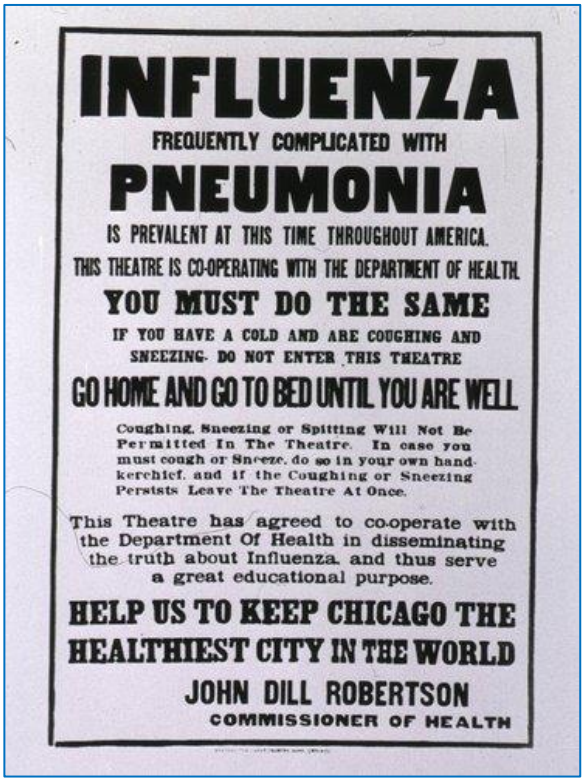
She had the Spanish flu. She was stricken that quickly! Well, I couldn't walk out on my uncle. There were twins there four months old, a five year-old boy, and an eight year-old girl and the mother, you see and you couldn’t get help. It just seemed about impossible so I telephoned [Rover?] and said I just had to stay here and hold on until somehow or other there is a possibility of release. So I did. I took care of this aunt, you see, took care of the children; kept them outdoors as much as possible, and so on; kept the twins in their baskets in the room with me.

As good fortune would have it, about a week later this practical nurse, a friend of my aunt-in-law’s who had been off on vacation, returned, came to call, found out what the situation was like, and she said to my uncle, ”I’ll go home and get my things together and I will be here tomorrow morning.” That was like a reprieve from a death sentence in a way. During that night my uncle heard the babies wailing and crying and he knew that was unusual so he came in to see what was the matter and I was thrown across the bed with the Spanish flu. That was in the fall of 1918 and I wasn't back in school until November, 1919, because – well – I was supposed to have almost passed out at that time.

I remember the local doctor, Dr. Schweitzer, telling me, “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” I had gone down to about seventy-four pounds. My mother had come East. And I remember I used to tease that doctor who was attending me to let me sit up. “I’m well now, let me sit up!” and he said, “As soon as your temperature is normal you may sit up.” So one day he took my hand. “Well,” he said, “it’s normal. You may sit up.” “How long?” “As long as you want.” I remember my mother putting stockings on; that’s the first time I’d had a look at my feet. I started laughing and she said, “What are you laughing about?” I said, “My legs are so skinny!” She started crying and said, “It doesn’t look funny to me.” Well, she got me out of bed and I sat in an arm chair there and after a time I said to them, “Well, I am kind of tired now. I guess I will go back to bed. I was up a long time, wasn't I?” She said, “Five minutes,” but it was a long time for me.

But it left an abscess in the lung and that was how I came to Dr. Schweitzer's attention, I was taken home on a stretcher, well, a wheel chair stretcher, that kind of thing, and we had a compartment on the train so I could lie down all the time. Finally this abscess was formed at the point where it had to be taken care of. I remember I went on the table. Of course, everybody around thought I was going to die when I was down with the flu in New York and I remember saying to the doctor one time, "I don't understand that other people get sick and then they get well and they can get up and back to work. I don't see why I have to be hanging around like this". And his answer was "Whenever anybody in my experience comes as close to dying as you did they finish the job and die." Well I didn't die. And then when Dr. Schweitzer examined me he told me he would like to try an operation; you see I was coughing up phlegm all the time and I would have to be supported. One of the brothers who was back from the war – well actually he was the one that didn't get overseas – he had been transferred to Columbia for officers training when the armistice was signed and so he got his discharge and helped my mother to take me West.

[Family input needed from Mary Ellen Sweeney or Leo: would this have been John? Pete and M.J. were both overseas; Ed must have been a little too young – or was he?]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11

And anyway I was taken to this doctor who considered Schweitzer so capable, and he said, "There is an operation that has been tried five times among the American forces in France for this kind of problem and one of the soldiers recovered, the other four didn't. Now", he said, "if I don't operate you'll live a few years, maybe two or three years more, but it will be living the way you have been living, according to yourself and your family."

I wasn't worried about my family but myself, of course. Somebody would have to come and prop me up, you know, so I could choke this phlegm up. "On the other hand", he said, "if you come through this you can be completely over all this trouble, and it is for you to choose." And I said "I'm going to take the operation.

So I went on the table for the operation…having once before been under an anesthetic for the removal of a gland here in my neck, I can remember that. And Jim (Robinson), you're a religious man and you know that I try to be a religious person so this certainly is not the way you'd think a person would be facing what might be death. I remember I did say, "Don't give me anesthetic; say a prayer for me sister, please." Then I looked around the room and I thought, "Well now, in what will seem just like a second this will be all over and if I see something like this I'm alive, if I don't, I'm dead." Well, I saw something like that when I opened my eyes.

H I was reading one of your speeches at one of the national conventions. I don't want to jump ahead that far but it just reminds me it's a perfect example of what you were discussing-this "red" issue-and you said you didn't know whether you were a wild-eyed radical or they call you a Communist but the one thing you were was a realist and that's exactly, I think, what this amounted to.

M Well, at any rate I finally got well enough so that I was back in school. As I recall that was November of 1919, something like that, and Mabel Coulter, who had been a teacher at Central High School, was president of the local at that time. There were two things that the Federation had in mind. One was a salary schedule, a regular schedule to be established and she did get the City Council – you see we were under the commission form of government at that time, and we had a Commissioner of Education, not a School Board-she did get the City Council to agree to a schedule. You know, within this past year I received an old copy of The Daily News, and it was Hansel – what's his first name? – for Mayor.

1916 St. Paul City Council[12]

JR (Jim Robinson)

Albert Hansel?

M Yeh, we have a nickname for him.

JR "Cody" Hansel?"

M Should remember it because he taught shop in my building for some years. Cody sent it to me and the reason he sent it to me was because there was a little paragraph in it (I have it at home), a little paragraph which speaks of Miss Mabel Coulter, the president of the Federation, appearing before the City Council to protest the fact that what they seemed to be instituting was not what the Federation felt it had negotiated: while the City Council was adhering to the minimums and maximums established it was not setting up the steps in between in regular order…That's in that old Daily News.

H They had negotiated this kind of agreement with the City Council?

M That's right.

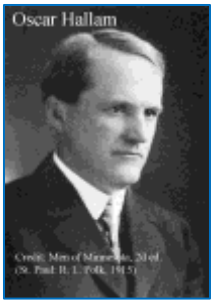
H I have known teachers that have gotten fired as recently as the 1950's for even presuming to try to negotiate with the Board. You were a pretty advanced group.

M Yes! That salary was to go into effect January 1, 1920. You see I came back at the tail end of 1919 but I do have this little excerpt from the old Daily News. That's really Cody's newspaper. While the Council was adhering to the minimums and maximum, the regular steps in between were not as they understood.

H You were back by then. Do you remember anything about that incident? The negotiation process?

M Well, I wasn't (a negotiator) at that time. I was considered a good follower and I was being used in another field, not in the negotiating field. I'll speak about that other field right now: the second objective: there were two objectives the women had set themselves. One was a regular salary schedule and the other (was) teacher's tenure. I don't know why, I had somehow or other through my reading acquired some knowledge about tenure laws that had been established in one or two states. I remember we had mass meetings at some one of the buildings

downtown and Florence Rood presided over these meetings, and all of us were invited to give ideas as to what we felt should be kept in mind in regard to tenure laws, you see. The outcome was that we introduced the first tenure bill in the Legislature of l921, and I was secretary of the committee that worked for the introduction of that bill. The chairman was Peter McMillan, now deceased, of the Men's Federation which had been established – that was Local 43, I believe – had been established maybe five or six months after the Women's Federation had been, when I was East, you see, not in the area.



Judge Hallam 13

Well, Peter McMillan was the chairman of the committee that worked out the details of the tenure law we were going to introduce and I was secretary of the committee. We decided that since, in the eyes of many people we were very radical in our point of view, that we would get a good conservative lawyer to draft the bill for us, of course telling him what we wanted in it.

So we hired Judge Hallam. He had been a member of the state Supreme Court; he may have been Chief Justice, I am not sure of that. We elect our members here, but he had not lost through, as I recall at least, a defeat. He had just decided to retire to private practice. So we hired [the] Judge to "legalize" the legal phrasing we had [written] in this tenure law, and then he coached us on trying to lobby that bill through the Legislature in 1921. Now one interesting thing about that law – this is something I think teachers throughout the state of both the N.E.A. and the M.F.T. forget nowadays – was that it was a statewide tenure law, not for cities of first class as we have now but a statewide tenure law that we introduced.

H Mandatory or local option?

M Mandatory. We wanted it passed through the legislature. Mandatory! And the people who lobbied hardest against us were teachers from out of state, and we were amazed. But they explained: we had no probationary period in our law, and frankly I don't believe in probationary periods even today. I did end my career in the city with, well, seventeen years I think it was as a principal. I really feel that there is no sense in the probationary period; if you are giving the person the help you should give, you can sense in that first year, really, whether this was a person that was going to grow.

H That would be a one year probationary period.

M No, no! They would be under tenure, if I had my way, from the very beginning. That's my belief. I don't know how many people would agree with me, but I feel that if a teacher is new in the profession you are going to give this person all the assistance you can and the other people in the building are going to give assistance too and if this person is really not well-qualified, you point out, "actually you need more training," or "you should change your profession," or, you prefer charges under the tenure law and you can substantiate your charges, and then that person is out as far as your city is concerned.

H What was wrong up state with these teachers?

M What they said was – and we could see their point of view – they said, "You'll never get this through without a probationary period. Maybe one, two or three years; we don't know what will be the probation time limit of our service in any community because no school board will ever let a teacher get on permanent tenure. And some of us have established ourselves in the community, we have bought homes there, we have put down roots; we would like to stay. But actually we would have to be on the move." That was their analysis of it.

H Do you think that was a just fear? Or reasonable?

M It was a real fear on their part; whether or not it would have so developed I do not know. No it was real; they weren't just making something out of thin air.

H Did they work that out?

M And really in this last year or two, under this Meet and Confer Law, when you consider what's been happening between school boards and teachers, you can sense the fact that there is a division between most, if not all, local school boards and their teachers that is not really what you would call understanding and sympathetic. So probably their fears were justified. We made an agreement with those teachers. We said, "Very well then, we will reintroduce this bill in the next legislative session" – that was 1923 – "and we'll introduce it for the cities of the first class only and will promise you that we will not introduce any bills into the legislature that would affect you teachers in the state unless you want them. But if you introduce something on your behalf at any time, we'll give you all the support that we can bring to you."

H Were you communicating to these teachers through the MEA?

M No, we communicated with them right there in person as they lobbied; we got their point of view. We made them that promise, that agreement. I don't think many of these present-day teachers realize that fact because, I know I got the Pennall Award a few years ago, didn't I?

JR Right.

M The year before [that], Pennall himself was guest of honor. Well, at that particular dinner, it happened that Tish [Lettisha Henderson] and I were busy about things – being busy bodies – and when we entered, the tables were quite well filled and so as not to disturb things, we sat down at the nearest table with two places vacant; and here we were seated with a group of men who came from the northern part of the state. And boy did they start riding us! We were so selfish; the people in the cities took care of ourselves so well and we had no concern at all for the people out in the state. I said to them a little about this. I don't know whether or not they believed me. Then they quoted Harvey Otterson [Oddison?]. Well, Harvey Oddison [?] had been up there and he had told them that, after all, they would have to do things for themselves. I said, "Well wait a minute, Harvey Oddison is right here and he is going to make that statement before us!" And I went over to the table where he was – I am an actress, you see – "Come over, Harvey, for a few minutes." So I brought him over, then I said to him, "This gentleman right here said that you were at International Falls lately and that. . ." "Oh! No. No," he said hastily. "He must have misunderstood me!" I said, "If Harvey or anybody else wants to dig back in history, they will find…" and then I repeated myself.

meet and confer

A requirement of some courts that before certain types of motions or petitions are heard by the judge, the lawyers (and sometimes their clients) must meet (usually, in person or on the phone) to try to resolve the matter. This can resolve many problems and limit the amount of court time needed to resolve disagreements.

http://www.nolo.com/dictionary/meet-and-confer-term.html

H I am curious: the upstate teachers were down here lobbying?

M Out-of-city teachers.

H Out-of-city teachers; were their school boards releasing them or did they have an organization they were working through?

M Well, they belonged to the MEA…Of course the MEA was in favor of the tenure law…

H Were they superintendents, principals?

M No, these were classroom teachers. It may have been that they were not too far out in the state so they could drive in, and of course on Saturdays you can always do a lot of lobbying. I want to tell you that while we were working on the Tenure Law, to trim it for cities of the first class, we always held meetings in Minneapolis because it was a nearer point for the teachers of Duluth. Every Saturday morning and all through that year of '22 before this 1922 session [of the legislature] a couple of carloads of teachers would drive down and meet with St. Paul and Minneapolis teachers over in Minneapolis while we went over these various points and the techniques we could use, and so forth and so on.

Mary McGough was an original member of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers (1918) and had started teaching in St. Paul in 1903; at the time of the strike, she was nearly 60 years old. In the 1930s, Miss McGough had been a vice president for the American Federation of Teachers. She was a strong, articulate woman who interviewed well and during the strike participated regularly in radio broadcasts which were a major contribution to efforts to settle the strike.

One veteran of the strike noted that McGough could "cut politicians to threads" and do it in a very ladylike fashion.

Lettisha Henderson was the strike committee chair and at the time of the strike, a vice president for the American Federation of Teachers. A "tell it like it is" leader, Lettisha worked long and hard to improve working conditions for teachers. She was unconventional: Henderson was a chain smoker in a day when women didn't smoke. She did not wear hats at a time when women were supposed to wear hats.

Together, McGough and Henderson were an effective team…"Lettisha made the snowballs and Mary threw them."

http://www.workdayminnesota.org/index.php?news_6_3019__print

So in the same way these people could come down and probably, just as we were busy lobbying – you don't stop lobbying on Friday, you lobby 'em Saturday too – they could very well have done that kind of thing. I don't recall that we asked them where they were [in their support of the law?], but I do recall that because of them we were defeated and also that we made this gentlemen's' agreement about hereafter letting them introduce what they wanted and then our throwing them support.

H Did that end the tenure drive?

M That was our first defeat. So then we entered our bill in the '23 session and I'm not sure that was when we got Mrs. Ladd to support us. She was Republican. It was good politics to get a Republican, you see, for us and she was accustomed to legislatures. Her father had been a governor of Rhode Island. Her maiden name had been Gregory, although I am not sure of that now. Tish (Henderson) would remember that, although Tish didn't come in [to the cities or to the movement?] until the 1930's, and we had tenure before that. And she [Mrs. Ladd] had been, if I recall correctly, a national committee woman you know, Republican committee woman, so she knew politics. Well we hired her as a lobbyist, I think, for that '23 session, but we hired her rather late, and while she did manage to make some contacts for us, they were not strong enough. So we were defeated in '23.

H You are hiring these people out of your Dues Fund of your Local or were you taking voluntary collections?

M It may be voluntary collections; that I don't recall. We were using MEA money too.

H Using the MEA money as well.

M Then that left the session of 1925. Well, you see, she [Mrs. Ladd] worked with the conservatives in the legislature. We don't use the terms. We don't use political party names in our legislature although everybody knows the conservatives are Republican and the liberals are Democratic Farmer Laborites, but nobody uses the terms, nor are they used in local government, although again everybody knows the affiliation. We are like the proverbial ostrich in that respect – just stick our heads down in the sand and we don't see what plotting a thing may be. Well, she would work with the Conservatives – and believe me she had her contacts

there – while we would vote with the so-called "liberals" in the Legislature. Well in '25, we got it through the House and it had not come up in the Senate and we were down to the last week of the Session – you know, the time when they begin covering the clock-and we had the majority of those senators pledged to vote for it in that last week. I'm not sure, since I decided to drop the legislative work except on committee, if their techniques are the same [now], but in that last week, if there were a certain number of objectors who would object to a particular bill being brought up as being too argumentative and therefore using up time that could be spent on things that were less argumentative, then that bill would not be called up. What they would do: the presiding officer, the lieutenant governor, would have the roll called alphabetically and senator after senator got up and called for our bill. They had set up that if there were five objectors, then the bill would not be discussed. So each time these men would call for that bill, the same five men would rise to their feet and object. Of course the session ended and our bill did not pass. We said the only thing that we accomplished is that we kept those five men glued to their seats all through that week. They didn't dare leave lest the bill would come up for a vote while even one of them might be outside.

Oh yes, you might be interested to know, too, that under Mrs. Ladd's tutelage, we established a practice which I think we still carry on, Jim [Robinson]; at least we did the last time I was doing [legislative work]. After the work, we would have lunches or dinners at which we would entertain the legislators and explain to them the things in which we were interested, and have regular give-and-take sessions like this, talking back and forth and so on. And we felt that perhaps that gained us some friends. And then beside that, in this trying week, (we got a name for this) we set up – not down in the rotunda but up in the balcony, because that's where the senate chamber was, you see, and the house chamber (we were through the House already so we weren't worrying about that) – tables with coffee and doughnuts so that any time a man needed a little refreshment, he could come out and have some coffee and doughnuts. We had a committee then; so it seems that the legislators had a joke among themselves that the Federation of Teachers was the only group that lobbied with coffee and doughnuts. You could read between the lines of that! I'm a lobbyist so I imagine they [lobbyists for other groups] were more concrete in their offerings; but at any rate, we were the coffee and doughnut crowd.

Well we didn't get it through ’25, so we just got busy. Mrs. Ladd traveled throughout the state; some of these people owed her favors. We reintroduced the bill in 1927 and actually the bill wasn't changed during the years except from that first one on a statewide basis.

H You included now a probationary period?

M Yes, and to that we had to yield – three years.

H In that period, from about 1920 on, the unions, especially teachers’ unions, were coming under very heavy attack. That's a very great dying period for the AFT.

M That’s right

H How was it here in St. Paul?

M Oh, we grew.

H You grew? When the rest of them were [dying]? This may have been a side effect of your lobbying techniques.

M Probably was, probably was. Of course the men, you see, were working with us – men and women – for the student increment. In that time, and for some years before that time, we had set up what we called a joint council, and the men always liked to meet. We – the women – were the only ones who maintained a headquarters. The men were free to use it for their monthly meetings, but they always liked to go to some cafeteria and have a real stag fest, you know. But we set up a joint council, the two boards, the men's board and the woman's board, which would meet once a month – sometimes oftener – so that on all policies that affected all groups, we would present a united front.

H What percentage of the teachers do you think you had organized in that period? Did you have half of them?

M Oh, I imagine we had much more. At any rate, in the session of 1927 we got the bill through. That time we started so early that it was signed and through long before the session was about half over. So that was the legislative session (when the bill was passed) and our legislature meets in January, I believe it is, and runs about three months and returns in April – something like that. So that year the Federation – the women’s Federation – decided to send me to the AFT

convention, which met in Chicago at that time, regularly, so that I could report to them the details of the fight for tenure because, of the people [fighting for tenure laws] we were not the first [but] among the first [to succeed in passing a tenure law]. Oh, and in the meantime some of these states where they had had some tenure laws, they were repealed – and me coming in with a new tenure law!

H How significant was the general labor movement in your passage of tenure there? Did they do service for you?

M Yes, they did. They did us our biggest service, I think, when we were on strike, because we had the first organized teachers' strike, you know. That was many years later [1946].

After World War II, AFT played a historic role in the passage of the G.I. Bill. Under the bill, as first presented to Congress in 1944, men over 25 did not qualify for all benefits.

AFT's legislative director, Selma Borchardt, helped to mobilize organized labor to re-write and push for passage of the boldly inclusive G.I. Bill that changed the landscape of higher education and the American middle class forever.

http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/higher_ed/History.pdf

H This was mainly a teachers' effort itself for passage of the tenure law?

M Oh yes. The labor men were always ready to work with us. All we had to indicate was what we were thinking about and, on teachers' policies, they figured we were the persons who knew; therefore they would aid and abet in any way that we indicated they could help us.

H Were you on the city's Central Labor Council?

M I probably was. I don't know when I first became a delegate to the Labor Council, but I was a delegate for many years. I just lost track. I don't know where there would be records of that either, but I functioned there for many, many years. I was always, as I would say, the mouthpiece of the teachers.

H Did you concern yourself mostly with educational issues with the Labor Council?

M That's right, although we were interested in other things that would concern them, in which we believe.

H There was a big issue that agitated teachers I know in Chicago and New York, and that was to do with the peace movement, the ROTC movement on campuses, the substitution of ROTC training for physical education. I believe Margaret Haley became quite put out with Stillman when he supported the AFL-Woodrow Wilson involvement in the war. Did that peace issue come up in St. Paul at all?

M No, not at all.

H Well, it was almost said that one of the reasons Chicago didn't come back into the AFT [was] because she [Margaret Haley?] felt betrayed because Stillman supported Wilson.

M That wasn't the way that we understood it at the time. We understood it that they felt they had a sufficiently good thing for their purposes going in Chicago that they didn't need the AFT.

H Well, you see, they were forced out when they fired about 70 or 80 teachers under the old "low blue" [possible misprint in transcript? Meaning of "low blue" not clear to this editor], and she [Margaret Haley?] withdrew from the AFT through an agreement, and the Chicago City Central group agreed that they would pull out and would re-employ the teachers and then, they assumed, she would come back in at a later date. But you are right, she was [the] labor movement.

M Well, at any rate, I went down to Chicago in 1927 for their AFT convention; that was the first one I attended, and I met such interesting people as Abe Lefkowitz of New York City. Later he became principal. I don't know whether he dropped out or what.

And Selma Borchardt from Washington, D.C. who was always, I thought, the best informed person on national politics that I ever met. She was uncanny!

In the later years of her attendance at AFT conventions, I sensed that there was a build-up against her taking place among some of the leaders; and I used to say to Lettisha, "You'll have to see that Selma makes her legislative report before the votes take place on members of the council," because once she made that legislative report, she just had that convention in the palm of her hand. Of course, you couldn't listen to her without knowing here was a woman who really knew what she was talking about, and she wasn't defeated until Carl Megel became

president of the federation. Now Carl Megel is in Washington as legislative representative, the result of a bargain he made. I have always been on reasonably good terms with Carl. But it is a fact that one year we were down there he and Selma on the program after the voting would take place – and I said to Lettisha, "We have to get Selma moved up before that voting. If we don't she is going to get defeated."

You see, when I go to conventions…people talk to me – surprisingly, a lot of people, it doesn't make any difference what their point of view is, they talk to me – and I get quite a gallery of information, cross-country-wise. And I said [to Lettisha?] "From what I've picked up, Selma goes down this time unless she has a chance to make that report." Carl Megel wouldn't be moved, and I said to Lettisha, "I haven't been able to corral Selma as yet, but if you do get her on the fly, you tell her either to withdraw her name – not let herself be nominated – or get herself moved up there. We'll try to get her moved up because if she isn't moved up, she is going to get defeated." Well then Selma telephoned, and afterwards came to me, talked with me, and she said, "Mary, I talked with some of those Chicago delegates and they said they support me." I said, "Individual people in Chicago support you, but the bulk of the votes from Chicago will not support you. And the only thing we'll get from Selma will be your legislative report."

But we couldn't hold Megel and she was defeated that particular year. I hated to see her defeated because she had been in the federation movement before I had been, you see. She was an active member of the federation movement when I went to that convention in 1927. Another interesting person I met there was Paul Douglas, who afterward became Senator, as I recall, from Illinois.

H Was he a member of the AFT and a delegate to the national convention?

M Well, he was there, that's all I know. Because I remember (laugh) he raised his eyebrows. I can see it yet. I was asked, of course, to make a report. We were a small group at the time; we always had a session in – let's see what we called it – "experience session" when different locals would give experiences that they thought might have value to other groups. And that was when I was asked to talk on this tenure bill. So I talked about our struggle, as I've talked to you here, and I recall that Paul Douglas was sitting in the front row, just to my left here, and I

have been trained as a public speaker so I do know how to make an audience know that I am conscious of all their reactions. That's important, you know, whether you really are conscious or not. But I said we decided finally that we had to take …. [Tape stops here; presumably this anecdote was finished while the tape was being changed.]

M There was, as I recall – I mean on the national level – a Miss Parker.

H Barker.

M Parker, Barker – one of the two.

H From Atlanta, Georgia.

M Atlanta, Georgia.

H Mary Barker.

M Mary Barker, that's right!

H She's another one of those amazing women.

M She was. And I think, oh for five or six years there, she was president.

H I guess Atlanta had an experience not unlike St. Paul in that they worked closely with the labor council [and] they were organized quite successfully before the organization of the American Federation of Teachers. Did you know A.J. Muste?

M Met him, a number of times.

H There was quite a flap for a while over workers' education and Brookwood wasn't there? What was involved in that?

M I don't recall, but ultimately, I believe that group fell out as one of the locals.

H They fell out with the national, the A.F. of L., I guess, then they fell out of the AFT. What kind of guy was Lefkowitz?

"The bane of the teaching profession is the unthinking and unquestioned obedience to the authority of official supervisors," stated Abraham Lefkowitz, a New York City teacher in 1920. Lefkowitz explained that autocratic domination by supervisors had to be eradicated in order for teachers to achieve their goals of professional autonomy.

"Our schools breed servants and autocrats but not democrats; followers, but not leaders; improvers, not inventors, imitators, not inventors; men flattened by the gratification of desire and not those consumed by the fire of great ideas; spineless followers, not fearless and independent thinkers…Freedom from molestation from superiors," charged Lefkowitz, is an ideal that every organization should work to accomplish.

http://books.google.com

M I admired him very much. I think he was an extremely well-informed person, an excellent parliamentarian, too, and…but there developed – and we all sensed it – an attitude…frankly, I would call it envy on the part of the Chicago men towards Mr. Lefkowitz as time went on. And also, as time went on – this was leading up to 1935 – he was bringing in resolutions from New York that were extremely far out towards the left. And, of course, they were jumping all over him because of them.

H What were the issues?

M No. Those I do not remember.

H Those were your early days in the national organization.

M That's right. Although from 1927 through to a year ago [1969] in New Orleans, I tried to get Dave Seldon to accept the fact that I missed two (but when I thought it over afterwards, I really only missed one) convention in that time and that was in '51 when I was in Europe. But all the rest…I thought I'd missed one because of illness, but then I remembered that I contracted…it was a gastric ulcer – that had the Rochester Mayo Clinic doctors worried, and they had me stay out of school that '51-'52 school year when I came back from Europe. I told them – they just as soon I wouldn't go back – I had one year left under what was our retirement law then.

The age limit is a little higher now than it was then. I did not want to go out on sick leave. And if [I could] get somebody to stay with my mother who was in a

wheel chair at that time, I would go to the national convention. And I did go to that national convention with my one week off from taking care of my mother, and then went to the opening of school.

H But going back to these resolutions: they seemed to be getting more and more towards the left all the time.

M Oh yes, another interesting person I met there [at the national convention] was Henry Linville who was, for a while, president of the New York teachers' Local – let's see, they called it five?

H Five, right! Two, now, I think.

M Two now. I believe it was Local Five then, at that time.

H The AFT works through caucus groups, or at least in all the conventions that I've been to. Did they operate in that way in those days?

M No. We always operated like a committee of the whole. The caucuses came about because of the infiltration or the takeover by the Communists. In 1935, we met in Cleveland for our convention. We had begun by that time to get away from Chicago, you know; we tried to get the convention out to different areas. And we had elected the previous year a young man from…

H Cleveland, wasn't it? Lowry?

M No. It was Lowry, but he was not a Cleveland man.

H Toledo.

M Toledo! Toledo, Ohio. We had elected Lowry.

H Selma Borchardt almost resigned over that, as I recall.

M Yeah – because he was a very conservative person.

H Lowry was conservative?

M Yes, very conservative compared to the rest of us. But he was elected in 1934, then we went to Cleveland in 1935. Well, I guess he did preside at that meeting, but he didn't show up in 1936.

H How could you recognize a conservative? What would he be doing in 1935 that you would say he was a conservative? It's pretty hard to…

M Yes, I suppose it would be in relation to the resolutions that might be introduced.

H You wouldn't happen to remember any of the issues.

M No. But I remember that in Cleveland in 1935, the New York City executive board of Local Five came to the convention with an unusual request. It asked to be permitted to surrender its charter. It said that these resolutions that they had been bringing in, and that had irked delegates over a period of several years, were the work of Communist infiltration in their local; that what was happening through filibuster tactics-their meetings would be dragged on until members would get tired, and finally some members would leave. And finally, they said that Communists would be accepting things in their local meeting. And then they would pass the resolution with instructions which were taken to the Federal…But they always, however, wanted an executive council, a group that was not communist. They wanted a good front. This is what we were told, by Abe Lefkowitz, I think, and by different New York people then, when we met in Cleveland. They said that this executive board of theirs had been nominated the preceding year, or during that preceding school year, as the Executive Board of Local Five; but they had refused to run because of these experiences, unless the Local would submit, first of all, to investigation by a committee set up by the AF of T., which would come over and investigate things; and if that were not successful, then, secondly, to this lawful surrender of charter at the Cleveland convention. The investigators were: the executive secretary of the AFT. She was a woman; I don't recall her name.

H Florence Hanson.

M That's right, Florence Hanson. I can see her so plainly.

H I want you to tell me a little about Florence in a few minutes.

M Yes, and Selma Borchardt, and the third one I don't recall; but at any rate there were three. And Selma – oh, Florence Hanson – was not willing to have…well, she was noncommittal in the matter, according to the report we got at Cleveland.

H In the power structure, she [Florence] practically ran the union, didn't she?

M That's right. And she was not going to be put in the position of taking sides. Then, in Selma's case, when she would interrogate, any questions addressed to those who were considered communist, they would answer. But any time she would direct a question to the other group, they would begin booing, and so on; and she reported at this Cleveland convention, as the situation developed there, that she asked them, didn't they believe in fair play? That they were not interrupted when they were testifying, and that they should let these people… but they hooted on her and said she had a bourgeois code of ethics. That was the report we got out of Cleveland. So the executive council then-succeeding in getting some of its members to hang on at meetings long enough to get a resolution passed to have, oh, something they wanted presented to their city council or their school board, or what they had there – found themselves opposed at their meeting with the school board or the city council, whichever it was, by the Communists who booed and hooted and so forth and so on, so that they felt this was the last straw and that they must go on with their other proposition. And so Abe Lefkowitz, who acted as spokesman for the group, presented their case and said…

H Which group now? The conservative group in the New York local, who were asking for their charter to be removed?

M If you can call it conservative.

H But you think that he was pretty far to the left but not as far as the Communists?

M Well, I think he was a liberal. I thought that he was very much of my own persuasion of thinking. And I don't consider that I was ever a Communist or anything of that sort, although when we got into the fight, every member of my poor family was worried because the fight was reproduced here in the state, and they were trying to label me as a Communist, which is part of a character assassination.

You do whatever you can do to break down…

H The reason I asked a few moments ago was that Abe had been moving to the left in some of his resolutions.

M He had been bringing in resolutions that were moving to the left…

H Not of his…

M because of the Communist filibustering and hanging on until the meeting was in their control, and then the resolutions were passed.

And so he explained at Cleveland. These resolutions that you haven't liked, he explained how they had happened. "Now," he said, "we know now who they are and, as a matter of fact, under the charter of our constitution, we can have a referendum vote for the expulsion of members who are found to be undesirable; and having publicized this situation, we held a referendum vote."

New York Local 5 at that time had a membership, as I recall, of about 5,000. And they had to get a two thirds vote for expulsion of a member and they failed by, I think, eight votes. Isn't that heartbreaking? So they said there was nothing for them to do but to come to the national. "Now," they said, "you know who they are. We'll surrender our charter to you if you will accept it and then re-issue it to us. We will reorganize and we will kick out these people we have identified, and then we can start with the type of organization that the AF of T accepts and wants."

Well, as I say, there had been great rivalry that had developed between the Chicago men and Abe. I always thought the fact that he was envied was because he was a very fluent speaker, a persuasive speaker. He was, I believe, trained in law, a good parliamentarian.

H Do you remember the names of some of those Chicago men?

M Yes. Now Stillman was not so active at that time.

H No, he was getting pretty old.

M Now, let me see…

H Meade?

M Yeah! Jimmy Meade. It was Jimmy Meade – very much one of the opponents. And there was another one that headed up the Chicago men.

H Freeland Stecker was pretty old, too. He was backing out by that time, wasn't he?

M Stecker. No, I don't think he was the one. I think he was fading out of the picture, too, into the background. Well, at any rate, the curious thing was that Chicago, at one time, had about four organizations that were all affiliated somehow or another with the labor movement, either on the local or national level. There was a men's group, a high school women's group, grade school women's group and a secretarial group, as I recall. And the Chicago grade school women always tied themselves in with the Chicago men's group; so when the Chicago men's group took their stand, the Chicago grade school women took their stand.

H No, not in the days of Margaret Haley. Margaret didn't tie herself in with any man or group.

M No, no, that's right; her days were over at that time. It took some time for those Chicago women to really accept some of the rest of us. The rivalry ended eventually, and I became their heroine of the hour, so to speak. But at any rate, we had a vote on this question of lifting the charter of the New York…no, it was first suggested that now, after this debate had gone back and forth, the New York people asking for it ,and there was a large delegation from New York of the Commie group. In fact, as we registered, there must have been about 50 there and the hotel people were wild. They were sleeping in the lobby, etc.; they didn't have any reservations, and they kept pace with the delegates as they walked along. I think Linville was president of the New York local at the time, and they would keep pace and tell us this was just a power struggle: that Dr. Linville wanted to keep the presidency, and so forth and so on and so on. We all had our ears almost buzzed off as we went along on this line for registering. (But anyway, I think I can stand another cup of coffee. My mother would say, "My whistle is getting dry.")

H Your voice is getting better, though. [laugh]

Diaphragmatic Breathing

1. *On inhalation the dome of the diaphragm presses down against the abdominal organs.*
2. *The abdominal wall is relatively taut.*
3. *The intercostal muscles maintain the shape and integrity of the chest wall.*
4. *The rib cage is flared at its base by the attachment of the diaphragm.*
5. *The mental state is clear and attentive.*

http://www.the-intuitive-self.org/scripts/frameit/author.cgi?/website/author/memoir/supplements/ways_breathing.html

M Is it? I'm probably using more diaphragmatic action. When I talk publicly, I mean to large groups – and I still do – I separate those chords more because, in order to make myself heard, I use the diaphragm more. Whereas, talking to small groups, I …tend to use the chest, so to speak.

H Are you getting tired?

M No, I'm not. You know I have extraordinary reserves when it comes right down to it.

H You certainly do.

M Well, as I said, I picked my ancestors well.

H My mother did me wrong. She said you can pick your friends but not your relations…

M We must be long-lived. I think my father died young but his sisters lived into the nineties. He had three sisters: 91, 92 and 93, and those were good ages to which to live, and functioning all the time, believe me, too. And on the other side of the family, on my mother's side, too, they seemed to be long lived. She was three months past her 93rd birthday when she died, and her mind functioning right up to the last minute, so that she just went to sleep permanently. So there is longevity, whether or not it applies to me. Well, it's done quite well by me anyway.

But coming back to Cleveland, it was decided finally that they would now limit the vote to three speakers on each side: people opposed to lifting the charter choose their three people and the New York people choose their three. And I felt highly complimented when they chose me as one of their three speakers, which they did. Abe was one, I was one, and I think Selma was the third, as I recall. Of course she had participated in the preliminary investigation. So we made our pitch, but the motion to accept – surrender the charter – lost.

H Was John Dewey there?

M No.

H He headed the committee at that time, didn't he? There was a Dewey Committee that investigated that group. Was Dewey the third member of that committee that we couldn't remember?

M In New York?

H Yes.

M That could be. All I'm sure of are Florence Hanson and Selma. Could have been Dewey. I don't know. I may have heard, but I don't know.

H The New York group…

M Well, I think the minutes ought to show…some of these confrontations…won't make very much difference.

H No, but it helps when you're paid to endure. (laugh)

M Well yes. That way I guess it does help. But I want you to know – I don't want you to make any mistakes – I'm very strongly for minority groups. I don't care whether they're black, brown, red, yellow, or what they are, I just cannot see this rejection of people because they happen not to be of my own complexion. I just can't see anything in it at all.

Well, at any rate, the vote went against us – went on in an intermission period, like a lunchtime or something…The New York people had made it clear that if their charter wasn't lifted, then they would withdraw entirely from the federation because they said that (they used the name "union" instead of the name "federation", although now they use the term "United Federation of Teachers" in New York) they said that in New York so much ill feeling had developed among the populace connected with the name of the teacher's union. (They said) that, in self-protection, they would have to withdraw. And they did. And none of their people returned until after we expelled a group of locals from the federation. Well about 80 of us, in that convention in Cleveland, got together in a caucus; and that was, as far as I know, the first caucus, and we met just to consider what we might do. And we decided – I think there were about 80 of us – we would withdraw from that convention, not from the AF of T. I know, when we got back home, we were anxiously asked by our membership here, "Not from the Federation?", and we said, "No, just from that particular convention." We didn't return to that

convention, and we called our caucus the Progressive Caucus. That was the first caucus established and [it] was established, admittedly, for the purpose of combating the takeover that occurred in New York and might be occurring in other places. The curious thing was that the Chicago men, who in my opinion were among the conservative people we had in the federation, didn't join with us, you see. And I think…

In 1939, a *Saturday Evening Post* article alleged (Jerome) Davis was a communist, leading to Davis suing for a retraction. The lawsuit was finally settled in 1943 and was an impetus for Davis' book *Character Assassination*…Years later, AFT President Carl J. Megel would make the same claim in an unpublished history of the organization while former AFT President Henry Linville would refer to him as a "fellow traveler."

http://books.google.com

H They supported not suspending the charter.

M That's right.

H How do you explain that?

M Well as I said before, I think to a large extent there was a good deal of envy of Abe Lefkowitz and his powers. I would hate to think that it was ethnic. Abe was Jewish; I would hate to think it was that, but I don't know…

H Who was the radical group? Wasn't the communist group…the Jewish group, or what were they?

M Well, they couldn't all have been Jewish because one of them in Local 444-I believe it was the college local – was Bella Dodd, Italian.

H And another one was Henderson, and that sounds awful Irish to me.

M And [C.J.] Hendley became president of their new local there. He was Socialist. We had some Socialists in our group. And the funny part of it was that in the succeeding AFT conventions, the Socialists would get together and have a little breakfast or something. And it used to amuse me because here we are fighting Hendley and his group, you see, and striving by whatever means would present themselves of getting them out of the Federation, and we have a couple of our own stalwarts; but they seem to be a different type of Socialist. Exactly what was the difference I've never been able to figure out. Well, at any rate, we started the Progressive Caucus. The next year we went to Philadelphia.

H Was that the year Jerome Davis was elected president?

M Yes, it must have been.

H He was not your candidate.

M I should say not! I would never say he was Communist empowered. I don't think so. He was in the Divinity School at Yale University. But they were the ones [the communists?] who kept involved. As I said before, they always liked a front, you see. And in a sense, I think, he was their victim; but they certainly got him. I remember [it] written up – I believe it was in the *Saturday Evening Post* – (as) "*The Little Red Schoolhouse*", or something like that, some very uncomplimentary remark.

H They fired him at Yale.

M Oh, did they?

H And then the union saved his job, I believe.

M Well, at any rate, we went to Philadelphia in '36. I had some very good friends in Philadelphia. I liked them tremendously, but I always told them, when I lived through that Philadelphia convention, I could live through anything so far as emotions, mentality, nerves were concerned.

H Mary, we've been going a long time now. What would you think about having supper and picking it up afterwards at the Philadelphia convention? Or do you want to go on?

M Whichever you please.

Character Assassination. By JEROME DAVIS. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950. Pp. xix+259. $3.00.

Character Assassination is a book written so graphically that one doesn't put it down until it is finished. More important, however, is the significant contribution it makes to our understanding of the severely damaging effects of smear phenomena. The impressionistic style in which Davis writes perhaps also contributes to the value of the material, since it reveals the severe personal and psychological destruction reaped by individuals who are subjected to "the label."

Particularly enlightening is a chapter in which Mr. Davis describes his own experience with the *Saturday Evening Post*, where, in the eyes of his colleagues, he was a Communist because he refused to be a perpetual anti-Communist. The book provides an excellent depiction of the much too common dilemma forced upon individuals who are damned by the group because they refuse to be categorized along type lines.

In discussing the sociological and political implications of defamation, Davis makes the assumption that the modern Communist plays the same role in society as the early Christian; i.e., he is an individual who calls attention to the ills of his own society. The implied conclusion is of course that "red-baiting" and smear become effective tools for impeding social criticism and social improvement.

http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.metrostate.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=jerome+davis+character+assassination&gw=jtx&prq=jerome+davis+character&hp=25&wc=on

DAVIS, JEROME. *Character Assassination.* New York: Philosophical Library, 1950. xix+259 pp.

Thoughtful Americans will profit from reading this shrewd analysis of the witch-hunting phenomenon which afflicts "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Mr. Davis, former Yale University professor and president of the American Federation of Teachers for three years, reminds his readers of the American ideal of freedom, and then shows how, in the history of America, prejudice, hysteria, and murder have gotten in the way of the expression of this ideal. Our presidents from George Washington to Franklin Roosevelt have been subjected to character assassination by persons who did not like them or with whose vested interests they interfered.

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The phenomenon of character assassination is considered in successive, informative chapters on "Anti-Semitism," "Ammunition against the Negro," "Hitting Labor below the Belt," "The Struggle for the Mind of America," and "The Corrosion of Politics and Education."

In an introduction entitled "What Price Freedom?" Robert Maynard Hutchins, chancellor of the University of Chicago, says: "We hear on every side that the American Way of Life is in danger. I think it is. I also think that many of those who talk the loudest about the dangers to the American Way of Life have no idea what it is and consequently no idea what the dangers are that it is in" (page xiii).

Mr. Davis tells us about these dangers in a fearless analysis of the pathology of bigotry. He tells also what each citizen can do to combat the sinister threats to liberty and justice.

MARY BRADBURY

H Dennis?...Okay, we'll go on. Good!

M Since we started on it. At the Philadelphia convention, the president didn't show up at all. That was Lowry, I believe. He had been re-elected and he was supposed to show up. So the man who presided as executive secretary, he was a Cleveland man; his name was Davis. His first name I don't recall, but I think he was one of them [Communist?]. I don't recall; that's just a guess.

And usually, you know, at our conventions, we have a lot of educational exhibits, and there would be men there – book men, and so on and so forth – [with exhibits] in which the delegates would be interested. But in Philadelphia, there was a Japanese gentleman who had a table about this size on which there were exquisite pieces of art, Japanese art, that people were interested in. That was the only thing that suggested culture, from my point of view. But at the back of the room there was a large bulletin board, and it was covered as closely as could be with copies of The Daily Worker, and a magazine that was called The Communist…I remember it had a paper covered back [and was] a little bit larger than this book in size. And those were the total exhibits in the Philadelphia convention.

And there was in front of us a great number – I don't know how many, I didn't try to count them – of men, presumably teachers from there…We weren't, of course, given any opportunity to sit on the registration; but they looked like people picked up off the street.

Previous conventions the men dressed pretty much like you men are dressed, you know, but these fellas had their shirts…I don't know whether they wore – no, they couldn't have worn – any undershirts because you could see their navels. That's a fact! And there they sprawled, you know, the most extraordinary group. Where they got them from, I don't know, but there they were. And Bella Dodd was there. If you read her autobiography, you will find that she says that, in looking back at that Philadelphia convention, she believes that [they] could have gotten that convention to go on record for anything – Stalin, Trotsky, Lenin – anything they wanted!

H Where is there a copy of her autobiography? Is there one around here someplace?

M I don't imagine. I have one; I lent it out, it travels around and I don't know just where it is now.

East She just died recently, you know.

M I know. It's been some years ago.

Bella Dodd's "School of Darkness" can be read at this link:

http://genus.cogia.net/chap10.htm

H I think that's [the biography] pretty rare. If you'll lend it to us, we'll copy it.

M I don't have it now and I'd have to inquire around and ask people if they have my copy of
Bella Dodd.

H If you find it, we will copy it.

M So many people are interested in reading it.

H Yeah, I think it's almost a collectors' item.

M I got to know Bella Dodd very, very well, you know, and we became very good friends eventually. That was when she abandoned the Communist movement; and she abandoned it not because of religion or anything like that, but because of the way they had treated some members of the party…She hadn't believed, up to that time, that they kept such closed minds, you know, and wouldn't give people a chance to explain their viewpoint.

H What do you think made her a Communist in the first place?

M Well, let's not go into that now. I may go into that later on. I want to finish up Philadelphia.

H All right.

M But she was one of the people that I met there, and…Florence Hanson was there. She was no longer executive secretary. It was Davis, you see, supplanted her; the new executive board had Davis and he was presiding on the stage since the president hadn't shown up; and she [Florence Hanson] was hovering around on the outskirts, not in the room, but sort of a portress [? word unclear in transcript]

We met in the shabbiest hotel – the convention – it was right across the way from that building…that has Ben Franklin's statue way up there.

[Could "that building" be City Hall? With not Ben Franklin, but William Penn "way up there?]

I remember Florence, at night, would take a look up at the gentleman's statue, watch the doves fly in and out so you would think that they were waving to us. And they were waving to us, as a matter of fact, as [they] came flying around the statue.

But here again, of course, the delegates …were being lobbied in the corridor, and …the new delegates didn't know who to believe. They'd talk to this one and this was the story; they'd talk to that one and that was the story. And in the meantime, our caucus held a meeting…during the lunch hour. I said, "There is just one way we can begin to get things straightened out: some of us will have to get up on that stage and openly and publicly explain what the real issue is facing us today. We can't trust telling people as we meet them in the corridor; they don't know whom to believe." Well, the group was afraid. They discussed it very carefully. They were afraid that if anyone said anything about Communism, that we would drive people out of the organization and they needed to build up strength to handle it. But as we broke up, Florence said to me, "Mary, I think your idea is right. Go ahead and do it!" I said, "All right".

So just before the convention convened for the afternoon session, I was right in the wings; and as soon as the gavel fell, I stood up at the center front of the rostrum, and I said "Fellow delegates!" By that time, the surprised chairman was up alongside me, plucking at my sleeve; and he said, "Miss McGough, you're out of order." I said, "I know it," and I just poked along. I was trained in parliamentary law by the same man who had trained the legislators, so I knew I was out of order. And so, shoving him back, I started in: "I'd like you new delegates to know that the real issue in this convention is who….." You'd think the roof would go up – stamping hooting, cat calling, you have it – just bedlam let loose. And I waited there until the noise had died down again, with Davis still plucking and me shoving and pulling away, and so on. And then I started a second time: "…the real issue here is…" Oops, a repetition. Then I waited while it died down, and the third time, instead of talking to them, I reeled to the right to where Davis was and I talked to him – but in a voice that I knew would carry through. And I said, "Mr. Davis, I will leave this platform in one of two ways. Either I shall walk off of my own volition, after I have completed what I want to

say – and I will not speak above the tiniest bit of sound; I insist upon a quiet audience – or I will be dragged off this platform; and I promise you, sir, if I'm dragged off, I shall scream and bite and scratch and struggle and become so disheveled that I'll be a newspaper item. I'll see that I get in the newspaper. Now, sir, I can stand the publicity. How about you?"

So we looked at each other for a few minutes and then he turned to the group and said, "I think you'd better let her say what she wants to say." And so it was perfectly quiet. I explained to the new delegates that our issue there was Communism, and proper democratic procedure too; that they were both at stake, and all they had to do was to look at that bulletin board, and so on – it's been so long ago, I forgot the details, but anyway some of it has been recorded I know. I learned [that] from one of our office workers a long time ago. She's in Chicago; I don't know if she is still alive or not. It was recorded in their minutes, but I don't imagine all that I said was recorded. And then, when I finished, I walked off [the stage]. Well, the new delegates came to me and said "Now we'll work with anyone you're working with." And that's how we built up the progressive caucus. That was the main achievement, as far as we were concerned, at the Philadelphia convention.

H From that convention on, the progressive caucus grows until, finally, it takes over the direction of the American Federation of Teachers.

M Yes. And then – well, we decided – for one thing, we all agreed that we should all work hard for increased membership; and for another thing, that we should preserve copies of the publicity put out by suspect organizations and we should also have regular copies of The Communist and The Daily Worker. I said, "It breaks my heart to think that we're going to subscribe to those daily publications!"

Well, we said, we have to know what the opposition is thinking and doing. And then, after a few years – well, this didn't happen [until] I think it was 1941 [or] about that time, I believe – through a national referendum vote of our membership, we did expel Local 5, Local 444, which was a college teachers' local in New York – that was the local Bella Dodd belonged to – [and Local] 92. That's Philadelphia. That was all at that time. It was done on this basis: as we sent out this vote, we would copy something from The Daily Worker or The

Communist, give the page and the issue, and then the publicity of this organization, right alongside, you see, so they could see the line being carefully followed.

H When did Arthur Elder come into the Progressive Caucus?

M Well, that was a very interesting experience and, in it, we had one of the best examples of discipline that you could find. After Philadelphia there was really going on at that time a struggle between the Stalinists and the Trotskyists. And the … [references unclear here] … in the new York Local, sated with them…whenever they could would prime our people as to what might be coming, what issues were sensitive ones, what Trotskyist resolutions might touch sore spots, and so forth and so on. But after Philadelphia, Isadore Began of New York and…their floor leader – I think his name was Dale Ziesman [and] Mrs. Whit, also from the New York local…no matter where I went, they were always right at my elbow. One of the New York Trotskyists managed to get me alone one time, I guess in the women's lounge, and said, "Miss McGough, don't let those two men hang around you; their purpose is to give the impression to the delegates that you're on friendly terms with each other, and people here who would follow you will then accept them." I said, "Well how do I shake them? No matter where I move, they'll be…[there]." …Now this was '36 at Philadelphia, (or) '37 (in) Madison, Wisconsin.

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It happened that Arthur Elder of Cleveland, I believe – Detroit? Well, they had come in [to the AFT?] just about this time or a year or so before, and Arthur Elder was functioning – after Abe Lefkowitz withdrew, they did let me still function as chairman of the legislative committee, and Arthur Elder was assigned to that committee – and I was very much taken with him. And I thought he should come into our progressive caucus. And I said, "From what I see in you, you belong with us." Well, he said his people at home just wouldn't understand that, so he just couldn't do it. I don't think he joined any caucus at that time. But in '37, at

Madison, we had a table…at which a group of us was sitting. I was here, next to me was Mary Herrick of Chicago; right here alongside of me was Isadore Began [and] Dale Ziesman; across from me was Herb Zitser of our St. Paul Local 43 men, and different ones like that. And at that time, to call for a roll call vote, you needed only six signatures from six different locals. Well, there was a motion made to retain the editor and the editorial board; they were doing such a wonderful job.

H Do you remember who the editor was?...Well, that's all right.

M Yeah. His name should come to me…it seems to me he went down to some job in the area of Washington. But at any rate, this motion was before the group…and Davis was our president then – Jerome Davis. On the voice vote, where each side tried to out yell the other, Davis decided that the "Ayes" had it – that we should retain [the editor and editorial board]. So there was a call for division, and the division was to be by show of hands, of course, with people assigned to count the hands for and against. And when the hands against went up, I stood up because this table was right in the back of the room where I could kind of watch what was going on on the floor. I stood up to take a look around; I sat down, wrote my name and my local, and I said to Mary Herrick, "Sign that, Mary. We're going to call for roll call!" And she says, "Oh I don't think so, Mary. Look at all the hands they have up", although she was signing. And I pushed it over to Herb Zitser and said, "Yes, but you remember two things: one, we bring only token delegates with us; we don't bring our full strength and our full strength shows up only on roll call. They bring their full strength, so on a division vote or things of that sort, they can outvote us. But I say there are hands up now of people who have never voted with us before." And with that, Arthur Elder was standing back here, and he reached up over my shoulder and said, "I'll sign that, Miss McGough." And I said, "Good for you, Art, I wondered how long it was going to take you to come over." And from that time on, he was with us.

"Well, I says, "that was the most perfect example of discipline, and here it comes." We got our six signatures and passed the slip to Tish Henderson, who was at the table, and who will be at the meeting tomorrow. And I said [to Tish)] "Take that up to the desk." And for the second time, when Jerome Davis said the motion had carried, I yelled out "Roll Call!" and Davis said, "I believe…" and I said, "They're on the way up!" and Tish says, "Here they are!". And as Tish was

handing them to Jerome Davis, Isadore Began raised his hand for attention, got it promptly – Davis always paid prompt attention – and he [Began] said, "If Miss McGough will withdraw her request for roll call vote…..

M "All opposed say, 'Aye!'" Complete silence, nothing, not one voice raised. And then, "All opposed say 'No!'" and all yelled "No!", and the motion was declared lost. Now I don't know what better example of party discipline one could imagine than that. It was an extraordinary demonstration, I thought.

H Let's see, we were at the 1937 convention. Jerome Davis was president in '37, wasn't he?

M Yes. I gave you what I considered the perfect example of discipline at the convention in '37 and Jerome Davis was the one___

H When you had the communist vote blocked and, to a man, not a one of them answered to the role, or answered a "Yes" vote.

M That's right! Complete silence. I have already explained to you the techniques by which we decided on how we would have to treat this question: the building up [of] the membership and the comparison of the publications put out by different organizations that were suspect with the publications of the communist party as shown in The Daily Worker and in this little monthly pamphlet or booklet that they called The Communist.

H Whose planning was that to set that system up?

M Well, the whole caucus. We used to talk it over when we'd meet, how we might handle the situation. Besides that, in between conventions we would meet with groups throughout the country. I remember, for example, that we went to Washington, D.C. to meet with some of the labor people there, and had a discussion with them of the problems facing us; and they told us that we did have a bad situation and that it would take us a long time to have it cleared up. I remember us going to other halfway points where other members of the caucus would come to meet with us…and I was active in that part because…by that time, after the position I had taken in Philadelphia on saying my say, I was more or less recognized as the floor leader. I was not chairman of the caucus ever though.

H Who was? Can you remember his name?

M I can't recall the gentleman's name. He was from one of the eastern states, but he was not active on the floor, so to speak. Well, things went on like that and we met around in different localities…at all times trying to build up membership, having these little regional meetings with each other and with people…in some locals in order to build up our membership vote and build up our policy also.

And finally – I forget whether it was '39 or '40, sometime in through there – New York people who were interested and watching what happened had persuaded George Counts to run for the presidency if we could get him elected. And I can recall the caucus meeting – by that time we had quite a good caucus meeting going on, and I can remember the caucus meeting – at which we met George Counts. I knew him by reputation but I didn't know him as a person until that particular evening…After the late evening session of the delegates assembly…we were assigning to different ones who should nominate whom, etc…I may be playing myself up too much but, at any rate, this is the kind of thing I would do: as we were arranging things, the chairman of our caucus said, "Now is there anything else that anyone can think of?" And I stood up and said, "Yes, there is." It was about two or three o'clock in the morning. Then I said, "We women have the name of a man…a candidate for presidency, whose name is respected in the field of education. And," I said, "we women have been too gentile, heretofore, at these meetings of the AFT." I said, "Did you notice how the Commies acted when that "gander" from Goose Creek [?], Texas, for example, showed up. Who ever knew about him before?"

H Who was this?

M I don't recall his name.

H He was a "gander" from Goose ___, Texas?

M Well, that's the way I labeled him. But I said, "When his name was suggested a year or so ago, oh, they were all up on their feet, they were applauding, etc. You'd think that a Daniel had come to judgement. Well," I said, "we have somebody with whom we feel we can really go to town, so

every time George Counts' name is mentioned tomorrow, instead of gently clapping your hands, I want you to get up on your feet and you just raise the roof with the hurrahs and the yells that you are going to give forth. And if you think you won't be seen, then get up on the chairs, and you wave your arms and you just raise the roof!" And I said that "if the person who nominates him starts out saying 'Dr. George Counts ', start [stop?] the convention right there, and you just keep the welcome going." I said, "Another thing-this convention is called to order at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Now that means nine o'clock! You're to be in your seats in the convention hall at nine o'clock-not at breakfast, not in the corridor coming along, but right in your seat. If you think you're going to be too sleepy, set the old alarm clock! If you don't have it, leave a call at the desk. If you have to go without breakfast, go without breakfast, but you be in that room in that seat when the gavel falls at nine tomorrow morning."

And that's what we did. That next morning, the person nominating George Counts said about a sentence, then his name came. And I was sitting next to Jerome Davis, as chance would have it, when Counts name was put in for office, so I jumped up, "HURRAYYY!" (loud), and so did the rest of them, and you should have heard all the yelling that went on. And after that-they did come through, they were in there-after that, every time that Counts' name was mentioned, we just stomped that convention floor. And I remember one time that I sat down, and Davis gave me a kind of rueful look, and he said, "Well, you got them well organized, Miss McGough." And I said, "Well, I think so." And the newspaper people said that, for the first time, it began to look like a real convention. Before that, on our side, it had been too gentile, but now it was a real convention!

Well, we managed to elect him. Then finally – I can't be sure if it was the convention of '40 or '41 – we were ready for the referendum vote. We succeeded in voting out of the organization – on the basis of their publicity – old Local 5 of New York; Local 444, I believe it was, the college teachers of New York City; Local 92 of Philadelphia, [in which] Mary Foley was very prominent…at that time.

And then, at the first convention after that expulsion, Florence Sweeney of Detroit, and Frances Comfort and I asked the group if they would be willing

to be in a "committee of the whole" as there was something we would like to discuss with them. We asked that caucusing now be abandoned; that we realized that the progressive caucus had been formed with really just one tie holding it together, and that was our anti-communist status; and that, in a sense, we felt that caucuses did tend to divide a group; and we felt that more would be attained for the welfare of the group if we had discussions. We might have resolutions assigned to committees, but not have caucuses functioning more or less against each other…discussion coming in from committees assigned to take care of certain resolutions, and all work going on on the floor instead of having caucuses. But we didn't succeed in making our point. The people…there-people who worked with us as good friends in the progressive caucus-said that they felt we were a bit naïve if we thought that we could really get along without caucuses, because it was natural for people with certain viewpoints to delegate together in caucuses.

H As far back as 1916 there was a conflict between the New York and Chicago people-Henry Linville with the paper in New York and Charles Stillman with the presidency out of Chicago. Was that apparent preceding this caucus, with the pattern here…you know, with geographic polarity?

M In 1916?

H Yes. The American Teacher was considered to be a bit radical, and it quite frequently came under attack-at least in the correspondence – it may never have come out on the convention floor.

M Didn't come out so far as the convention floor?

H The competition between Linville and Stillman, in the Chicago group, wasn't apparent until you began to pick up the hostility to Lefkovitz when he was asked to present those radical resolutions?

M Yes, and they were pre-1935. Now Linville, as far as I can recall, did not return as a delegate for the American Federation of Teachers after we had expelled these various locals. Abe Lefkowitz did come back, and I remember I was serving on our credentials committee; and serving with me on that committee was Joe Landis, who was president for a number of years.

H He was supposed to be a first rate parliamentarian.

M He was, he was – one of the best parliamentarians I've ever worked with, as a matter of fact. And I recall that, as Abe came along in the line, I…had real respect and admiration for Abe so I gave him a very hardy welcome back. But as he went on, Joe Landis said to me that he felt that the more Mr. Lefkowitz stayed in the background, the better it would be so far as his being accepted by the convention…

H The American Teacher used to scare off some of the more conservative teachers by some of its earlier attacks on administrations and principles in the 1918, 1919, 1920 period. There is also another level of conflict that is apparent when you start reading the correspondence-and sometimes, the myths – and I notice it is still there at the last convention. For example, last year the New Rochelle group out of New York presented a whole series of resolutions attacking the policies of George Meany…And you would find this …anti-trade-union bias, and it comes out, sometimes quite viciously, against Green and against Gompers [?]. Did that show up in the convention?

M Not earlier than last year, so far as I recall…Because I have been reading with interest and have been talking to some of our delegates who had been to the convention this past summer, I notice that there have been some quite extraordinary resolutions that came in somehow. But in the conventions before that, that kind of thing had not been evident that I can recall.

Well, going back to this caucus business: when we couldn't get the convention to agree that we [should] just abandon caucusing, some of us announced – I think probably Florence Sweeney and Frances Comfort joined me in this – I know that I announced because I had been the floor leader for the caucus for these few years of fighting. I was the one who was conducting meetings; I said that so far as I personally was concerned, I would not caucus with any group unless I saw what seemed to me to be a revival or reappearance of communist activities, and then I would caucus as I'd done before. So I got out of caucusing.

Well, I'm not sure what year it was that we met in Denver, Colorado – no, Glenwood Springs – and from things that happened there – the acts, the tables, and during lunch time and on the convention floor – I decided that the

Los Angeles local…had, in all probability, been taken over, so I went back into caucusing and we did expel the Los Angeles local, as I recall.

H Do you remember what year that was-that you started back in the caucus group?

M No, I don't. I suppose if I sat down and just tried to check up closely, I could recall.

H One of the things I notice pertaining to the convention proceedings in '37, I guess___

M That was at Madison___

H Anyway, the convention when Jerome Davis was president, and one of the things that seemed to have had a heavy impact on the teachers was this new CIO movement and the split off…of a substantial portion of the AF of L. And Davis made a very long speech in which he recommended that the American Federation of Teachers amend their constitution [from] saying "that they shall be affiliated with the AF of L" to "that they may be affiliated", and allow a lot of locals to go either way. To your recollection, were you aware of dealing with this AFL/CIO faction?

M Yes, I know that question did arise. So far as I recall, with regard to the local that we actually had, I don't think we lost any to the CIO movement. I do recall that…the national struggle was reflected here in the state and I could mention names of people nowadays, but I would hurt the feelings of members in locals now who were not in the locals or perhaps not even in teaching at that time, and there is no point in doing that.

But right here in this state, I know, at a convention that met in one of our cities, I was up in front of the group explaining the issues, since the struggle had been brought – and not by us but by some of the other people of the state – into the state. I decided then, that at each convention of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, I was going to make a point that delegates understood exactly what was happening, and that some of the arguments that were being shaped up in the states were reflections of the struggles in the national.

I was up in front of this group explaining this to them and a young man from the university – we had a local at the University of Minnesota at that time and they had three delegates there – I don't know if this particular young man is still there or not, but I do know the other two delegates – well, they may have reached retirement age by now – …continued to function there but they never again sent us delegates. Well, this young man from the U was about midway in the audience…and he yelled at me, "You'd better be careful what you say! Remember what happened to Trotsky!" Trotsky had been icepicked that summer, I believe. It was down in Mexico, if you remember. So I stopped and looked at him and I said, "Oh, you mean you may liquidate me?" And I said, "You people have tried everything in this state that you could in the way of telephone calls" – (which is true) "threats against me, against my family, assassination of character – even trying to make people believe that I was a communist, wherever you thought that might serve [your] purpose. So now you think I can be wiped out entirely, is that what you mean?" Of course he made no answer. To my amazement, when that particular session ended, some women who were attending their first convention said to me, "Miss McGough, that was an awful thing to say to that young man." I looked and I said, "Well what do you think about what he said to me?" Well, they didn't have any opinion on that. So you could see that we had bitterness here in the state as a reflection of this trouble.

H Quite frequently it comes through in terms of an attack on what they call "business unionism" or "bread-and-butter unionism" as the too narrow contractions of the teacher vision; that they [the teachers?] should be interested in larger issues, and [that] the attack directed against the AF of L …[was] really, in a sense…on more conservative union leaders like Charles Stillman. Do you think there is anything in this type of division that might not have been, strictly speaking, communistic?

M No, I don't think so. I would say that, aside from following a party line, that in the progressive caucus, we probably have the most progressive___

H How was this progressive caucus group___?

M They continued to function right on down to the present.

H Somewhat in a more liberal fashion than the general policy of the AFL…or pretty much in harmony with what was going on, as reflected in the AF of L convention?

M Well, as a matter of fact, if they___

H You were not aware of disharmony between the progressive group and the AF of L?

M No. Disharmony was between the progressive group and the classroom teachers caucus that was set up.

H Which was the CP group?

M No, it was after we expelled the CP group.

H What was the classroom teachers group that was set up?

M Well, most of the Chicago people were in it.

H More conservative than the progressive group?

M That's right…I always felt so. They called themselves the classroom teachers group, and by that time – now let's see, I think it was '40-'41– we finally did get that first clean-up[?]. Well, I was a principal by that time and Miss [Lettisha] Henderson, I think…was supervisor of special classes for handicapped children, so we weren't strictly a classroom teachers group. I think that both Joe Landis and Jack Fewkes of Chicago were very prominent in the classroom teachers group. But after a while, Chicago – some years later – didn't seem to like or feel that it was being properly recognized in the classroom teachers' caucus, so it withdrew from that caucus and set up a Chicago caucus that functioned all alone.

H That was a sort of big-local/small-local competition.

M Something like that.

H I notice from some of the things that Art Elder has said, and Selma Borchardt, that … dealing with the Philadelphia and New York CP groups, [they] faced the problem of academic freedom, proving that a member was [also] a member of the communist party; that they talked instead about "dual

unionism" or "bad" trade unionism. Elder, again and again – I'm familiar with him because I've seen his material-again and again is cautioning members of the progressive caucus to stop attacking them as "communist" and get on this issue of the fact that they were bad trade unionists or were dual unionists. Are you familiar with any of that type counseling?

M Well yes, I think there was some of that as I recall. I can remember, for example, right after Bella Dodd had split with the communist party and announced that she was going to try to devote the whole rest of her life trying to undo the harm that she had done while she worked with the party…She had gotten in touch with me – I don't remember where we were meeting at the time…and I was approached by a delegate from Iowa or Nebraska…[and] he asked me if I would be willing to talk with Bella Dodd, who split with the communist party; and I said, Yes, I would. So very shortly after, there was a telephone call and she was down in the lobby. I think he had gotten hold of a copy of her book that I was very interested in, and on the basis of that he had written her to get some of her ideas, you see.

Well, at any rate, I got the telephone call and it was Bella Dodd, and she asked me if I would mind if she came to see me and I said not at all. I said, "About how soon could you be here?" and she said "Well, I'm down in the lobby." Well, I said, "Fine, come right up." My roommate was Lettisha Henderson [and] I said, "Tish, Bella Dodd is down in the lobby and she wants to come up and talk, so how about sitting down and let's hear what she has to say, etc." And Tish said, "Well, I have to attend a committee meeting right now so I'll be on my way." So Bella Dodd came up and she told me some of her experiences after she had split with the party. They are not all in her book…She said that it was common, for a while, that she had to make a living scrubbing floors and anything like that that she could get. And she said she might be standing on a street corner…waiting to cross…and somebody would come up to her and spit right in her face. It was extraordinary, some of the things she did…These were some of the things she was telling me just by word of mouth. I don't recall if they are in her book….

H Because she split with the party?

M These were commies who were treating her this way…You know she was a lawyer, and of course, she said, the law cases she had handled had all been for people who had been sent to her by the commies, so that when she split with the party, they, of course, sent her no more law cases to handle; and she was out of school, you see, no longer affiliated with new York University. So I said, "How are you managing now?" and she said, "Well now I'm doing very well."

There were two people – she gave their names [and] they may be mentioned in the autobiography too – who had known some of her family and had known her when she first came to the United States, and who had never surrendered the idea of getting her weaned away from the communist party. And she said they were the ones – they were both Catholics – they were the ones who brought about a meeting between her and Bishop Sheen, who was on TV so much for a long time, you know. And he was the one who instructed her, and through him she came back into the Catholic church; and then they began seeing that gradually law cases were sent to her, and now, she said, "At this time…I have the floor of a building in New York and …I have several younger lawyers there associated with me, and we keep quite busy and are doing quite well."

But then, afterwards, she became ill, as you probably know, and had to go to the hospital; and then she became worried because so often she had taken law cases for people who actually couldn't pay much in the way of legal fees…she was trying to undo some of the evil she had done. And we learned, not from her but through this Carmelite cousin of mine…[who] had been interested in following Bella's progress…[that Bella] was sick, and so on. She [the Carmelite cousin] got in touch with one of my brothers [this was her brother, James, aka "M.J."] and asked if he could interest himself in her behalf because she [Bella] was in the hospital, expenses were mounting, and her worry was how she would ever pay those bills. And the nun, the Carmelite, sent to my brother the name of a man who headed up a committee in New York…

M And I told him a little of the background, and that seemed to suffice because the next thing I heard, when he was visiting another evening-…in '55 this must have been-my brother said, "You know I wrote to that man who was

heading the committee on behalf of Bella Dodd, and …it turned out rather curiously that he was a man that I knew very well when I was in New York City." …This brother had been a junior partner with my uncle in the contracting business. The uncle had been one of my father's foremen and then, when my father came west because of health, this uncle had carried on the business there, you see, and eventually my brother had been a junior partner of his for a while. He said, "I knew this fella quite well." I think they used to be in the _____? Society, or something, together. And this man had written him [M.J.] to say that many of her [Bella's] clients were young people working in factories and shops, etc., and very often she'd take their cases for no fee and other times just for nominal fee, so she didn't build up financial reserves for herself at all.

H What kinds of problems were they having during those periods? You said she'd take their cases, but what were they? The usual run of the mill?

M That wasn't brought out…But this man went on also to say…that many of these people that she had helped had banded together to try to raise funds for her, and there would be donations – perhaps a quarter, a dollar, whatever they might be able to afford – in order to get a fund so that they might be able to take care of her expenses. Well at any rate, she then became quite prominent and, what I personally thought was rather conservative…within my own religious group…I consider myself the type of person who is interested always in all the oncoming changes that might be necessary. Some of my views may be Bolshevik, even in the area of religion, you see. On the other hand, she seemed to be part of a movement that throughout the United States was conservative; that wanted to hang on to the old traditions, you see. I'm quite sure they would have wanted the Mass still in Latin instead of in the vernacular, and so forth and so on.

H You don't object to a banjo church?

M Well, I'm not particularly hipped on it. But if that's what people like, well then they can play the banjo.

Well, at any rate, I was amazed that when my telephone rang one evening and I answered it, here was Bella Dodd. She was home in Minnesota talking before a group of this type of traditional Catholics…and she wanted me to

come over and have dinner with her. So we set a date and I went over there and met her. And I recall…she was in a wheel chair then and this was after that experience in the hospital. There was a man and woman with whom she lived – let's say her housekeeper or something like that – who took her about wherever she might go, and they were at the table. There was a gentleman there who had just returned from Geneva, from a conference over there, and they were very interested in talking with him. I forget the names of quite a few of the other people who were there. In the course of conversation [with] this gentleman who had just returned…I wasn't quite in agreement with something he had said. He gave a different point of view, and he said…that he didn't realize that I was one of those philosophic socialists. I said, "You don't know my background; I was brought up to be just as wary of socialism as of communism." I said, "If you want to know what I am, I'm a straight trade unionist. I've heard trade union talk in my family as long as I can remember. My father was a trade unionist, my uncles, my cousins and I'm a trade unionist too, and that's why I'm in the American Federation of Teachers because, to me, it's a trade union movement that looks out for its membership to the best of its ability."

H The AFT, in 1954, will lose again a substantial portion of its membership over the segregation/integration issue, when they will lose Atlanta, for example. I believe they expelled Atlanta, Chattanooga, Mountain City – no, not Mountain City?

M They didn't expel them…I think it was about the mid-fifties, someplace in there.

H Well, it comes after Brown vs. Board of Education, in which students, by government order, are going to have to be integrated, and the assumption is that teachers should be integrated and teacher union groups should be integrated, and that they should merge teachers where they have a black local and a white local.

M No. As I recall it now – I might be wrong now, but as I recall it – the government hadn't taken any particular stand at the time, but we took a stand. We had come to the point of view where we felt that there should be only one union in a locality. We didn't want a division of men and women.

Now here in St. Paul, for example, we had men and women. You see, neither did we want black locals and white locals. So I would say a warning of about five or six years was given, and I think 1952 was the date set as the deadline; and by that time, in all localities, there was to be just one union. Men and women were to be merged, blacks and whites were to be merged, and if there were any groups unwilling to accept that, then their charters would be lifted. And the…groups that were willing to have just one union in the area, and to accept membership from any other groups, were the ones that continued to hold the charter.

H Then Atlanta left voluntarily? Is that it?

M I think that might have been about it.

H That on the whole was a respected local trade union.

M Oh yes, that had been a very powerful union, Atlanta. Another one we lost – I remember a very fine man there, I can't remember his name – was Birmingham. For example, the Ku Klux Klan had burned a cross in front of his house because they felt that that particular family was too sympathetic to the lives of the black people, you see.

H In that convention when that issue was fought out, it was somewhat passionate and emotional, wasn't it?

M That's right.

H Was it anything at all like the passion and emotion that was raised over the 1936 convention on the communist issue? I know the issues were different, but I mean the atmosphere-the intensity?

M I think there was more intensity on this question of the single union. Because, you see, in '36 the convention was so obviously overtly in control of one group…nothing very passionate occurred on the floor except my determination to be heard…The rest, you see, we just withdrew in caucuses.

H But when they moved to expel them, it got pretty involved – pretty violent – didn't it?

M Well yes. While the discussion was going on as to what we should do, I remember we used to have a very fine man – he served on the executive council – who came from – let me see, Rosa came from Chattanooga; I believe he was from there also.

H Stan Stanton?

M No, Stanton wasn't from there…[Willard] Millsaps is the one I'm thinking of. He didn't get emotional on the floor, but talking to some of us, he said, "So far as I'm concerned personally, I would be in favor of it and would go along with it." As a matter of fact, in Chattanooga they had a joint board set up of the executive boards-something like we have [had?] in St. Paul with the men's and women's locals. The board of the black local, of which Rosa McGhee was a member, and the board of the white local used to meet regularly in order to work out policies encountered in general.

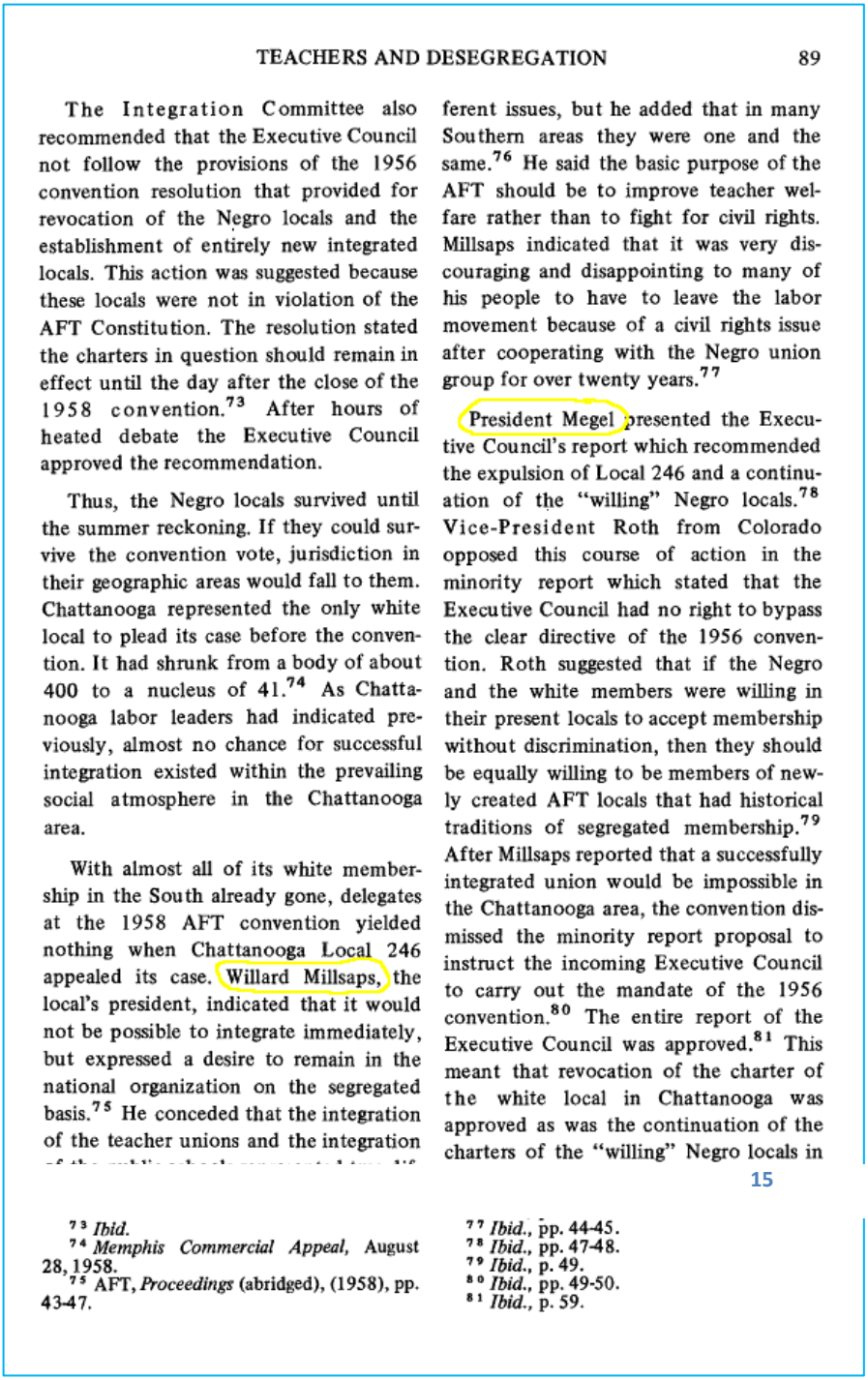
I recall that, at one of our conventions during the time that the discussions were going on, we had a report by two people from Chattanooga. One was not Millsaps, but someone who came to the convention just to report…from the white teachers point of view, and Rosa McGhee was the one who made the report from the black teachers point of view. Rosa did a far better job than he did. She did such a good job…my attention was attracted to her, and except for this last summer when I did not attend, I was the one who nominated her each time when we had elections for the national board, because I had faith in her ability. Now in recent years – I won't mention names – there have been some of our people on the national board who said to me, "Mary, you did a disservice to the national organization in nominating Rosa, etc." But I notice she managed to get elected this summer on her own.

H There are two points in time, in the early 1960's____

M Let me go back to Millsaps. What he said was, "My daughter is the one who will pay the price, not I. And," he said, "my daughter is in high school."

H Would pay the price of____?

M If they had the black and white locals actually merged. The fact that her father might be in such a local would be something that would be used against her in school, and she would be more or less ostracized. And he said, because of his daughter, he couldn't go along. So the white local in Chattanooga had its charter lifted and the black group, which was going to accept members of both groups, had the prevailing charter. And I understand that they now have white people in their local.



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The Integration Committee also recommended that the Executive Council not follow the provisions of the 1956 convention resolution that provided for revocation of the Negro locals and the establishment of entirely new integrated locals. This action was suggested because these locals were not in violation of the AFT Constitution. The resolution stated the charters in question should remain in effect until the day after the close of the 1958 convention.[73] After hours of heated debate the Executive Council approved the recommendation.

Thus, the Negro locals survived until the summer reckoning. If they could survive the convention vote, jurisdiction in their geographic areas would fall to them. Chattanooga represented the only white local to plead its case before the convention. It had shrunk from a body of about 400 to a nucleus of 41.[74] As Chattanooga labor leaders had indicated previously, almost no chance for successful integration existed within the prevailing social atmosphere in the Chattanooga area.

With almost all of its white membership in the South already gone, delegates at the 1958 AFT convention yielded nothing when Chattanooga Local 246 appealed its case. Willard Millsaps, the local's president, indicated that it would not be possible to integrate immediately, but expressed a desire to remain in the national organization on the segregated basis.[75] He conceded that the integration of the teacher unions and the integration

ferent issues, but he added that in many Southern areas they were one and the same.[76] He said the basic purpose of the AFT should be to improve teacher welfare rather than to fight for civil rights. Millsaps indicated that it was very discouraging and disappointing to many of his people to have to leave the labor movement because of a civil rights issue after cooperating with the Negro union group for over twenty years.[77]

President Megel presented the Executive Council's report which recommended the expulsion of Local 246 and a continuation of the "willing" Negro locals.[78] Vice-President Roth from Colorado opposed this course of action in the minority report which stated that the Executive Council had no right to bypass the clear directive of the 1956 convention. Roth suggested that if the Negro and the white members were willing in their present locals to accept membership without discrimination, then they should be equally willing to be members of newly created AFT locals that had historical traditions of segregated membership.[79] After Millsaps reported that a successfully integrated union would be impossible in the Chattanooga area, the convention dismissed the minority report proposal to instruct the incoming Executive Council to carry out the mandate of the 1956 convention.[80] The entire report of the Executive Council was approved.[81] This meant that revocation of the charter of the white local in Chattanooga was approved as was the continuation of the charters of the "willing" Negro locals in

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[73] *Ibid.*
[74] *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, August 28, 1958.
[75] AFT, *Proceedings* (abridged), (1958), pp. 43-47.
[77] *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

H Yes. At two points in time, early in the 1950's and late in the 1930's, the American Federation of Teachers separated itself from a very substantial

body of its membership. They watched the membership grow and drop in those two [periods]…It's almost like a purification rite that had taken place here at two points in time.

M Yes. Well, we lost Atlanta, which was one of the very big locals. I can remember the last [time]…Ali Mann came back after the fuss was all over, and this time she asked me plainly after the convention was adjourning, "Mary, did you really think I was a communist?" And I said to her, "No, I just thought you were a first class opportunist." She wanted to be the president because Mary Barker had been president, and it was a rivalry even while we were down in Atlanta. Well, she never showed up at another convention.

But at a later convention – I don't know which one it was now or where it was – I remember that this fella from Atlanta – and he was practically bidding for votes – he said, "I have thirty votes!" and we all finally started laughing at him; nobody wanted his votes badly enough. He wanted to make a deal, you see, and we were not willing to make a deal. Well, it was after…we laughed that we lost. We lost membership in Chattanooga, of course; the Chattanooga whites withdrew. We lost membership in Memphis, Tennessee; we used to have a thriving membership in Memphis. We lost in Atlanta [and] we lost in Birmingham. There are four that I can recall, and they were all pretty good-sized and active locals.

H And practically closed down, for a number of years, the possibility of organizing in the South?

M That's right, that's right.

H When did you become principal? Was it in the 50's?

M 1936.

H '36? Then you were a principal straight through to your retirement___

M In June of '53…When I retired, I thought I was going to retire, but St. Catherine's College lost its supervisor of teachers in practice, you know. You may have the same system in your area; but in Minnesota – I think they still have it – the graduates of the College of Education, or of any of the

colleges and the universities around, had to do a certain amount of teaching. I think it's about two quarters in classrooms; and teachers indicate whether or not they will be willing to have a practice teacher come in…They used to pay them a very small stipend when I was in school.

H They still do. Twenty bucks!

M Oh. Well it was about twelve dollars when I was in school work. But the organization which is placing those practice teachers, like the university or any of our local colleges here, must maintain a supervisor who will visit those practice teachers regularly and, with the principal of the building and the cooperating teacher, supervise and evaluate the work of this practice teacher.

Well, it just happened I retired in June of '53, and St. Catherine's supervisor, who was an Eastern woman, about a week before school opened notified them that because of a serious health problem that had developed in the family, she couldn't come back. So there they were, stuck. They had practice students who were going into the schools in the Fall, and they had to have a supervisor. So the president of St. Catherine's College at that time got in touch with the university placement service and the State Department of Education placement service; and she called me up and told me of her situation, and she said, "I got in touch with these two groups and both of them told me to see if I could get you; that…after all you had been a principal and have worked with such students and helped train them for years." We had them every year. We had them from Hamline, the University,…St. Catherine's, and I think Macalester, too, but I'm not sure…It was only those going into the elementary school that would come to us…As principal, I worked with them as well as the coordinating teacher. So these two placement bureaus said, "How about getting Miss McGough; that's what she's been doing for years and she's retired and free." So they asked me if I would take it and I said, "Let me think it over for a bit," because by that time I was fifty-three [must be a copy error; she would have been sixty-eight and was not apt to forget that], and my mother was a wheelchair person and she and I lived together …I did have a good housekeeper, but then there was also the question that, at that time, you

forfeited your pension if you took any kind of teaching activity – even substitute work-anyplace.

Well, Antonio called me the next day to find out my decision, and I said, "I agree to the supervising and I promise to spend my total forenoons doing that. I will not do any teaching of any kind – I can't because of my mother's situation – but I will meet every girl in the afternoon. I won't discuss her work with her there; I'll sit down at the college and talk over her work in the afternoon." And I did but, believe me, it would take my whole morning and then I'd go to the college in the afternoon when these girls would go about free. And I'd have to spend about a couple of hours there…evaluating their work with them, analyzing what their strengths were and their weaknesses. Well I did that for part of two years. By that time my mother was confined to a hospital bed at home and had to have full time services, so I had to give it up. She was stricken with pneumonia just as I was finishing my second year work at St. Catherine's. …

H Mary Barker had confronted the issues of principals organizing their own locals, and she didn't give them very much encouragement, as I recall. Did you notice any contradiction in your role as a principal? Was your role very difficult as a principal, then as a trade unionist? Now, of course, principals aren't in the unions.

M Oh yes, they are!

H Oh, are they?

M Oh yes. We fought a battle between Al Shanker and me when the constitutional amendment was being introduced; and I told our attorney, Litgenburg, and he said, "As this is worded, you're going to attempt to make this retroactive, and you can't do that." And I said, "After all, you take my own local-its charter gives it the right to determine what its membership is, and you can't revoke anything that's in our charter." And Litgenburg agreed with me and the wording. I really haven't checked it lately in my constitution, but it was supposed to be amended in such a way that they could not affect procedures in any local whose charter already had established a right for the selection of members. Now our charter allows us

to organize within the union anybody up to the superintendent of schools, believe it or not!

H In Minnesotat or St. Paul?

M In St. Paul. The charter that we got for Local 28, and that's the charter under which we operated when the men merged with us as Local 43.

H One might offer, you know, the same argument in terms of merging the locals. Their charters allowed them to organize white and black locals.

M Yes, that's true enough, I presume.

H The argument didn't prevail there?

M No, it didn't. They didn't happen to argue it that way, as I recall. I was just trying to think back. No, they were just arguing in terms of the impracticality of doing that in an area where they have the Ku Klux Klan, for example, so active; and what the effects might be upon them and upon the members of their families.

Well, coming back to our business, the deputy superintendent of schools is a longtime member. He was an elementary school teacher to begin with, a sixth grade teacher when I first got to know him, and he never gave up his membership.

H You got guys like Lembol [?] who were principals, and Linvalls. I think Linvalls might have been. I know Al Flagg Young [sp?] in Chicago was superintendent and she was in the union.

M A superintendent? No superintendents according to our charter, but anything below the superintendent was ours.

H This was back in the early twenties, and she was a longtime union member; and I heard she retained her union membership. You don't believe there was any contradiction that gave you difficulty in performing the two roles, since you were a union member?

M Well, one of the criticisms that some of my administrative friends in the downtown office made of me was that I don't dwell upon the problems and

the trials, and so on, of the administrators there. All I do is go back and talk about the teacher problems. Since I was an administrator for a number of years, why don't I talk about some of the problems of the administrators? To which I reply, "I have sense enough, I think…[and] I'm thankful to recognize, that the real people who function in the schools are the classroom teachers." Now I always like to quote Angelo Pottry [sp?] to them. It was a long time ago; I don't know if anybody read any of his columns. He was, I guess, an assistant principal or something in New York City at the time…

H He was the founder of *The American Teacher*, wasn't he then?

M Pottry? You mean one of the town members?

H One of the founders, I believe, along with Linville – one of the original group. Or at least he is identified as the founder.

M Is that right? Well, I always remember one particular quote and I liked it. I quoted it to the school board, too. I won't be able to quote it verbatim, but this comes close to it. He said: the administrators will get together, and the curriculum makers and the supervisors, and so on and so on, and they will develop their plans and their curriculum; and then they will pass these all out to the teachers. (They used the feminine gender for teacher because it used to be they didn't have so many men in education.) The teacher opens the door of her classroom, then closes the door, turns to her class, and the process of education begins. (He doesn't say "continue" – it begins.) And then he went on developing it because, after all, it was what happened in that group…between the teacher and her class and among those students, that constituted the real educational process. And regardless of what the teacher might get… in aids and lesson plans and what-have-you and what-have-you-not, that actually it was the rapport or lack of it that existed among that group of teachers and pupils that made education possible. And I believe that.

H You don't hold, then, with this NEA and MEA idea that the problems with trade unionism among teachers is that it is divisive and that it tends to throw the teachers in one group and the principals in another. That would be destructive of the educational process.

M No, I don't really hold with them on that. You know I used to be active in the NEA, and I split with them and gave up any hope for them in 1948. That was the last convention I attended with that group…They were going to be so very democratic, so they presented a "Creed" and we were to vote paragraph by paragraph on this creed. And it was passed out to all of us so we all had a chance to look at it. (I think I told this to Pat Strand when she interviewed me down in New Orleans a year ago.) Our Minnesota group got together a caucus on our reaction to this creed. I said, "Well, I've been running through this and I'm going to offer an amendment to…number one." It was a hot lunch program that I felt should be presented to children of need…and I said, "I think that we should insert right here, 'regardless of the school attended'." And one [woman] who was attending her first convention…said to me real snappy, "Well, if you do, I hope you make it clear that it's just your point of view." I said, "Lady, I'm a seasoned delegate and I know when to make it clear when I'm talking for a group and when I'm talking as an individual." And that was that!

Well, the next day, the Minnesota group was seated up in the balcony, and I decided that I had better be a bit diplomatic, because I can be an old gem [?] at times…We had a southern gentleman who was the president of the NEA that year. So I got to the mike way up there in the balcony [and when] we had come to this particular paragraph…I said to him, "Mr. President…I would like to offer an amendment…and if it is seconded, I would appreciate you giving me the opportunity to speak upon it." And he said, "You certainly will have that opportunity." I had attended early conventions of the NEA where I had seen – oh, I forget her name, but – a delegate who was there for a number of conventions. She came in from Westchester County, and she [and I] had somewhat comparable ideals; and she'd get up and make a motion and before there would be any debate, someone would get up and move the previous question cut off…before debate started.

M So the gentleman told me I could make a speech, and I said, "On the hot lunch program, I would insert the words, 'regardless of the school attended'." There came a second from down there on the floor – a Rhode Island man, as it turned out to be – and then the president said to me, "Now, go ahead." I told them [that] when I came into St. Paul to teach, we had

public school nurses. (I'm talking about when we were under the commission of formal government, before we were at the school board). We had public school nurses who were on the payroll in the Department of Education and we had nurses in the parochial schools who were on the payroll in the Bureau of Health in the Department of Public Safety. We had libraries that serviced the schools. When, as a principal, I made out my class lists last Spring, I not only sent a list to the downtown Office of Education, I also sent them to the libraries and in the Fall, when school opened, I would find library boxes that held fifty books for each of my classrooms. They would be labeled by grade according to the list that I had sent in. And…I can pick up any one of those books and look at the fly leaf, and I will find: public school, parochial school, public school, parochial school, just like that, alternating.

"And" I said, "when the books have been with us for about a month or so, we were informed that we should have our library cases down in our school library by a certain date; the truck would come out to pick them up. Well," I said, "the truck starts out from the public library with one set of books and they go to the nearest school, which happens to be the Cathedral School, and leaves them there; picks up the Cathedral set and brings them to me; takes my set and brings them over to St. Stanislaus, then picks up St. Stanislaus__", and that was what they did and, I said, that goes on regularly.

"And" I said, "there is another thing. In the school where I work, we have a beautifully appointed dental office. You couldn't find a better one in town. In the Fall I have a dental nurse there; she has all the children in the building come to her, by classes, and she checks their teeth, and if they need any work done, she sends a note home to the parents and she asks them if they will take care of it privately or will they have it done by the school dentist. If they indicate the school dentist, a dentist appears at my building and the children in the building are taken care of – those whose parents can't afford it. Then both she and he disappear from the building and they go off to another public school; but a new nurse appears and a dental nurse, and strange children come into the building with a couple of guides and letters, and a strange dentist comes in. These are parochial school children, and they are taken care of…Then the public school nurse comes back again and

neighboring public schools are brought in for check-ups." That was the kind of thing that was going on. And I said, "In this case the public dental service was checked against the budget of the Department of Education and the parochial school dental service is against the Bureau of Health in the Department of Public Safety."

"No", I said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, that has been going on – this is 1948 – since I went into St. Paul's schools in January, 1915. I don't know what the bugaboo is here, but I assure you that we're no nearer a union of state and church in St. Paul than you are in any other part of the country." And they had a voice vote, which couldn't be determined [so] they had a standing vote. Well, we didn't win, but we came so darn near that it wasn't funny. It was amazing how many people stood up.

That was one time I was written up from coast to coast because, as soon as it became evident what I was doing, the men from – I was told, the New York Times – but different men…were right up in that balcony, and they were snapping pictures at me from all angles, and I was trying to ignore them and keep my mind concentrated on what I wanted to do. Well, last summer as I read in the public news, the NEA – I believe the convention met in Philadelphia – went on record favoring that kind of thing. [After] twenty-one years, they caught up with us!

H I have one more question. If you were constructing a Hall of Fame of people who did a first rate job for education in the state of Minnesota, who would you put on it?

M Florence Rood.

H Right off the bat, number one?

M Yes.

H Then who would you put on it? I nominate Mary McGough, but where would you go?

M You asked me for one and I answered.

H Yes, but don't you have any others – not necessarily among teaching professionals: political professionals, church people, statesmen?

M Well, I'd have to think that over some. But it wouldn't be the MEA – not as it is constructed at present.

H [laughing] No, nor the past.

M At one time it wasn't too bad.

H How about the statesmen: councilmen, senators, representatives?

M Well, of course, in a way.

H Trade union people?

M I think Hubert Humphrey has been quite successful in that respect.

H That's on a state and a national basis.

M I don't know about the national, but I'm thinking now in connection with the state area. I met him. I don't know whether he was a student or what out at Macalester [College, at that time] or whether he was on the staff, but I think it was about 1918 or something like that. 1919 is when I came back from that long illness, and I was amazed to be corralled by an Alice Clark. She was a grade school teacher too, and she had a married sister who was an elementary school principal here. I think it was something that I did. We set up what was called a labor College, and the three of us were working with these labor men whose educations had been so stunted, in many respects – no more than a fifth or sixth grade education – and they were conscious of the fact that it was a handicap. Humphrey, as I recall, taught public speaking and parliamentary law; I taught them English and labor history, because labor has a lot to be proud of as far as establishing the public school system; Alice Clark, I think, taught English. The three of us worked quite a while in helping these men so they would be able to go out among groups and really work with people without embarrassment.

[In the previous paragraph, either Mary's memory appears to have been confused or she inadvertently gave the wrong dates. While Hubert Humphrey did teach Political Science at Macalester College, it was in the 1940's after World War II. Since he was born in 1911, he would have been only seven years old in 1918. It is perhaps more probable that this cooperative effort between the three teachers took place just after World

War II rather than after World War I. By that time, Mary also would have been a well-established and respected figure in labor events.]

H What about our national level, either in the union or out of it? Would you include Selma in that group?

M Yes, I would be willing to; I think George did a lot too, nationally, for the whole pattern of education. And of course, Dewey did a lot, it seemed to me.

H Could you identify the presidents of the Federation of Teachers that you had the most respect for? Who would you put on there? You've indicated there were some you were not too proud of, but we'll leave them out. Two or three of them___

M I think Counts was the one for whom I had the most admiration. I did like Mary Barker very much. I thought she was a very capable person. Of course, I didn't have experience with Charles Stillman as president; he was before I attended the national convention so I couldn't say with respect to him. But Counts came in at a very difficult time and he really enabled us to get on our feet, and he made no attempt to take any personal glory out of the situation, you know. It was just a case of trying to meet a situation as it rolls, and doing our best at getting it straightened out. And I had great respect for Charlie Cogan, too. In fact, Selma and I were the two people who got busy with him to run for the presidency of the American Federation of Teachers.

H In the early days of the teachers' union, you seem to think that it used to be a feminist movement. There were the women in Chicago and yourself. What is your observation on that? Men seem to take up the union to a certain extent, but women seem to be continuously active. Why do you think you found such a strong influence of elementary teachers in a trade union movement which, by and large, doesn't seem to be that now? Or maybe I'm incorrect in that statement.

M Well, I can only speak from my own experience. Locally, of course, there was the fact that we certainly popularized ourselves in the trade union movement in our attempt to help these men get out and meet people. That didn't hurt us a bit and, in return, they were certainly strong supporters of us.

I remember when we had the strike in the fall of 1946, which, by the way, was the first organized strike in history in the American Federation of Teachers or in the country – in the whole nation. It was the first organized strike. I remember we were holding after-school meetings at a building we'd rented – Pina [sp?] Hall. This particular day the telephone call went out to all schools – I was a principal then, you see – and we were told to inform students that there would be no school that afternoon, and that all teachers were to meet down in the auditorium at two o'clock. So we all reported at two o'clock. Being modest people, you know, we left the first two or three rows of seats empty and we sat back a ways. Just before two o'clock there came out on the stage (there was a backdrop there so that the whole stage wasn't open) the whole city council. We didn't have a school board at that time. Even the poor mayor, who had had a stroke, was wheel-chaired in, and the superintendent of schools; and they all lined up there. Incidentally, our superintendent, who had been principal at Central High, had been my principal for five years and a man whom I admired and respected, was very much worried because he did have a very high regard for teachers. And he didn't want, particularly his Central High School teachers – and here were some of us very busy in this proposal – perhaps to strike. He just didn't want us to get into any trouble.

Former Central High 16

But we were told by one speaker after another that if we did go on strike, we would not only lose our jobs, we'd lose our pension rights, of course, but we'd also lose our certificates. The state Department of Education would withdraw our certificates so that we couldn't teach any more, any place.

Just before they got started and they got out on the platform and they got ready to begin, they heard a "clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk," and here, from the rear row of the auditorium right up to the front seats, there came

about a dozen or so business agents from the labor movement. They had no qualms about taking a front seat. So when they got up to the front seats, they sat down, folded their arms, you know, leaned back and looked up at the impressive array on stage. I'll always remember that. That's what labor did for us.

Well then, after being assured of all that we were going to lose…our superintendent [who] as I said, was very sympathetic with us, said, "Now this auditorium has been rented by the department for the afternoon and you may use it for meetings and consider what you want to do." When he had finished, a Molly Garry, whom we had elected as chairman of our joint council [got up]. I told you how the boards of the two federations met each month, and Molly happened to be the chairman at that time. She was one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen, and she was exquisite the way she turned herself out, the way she dressed; and she had a soft, gentle voice. So Molly got up and, in this soft, gentle voice, after all these warnings, she said, "Is that all, Mr. Marshall?" If you ever think of an anti-climax! [laughter] He was kind of surprised, but he turned around and said, "Yes." Whereupon she turned around to the rest of us and she said, "Well, we were to have a meeting at Pina [?] Hall at four o'clock, so we may as well go right down there now and go ahead with our meeting." So we all trouped up and went to Pina [?] Hall instead of taking their invitation to use the auditorium, and [we] took our vote. It was by secret ballot, and even the assistant superintendent – believe it or not – came. And just eight people voted not to strike. Everybody else voted to strike.

Murray School 17

And only three teachers tried to cross the picket line; that was out at the Murray School. (It was a junior high at that time). But when they got there, there were no pupils, so they left. It was an interesting situation, and pickets all around through the city. The parents were with us too, you see.

This had all come about through attempts to get certain programs put through. I

remember we were asking for a salary of $5,000 [laughter] maximum at that time. And we were asking that the amounts spent for materials should be upped to – I think – $50,000 annually. We wanted school social workers. They were called "visiting teachers"…assigned on a pupil ratio. We wanted nurses assigned on a ratio that we set up. That was point four. We had a five point program. We were like the Russians. [laughter] At any rate, these were the requests we were making, and the parents were sympathetic. So the parents in the neighborhood set up coffee clutches [clusters?] for us.

I picketed just one two-hour term because I was the public relations person, and that seems to have always been my job, you see; so I was on the radio (I don't think we had TV then) coast to coast broadcast. We got messages in from both coasts for they heard us, you know, they heard the broadcast. And I went around meeting groups, explaining to them what the issues were…In order that I might say that I had done some picketing, I insisted upon having one shift.

There were two-hour stretches – bitter cold weather. We went out the Monday before Thanksgiving and we picketed – struck right up to the Christmas holidays. We returned after the holidays.

And somebody in the neighborhood would come over and would say to whatever teacher might be picketing, "Here, go over and have a cup of coffee; we'll take your signs." And we'd go over to whatever house was indicated, and a bunch of picketers would have a cup of coffee and a bite to eat, and then go back on the picket line. Clergymen picketed for us, parents turned out and picketed, college professors and all – the most curious strike you ever saw! Students,

Teachers on Strike, Kids Hear Lessons On KUOM Airings

ST. PAUL, Nov. 30.—KUOM, University of Minnesota station, is providing daily programs for school children here whose teachers are out on strike for higher wages. Burton Paulu, station manager, said KUOM's school of the air programs were adapted to benefit kids who have had no school since Monday (25), when the teachers staged a walkout and began picketing schools.

The programs, normally used to supplement classroom teaching, have been changed in order to direct them toward kid listening as individuals rather than in groups. These include news segs in language moppets can understand, dramatizations, simple science, music appreciation and history.

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of course, picketed. Now can you imagine a strike like that, with everybody all worked up?

As a matter of fact – and this I was able to tell – the suggestion that we strike came from the PTA Council Board. You know, the central board of the PTA! I was on that – I've been on it for some years. I was vice-president of the board, and we had made these attempts to get these changes made with regard to the department's use of funds, etc. First the teachers had made the attempt, then the parents said, "Let us do it now." They said, "We'll save you…[look] out for your own interest; let us do it." Well, they fell to.

Well, we were holding a post mortem, you might say, with the PTA Council. I was there and right across from me was our superintendent of schools. Finally, after they had analyzed the situation, a lady by the name of Mrs. Finger…said, "The teachers must create a crisis." Nice word – crisis! And I could feel all the eyes turn toward me; but I thought, "Oh, I'll just let that lie a bit." So the superintendent picked it up and he said, "If the teachers do strike," – and that was the first use of the word, "strike" insofar as this group was concerned – "what would be accomplished?" So then the whole group just went into what could be accomplished.

But we had a committee for communication purposes…established then in the schools – a committee of a hundred; so I immediately got in touch with our chairman of the committee, got the word around, got the committee together…and I told them what happened. I said, "These parents want us to strike because they are in complete sympathy. They've tried to get these things done, and they feel that no way will handle it except to strike." That's how we organized the strike. Whereupon, the labor men formed a "flying squad" to go around to the schools to make sure that we wouldn't be harassed. But they told us afterwards that they got the surprise of their lives because everybody was working with us. Nobody was working against us, and they weren't needed at all. And they said they'd never seen anything like it.

H [It's late; perhaps we're] ready to strike again. I think you have worn us all out…I think Mr. East wants to go home and go to bed.

(Laughter and banter and interview is finished)

Names Referenced

Jane McGough *might* continue research on the names below. If anyone else finds information, please send to Jane or to Ellen Michael.

Al Smith	City Councilman	Union man	
Mabel Coulter	Second President	NEA/AFT	Teacher at St. Paul Central High
	President of the Local in 1919		Appeared before the City Council
			The Daily News had a little paragraph
Miss Sprenger	First President	NEA/AFT	
Dr. Schweitzer	Brooklyn	Spanish Flu 1918	
Albert "Cody" Hansel	Ran for Mayor	The Daily News	Taught Shop
Peter MacMillan	President of the Men's Federation (Local 43)		
Pennel Award	Mary got the award "a few years ago"		
Harvey Otterson (Oddison?)			
Mrs. Ladd (ne Gregory)	A Republican	Her father was Governor of Rhode Island	
Margaret Haley			
Stillman	Supported the AFL-Woodrow Wilson involvement in the war		
Paul Douglas	later Senator of Illinois		
A.J. Muste			
Dave Seldon			
Dr. Henry Linville	President of New York Teacher's Local		
Lowry	Elected in Toldeo	Conservative	Elected in 1934 Did not show up in Philadelphia
Florence Hanson	Executive Secretary of the AFT		
Jimmy Meade	Chicago		
Freeland Stecker	Chicago		
Arthur Elder	Progressive Caucus	Cleveland? Detroit?	

Isadore Began	New York
Dale Ziesman	New York Local
Mrs. Whit	New York Local
Mary Herrick	Chicago
Herb Zitser	St. Paul Local 43
Margaret Haley	Chicago Irish at the time of the founding of the AFT
Pat Strandt (?)	on staff of AFT wrote an article on Mary (1969?) in The American Teacher
Harold Strand	Mary's student in Benson
E.C. (B.C.?) Hartwell	1918 went from St. Paul to Milwaukee wanted to establish the merit system
Florence Sweeny	Detroit
Frances Comfort	
Joe Landis	Chicago
Jack Fewkes	Chicago
Stan Stanton	1936
Ali Mann	wanted to be President (Atlanta) Mary Barker's rival
Molly Garry	elected as Chairman of joint council
Mrs. Finger	

Family Memories

Please send any memories you have of Mary McGough to Ellen Michael or Jane McGough, and we will add them to this document, and send out to family as an Addendum.

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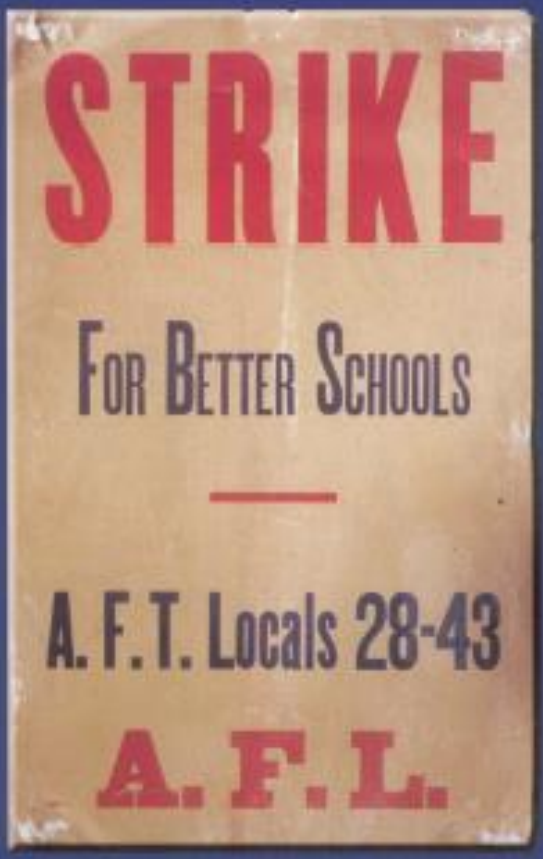


This strike notice was one of many that St. Paul's public school teachers carried in the 1946 teachers' strike, the first strike by teachers in the United States. It is reproduced here by permission of Local 28, American Federation of Teachers.

Strike for Better Schools

The St. Paul Public Schools Teachers' Strike of 1946

Cheryl Carlson

This article is based on the author's doctorial dissertation. Dr. Carlson is a retired Saint Paul Public Schools mathematics teacher and school counselor. Her hobby is genealogy including collecting old family photographs. In the early 1990s when she was doing research for her dissertation, she interviewed over fifty individuals who had some connection to the strike. One of the individuals whom she interviewed was Virginia Brainard Kunz who at the time was the editor of this magazine, Ramsey County History. *Dr. Carlson was fascinated by Virginia's insight into the history of St. Paul during the first half of the twentieth century and how it pertained to the Saint Paul Public School system and the St. Paul teachers' strike of 1946. This article is a memorial to her friend Virginia Brainard Kunz.*

The strike of 1,165 St. Paul school teachers, lasting from November 25 to December 27, 1946, startled the nation into realizing that teachers were ready to use the strike weapon as a method to alleviate school funding problems and/or intolerable working conditions. The St. Paul teachers' strike was the first organized teachers' strike in the nation and the only teachers' strike in the history of St. Paul.

In 1946, the national public school picture was grim; the plight of the Saint Paul Public School system was even more serious. St. Paul had a long history of inadequate funding for public education because the local business community continually campaigned to keep property taxes at a minimum and other citizens were unwilling to spend more tax dollars on public schools. At the time of the strike, the city of St. Paul had no board of education. The St. Paul teachers' strike exposed the weakness of a system which gave fiscal controls for education to city officials rather than to responsible educational authorities.

School funding was grossly inadequate. Since 1914, the Saint Paul Public School system had suffered under the restraint of a per capita spending limitation on all city services; without a specifically designated school advocate, the schools had to compete in the political arena with the other departments of city government for a share of the city budget. When St. Paul failed to provide adequate funds for the proper operation of its schools, St. Paul teachers assumed the leadership needed to initiate charter amendments that eventually passed and improved public school funding.

St. Paul teachers were on strike after long delays, frequent evasions, and outright refusals by city officials responsible for education to provide sufficient financial resources to meet the educational needs of St. Paul public school students. There were no sincere attempts at negotiations before the strike was called.

Underlying Problems that Led to the Strike

The First Seventy Years

From 1843 until 1888 the school board for the Saint Paul Public School system was elected by the voters in St. Paul, and was fiscally independent from the city government. This changed in 1888 when the mayor was given the authority to appoint the school board. In 1891, the school system officially became a part of the city government, which operated under tight financial restraints. These tight financial restraints would affect the school district for more than half a century.

Parochial Schools

A major factor leading to the 1946 teachers' strike was the lack of support for public education by those taxpayers who sent their children to non-public schools. Dr. Steven Schellenberg (interview, July 18, 1995), Supervisor of Student Data Management for the Saint Paul School system, mentioned that until 1968, approximately one-third of St. Paul's school population had consistently attended private schools.

St. Paul School Enrollment—Fall 1946
(Total Enrollment: 52,045)

Public schools	34,454
Catholic parochial schools	16,218
Lutheran parochial schools (estimated)	500
Breck School	395
St. Paul Academy	238
Summit School	240

Source: St. Paul Dispatch, November 26, 1946

At the time of the 1946 teachers' strike, roughly two thirds of the school-age children in St. Paul attended public schools.

Adoption of the Commission Charter

Another major cause of the 1946 teachers' strike was the commission charter which determined the governing structure of the City of St. Paul and the Saint Paul Public Schools. A related cause was the $30 per capita spending limitation for public services mandated by the 1919 amendment to the city charter that was still in effect in 1946.

According to a May 8, 1912, extra edition of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, St. Paul voters had voted overwhelmingly the day before for a commission charter. The new charter established a close relationship between the schools

and other municipal services. Every two years, an election was to be held for the mayor and six city councilmen. After the election, the mayor was to assign each of the six councilmen to lead one of the six departments of the city government: education, public utilities, public works, parks, finance, and public safety. One commissioner was to be assigned the Department of Education who was also in charge of the public auditorium and all public libraries in the city. The commissioners were, therefore, legislators in the morning when they met in a city council session and administrators the rest of the day when each of them managed the city department he led.

In St. Paul, the Department of Education had the largest budget, the largest number of employees, and was probably the most complex department to lead. Nolan C. Kearney found that the newest city council member was usually appointed as the Commissioner of Education. He felt that this was probably because the Education Department was the least desirable of the six city departments.[1]

Rarely were commissioners chosen because of their expertise as administrators. There were no minimum requirements for the Commissioner of Education job or indeed for any of the commissioner positions, and there was no assurance that trained administrators would be elected. According to former Governor of Minnesota Elmer L. Andersen (interview, February 6, 1995), one of the most effective individuals to head the Education Department was Frank Marzitelli, a St. Paul high school dropout. Fred Truax, the Commissioner of Education during the 1946 strike, was a postal worker. The previous Commissioner of Education, Axel Peterson, was a plumber.

When the Commissioner of Education was appointed, he was given most of the powers usually held by a school board, although in theory, the city council retained the right to exercise authority over the affairs of the different city departments. All commissioners were elected for two-year terms, and the Commissioner of Education was required to appoint a superintendent whose term also ran for two years.

The St. Paul charter also provided for a charter commission, a body of fifteen men, appointed by judges of the district court. This commission was charged under state law with the duty of drafting and submitting needed charter changes to the voters. According to Michael McDonough, for years, the majority of the members of the charter commission represented big business and real estate interests. He states, "It was very difficult to get them to submit a charter amendment to the people that was favorable to the schools."[2]

St. Paul Public Schools
Per Capita and Per Pupil Costs
Compared With Comparable Cities
(1945 costs)

City	Cost Per Capita	Cost Per Pupil
St. Paul	$14.05	$132.83
Akron	20.48	135.77
Columbus	16.99	138.65
Dayton	20.54	155.49
Denver	20.03	134.03
Indianapolis	21.32	168.93
Kansas City, Mo.	16.61	134.93
Oakland	28.68	197.29
Omaha	16.68	129.64
Rochester, N.Y.	21.43	229.15
Seattle	24.13	174.25
Toledo	15.89	144.01
Providence	19.57	181.36

Source: St. Paul Pioneer Press, January 11, 1947

When compared with cities of comparable population, St. Paul had the lowest costs per capita and per pupil in 1945.

A major cause of the 1946 teachers' strike was the per capita expenditure limitation established by the 1912 city charter amendment. The charter originally set a $24.00 per capita expenditure limitation on all city expenditures and a $6.00 per capita expenditure limitation on expenditures for schools. Later, this was amended in 1919 to allow $30.00 per capita for all city expenditures of which there was no specific limit for the schools. Any change to the charter required a sixty percent affirmative vote by the citizens of St. Paul. The 1919 change to the charter was the only successful charter amendment to affect the school system between 1912, when the charter was adopted, and 1947. The inability to change this per capita amount clearly contributed to the conditions which eventually resulted in the strike.

The School System under the Commission Charter

The July 10, 1935, *St. Paul Daily News* reported budget reductions in the public schools of $462,603 from 1932 to 1935 even though enrollment had increased by 873 pupils and the teaching staff had been reduced by forty-eight teachers. The number of pupils per teacher in St. Paul had reached the absolute limit tolerated by the Minnesota State Department of Education and the North Central Association.

Between 1919 and 1946, all amendment attempts to raise the $30.00 per capita funding limit in the St. Paul charter were defeated by the citizens of St. Paul.

St. Paul 1946 Teacher Salaries
Compared to Cities of Comparable Size

City	Minimum Salary	Maximum Salary
St. Paul	$1,300	$2,800
Birmingham, Ala.	1,260	2,675
San Diego	2,100	3,200
Denver	2,280	3,650
Atlanta	1,020	3,627
Louisville	1,650	3,050
Omaha	1,530	2,880
Jersey City, N.J.	1,800	4,750
Rochester, N.Y.	1,850	3,250
Akron	1,650	3,100
Portland, Ore.	1,800	3,100
Dayton	1,700	3,100
Toledo	1,420	2,850
Oklahoma City	1,400	2,450
Providence	1,300	3,800
Dallas	1,623	2,835
Houston	1,800	3,000
Seattle	2,000	3,200

Source: St. Paul Dispatch, December 30, 1946

In 1946 the salaries of St. Paul's public school teachers lagged behind those of comparable cities.

The continuing use of a vote-splitting technique in which two similar charter amendments were submitted at the same time helped in their defeat. In addition, for years, the St. Paul Real Estate Board and the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce budgeted for campaigns to defeat charter amendments which raised taxes on businesses. The business community fought actively against increases in school spending in an attempt to keep its own taxes low.

Due to widespread criticism of how St.

Paul operated its public schools, in 1944 the city council decided to conduct an extensive survey of the public schools, appropriating $10,000 for this purpose and appointing a Citizen's Committee to manage it. The Citizen's Committee members were Dr. Martin Graebner, president of Concordia College; Dean C. E. Ficken, professor at Macalester College; Rev. Vincent J. Flynn, president of St. Thomas College; Ramsey County District Judge Gustavus Loevinger; and Dr. Edward C. Roeber, professor of education at Hamline University.

In early 1945 the Citizen's Committee published *Your Schools and Their Needs.* The 195-page report recommended sweeping changes to St. Paul's public school system. The survey recommended that the governance of the city's schools be transferred to an autonomous public corporation armed with all authority but the taxing powers and ruled over by a seven-member, citizen-elected board of education.

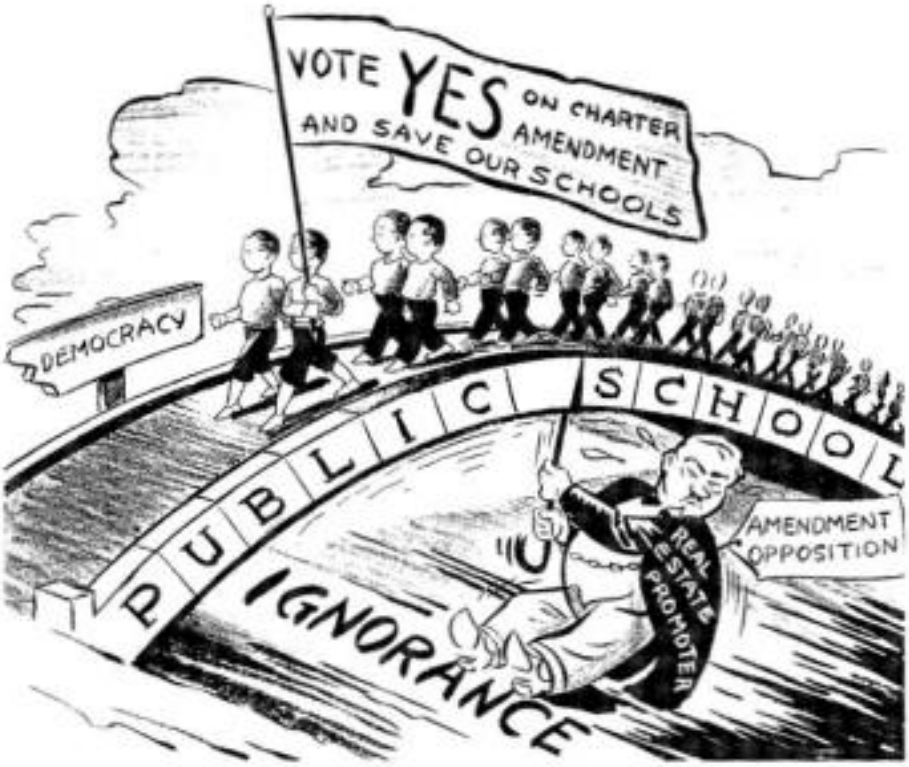
Further, the report also strongly criticized the school district for not buying textbooks for students. It recommended that textbooks be provided cost-free to students and that additional funds be provided for library books and periodicals in both elementary and secondary schools. The survey also classified fifty-five percent of the elementary school buildings in the city as poor or inferior. It recommended that the city adopt a comprehensive and continuous long-range school program.[3]

Corruption in Saint Paul

St. Paul had a national reputation for corruption during the 1920s and '30s. According to Virginia Brainard Kunz in *St. Paul: Saga of an American City,* beginning in the 1920s, arrangements were made with the St. Paul police that allowed criminals to "not be molested in St. Paul as long as they did not commit any crimes there. A self-serving accommodation, it ignored the danger to people elsewhere in return for assurances that St. Paul's citizens would be safe, but it had the support of the city's administration and civic leaders."[4] Kunz maintains that civic leaders supported this system because gangsters purchased expensive clothes, bought luxury automobiles, and rented fancy houses and apartments. During this period, substantial amounts of money changed hands between gangsters, the St. Paul police, and city government officials. Kunz (interview, May 8, 1995) said that Homer Cummings, U.S. attorney general under President Franklin Roosevelt, called St. Paul the "cesspool of the country," because of rampant corruption.

The V-5 Committee published this advertisement in the St. Paul newspapers encouraging citizens to vote for the five amendments to the city's charter in an effort to improve the St. Paul schools. Ad courtesy of the author.

During the first half of the twentieth century when the city council controlled the public schools, corruption was also common in the school system. Several interviewed teachers confirmed that during the 1920's and '30's some teachers, including themselves, paid money to the comptroller or the city clerk in St. Paul in order to be hired. During the Depression years, when



A St. Paul teacher drew this cartoon that the Joint Council of Men and Women Teachers circulated in support of the V-5 charter amendments. Cartoon courtesy of the author.

there were more teachers than positions in large cities, paying to get a teaching job was the only sure way of being hired unless one had other connections.

Gordon Minichier (interview, March 17, 1995), retired St. Paul assistant superintendent, felt that the Saint Paul Public School system was "full of corruption" during the 1920's, '30's, and into the 1940's. He said that it was common practice for several years that as part of their jobs and/or to be promoted, St. Paul school administrators were expected to deliver political pamphlets door-to-door and to hand out political pamphlets on street corners during election years for city council members and other city officials.

The Spark

Following the release of the 1945 school district survey, *Your Schools and Their Needs*, and under the financial restraint of the $30.00 per capita limitation, the Saint Paul Parent Teacher Association (PTA) became increasingly more active in its attempts to bring about needed administrative and financial reforms. After months of research and deliberation, the PTA, along with representatives from the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, the firemen's union, the Trades and Labor Assembly, the College Club, and the League of Women Voters, drafted what was called the V-5 program. The V-5 program stood for victory for five amendments. To promote this program, these organizations formed the V-5 Committee with Mrs. Matilda Kramer as its chair. According to former Governor Elmer L. Andersen (interview, February 6, 1994) with the exception of the St. Paul teachers themselves, Mrs. Kramer did more to facilitate the change of the St. Paul schools to an independent school system than any other St. Paul citizen.

The benefits of the amendments were detailed in *The People's V-5 Report*, an eight-page newspaper written by Mrs. Kramer and published in 1946 by the V-5 committee. The fifth amendment proposed in this report pertained to the public schools and was intended to separate the schools from politics. It also gave the Superintendent of Schools an improved salary with greater authority over instructional matters. It indicated that the superintendent would not have to "play politics" to hold the job.[5]

The Parent Teacher Association decided against submitting the program directly to the charter commission for approval because they feared immediate refusal. Instead, it submitted petitions signed by almost 27,000 voters to the charter commission and asked that the five proposed charter changes be submitted directly to the voters at the July 8, 1946, primary.

All the publicity forced the charter commission to submit the V-5 charter amendments to the voters; however it submitted a sixth amendment as well. Eight of the fifteen charter commission members voted to include this sixth amendment, an amendment that would negate the previous five amendments by continuing the crippling $30 per capita restriction.

The V-5 committee sought to impress upon the voters that as costs had risen, the city had been forced to reduce its services to the people in order to stay within the $30 per capita limitation. Shortly before the election, the *People's V-5 Report* was distributed throughout the city under the sponsorship of the V-5 Committee. It contained pictures of playgrounds and school buildings that were in a "disreputable condition." Some schools still used individual coal stoves in each room for heat. The newspaper claimed classrooms were overcrowded; it was not unusual to have fifty students all day in an elementary classroom. It published a photograph of several boys using the one sink in the only boy's restroom at Guttersen Elementary School, a school with more than 180 boys. The photograph showed the boys wiping their hands on their shirts because the school could not afford to supply paper towels for the restrooms. Many schools had no soap, no towels, and no toilet paper in any of their lavatories. Many St. Paul schools in 1946 did not have modern toilet facilities.

The real estate and business community spent thousands of dollars to defeat the V-5 amendments because they had even more money at stake if the amendments passed as their property taxes

would increase. In 1946, a full-page ad in the *St. Paul Dispatch* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* cost $600. That cost apparently did not deter the opponents of the charter changes because the newspapers ran full-page ads daily calling for the defeat of the V-5 amendments.

The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* for Tuesday, July 9, 1946, announced that the city charter changes had all been defeated by wide margins. Lettisha Henderson, chair of the teachers' negotiating committee during the strike, mentioned in her October 29, 1970 interview with Dennis East, archivist, Wayne State University Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, that immediately after the defeat of the V-5 charter amendments, many teachers who never would have thought about striking before said, "We have to strike!"[6]

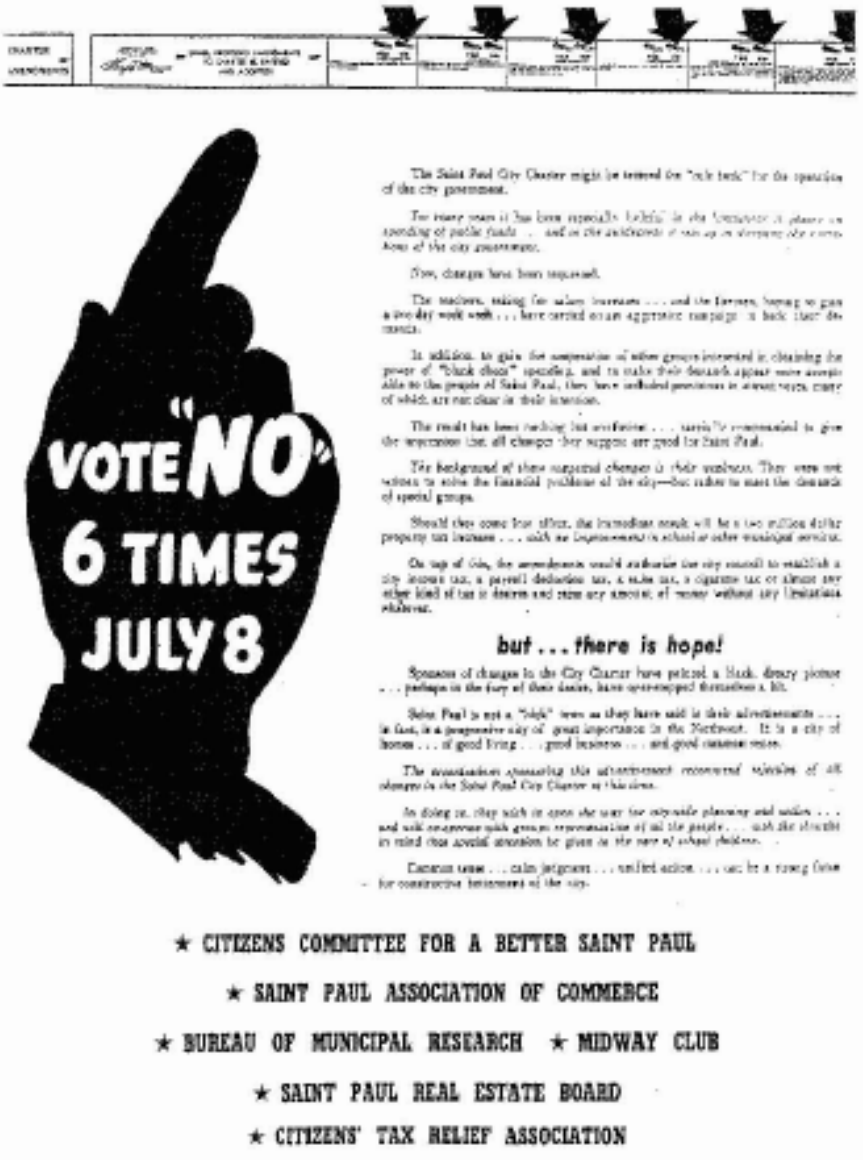
Dr. Marjorie Neihart (interview, January 25, 1995) said the teachers had tried everything. They had gone to the city council; they had gone to the mayor; they had gone to the legislature; and they had tried to pass the charter amendments. All of these efforts had failed to result in improvements for the Saint Paul Schools. A strike seemed to be the only remaining recourse.

Preparing to Strike

In a public letter distributed to all professional staff in St. Paul, dated October 29, 1946, the Joint Council of the men's teachers' union and the women's teachers' union stated that for nearly a generation, the quality of public school education in St. Paul had been deteriorating. Schools had been understaffed, inadequately equipped, and poorly maintained. Instructional salary schedules were so low that many capable teachers had resigned, capable new teachers had not been hired, and shamefully low living standards were being forced upon those who remained. They asked for support of the program, which was outlined in the Joint Council's 1946 pamphlet, *The First Step Up,* to advance public education.[7]

To promote the program outlined in their pamphlet, the Joint Council called for a mass meeting of teachers to be held on October 29, 1946. According to the October 30, 1946, *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* more than 900 professional staff attended the meeting. Three resolutions were unanimously adopted. The first resolution demanded funds totaling $1,700,000 for school improvements. The second resolution called for a new salary schedule with a minimum of $2,400 for an annual teacher's salary and a maximum eventually approaching $5,000. The third resolution called for a $50.00-a-month cost-of-living bonus for the last four months of 1946.

A fourth resolution gave the Joint Council authority to be the teachers' bargaining agent and to take whatever course of action was necessary to achieve the first three resolutions. A standing vote was taken and only six teachers opposed the motion. Helen Arbes (interview, February 7, 1995) said that she had no idea before the meeting that there was any possibility of a teachers' strike. She voted "no" because her initial reaction was that teachers should not strike. After talking to others about the conditions in the schools, however, she decided a strike was the only way to force changes in the school system. In the 1946–1947 school year, Ms. Arbes had fifty students in her crowded eighth grade classroom.



In the war in the newspapers over the V-5 charter amendments, the opposition published this advertisement in the St. Paul newspapers. Ad courtesy of the author.

On Wednesday, November 13, 1946, the Joint Council sent a letter to State Labor Conciliator Leonard Johnson. This letter declared that under the provisions of the Minnesota Labor Relations Law, the St. Paul teachers were giving the required ten-day notice of their intention to strike against the St. Paul Education Department on Monday, November 25, 1946.

On November 18th, the city council voted to dismiss students at noon the next day, November 19th, in order to discuss the threatened strike with the teaching staff at a 2:00 P.M. meeting at the city auditorium. The Joint Council had scheduled a pre-strike mass meeting with the teachers at 4:00 P.M. that same day.[8]

According to the November 20th *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* at the teachers' meeting with the city council on November 19th, Commissioner of Education Fred Truax and Superintendent James E. Marshall warned teachers in great detail that if they struck, they would jeopardize their tenure rights, their state teaching certificates, and would be subject to discharge. Grace Benz (interview, September 15, 1994) said that no one asked questions, and no one responded to the speakers. At the end of the meeting, the teachers got up and silently left the auditorium. Ms. Benz characterized it as a "very dramatic happening."[9]

On November 25, 1946, the *Minneapolis Star* reported that in his sermon on Sunday, November 24th, the Reverend M.L. Frank of Olivet Congregational Church in St. Paul declared that the city's public school teachers were the victims of an outmoded and inadequate method of financing and administering the schools. He also placed responsibility directly on the voters and indicated that too much was at stake to let fears of increased taxes or selfish interests obstruct the proper functioning of the city.

To The Tune Of A Hickory Stick

On November 30, 1946, the St. Paul Pioneer Press *published this cartoon capturing the dilemma that St. Paul faced regarding funding of its public schools. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

Strike Leadership

All the striking teachers who were interviewed as part of the research for my dissertation identified two people as the strike's leaders: Mary McGough and Lettisha Henderson. Ms. McGough was frequently named as the most important leader, an intriguing fact, as she actually had no official strike leadership position. During the strike, she was the principal at Jefferson Elementary School and had started teaching in St. Paul in 1903. During the strike several of the principals in St. Paul were members of one of the two teacher unions. This changed in 1971 when the Minnesota State Legislature passed collective bargaining legislation which no longer allowed teachers and administrators to be members of the same bargaining unit. Lettisha Henderson (interview, October 29, 1970) indicated that during the strike, Ms. McGough participated regularly in radio interviews, explaining to citizens why St. Paul teachers were striking and answering their questions about the strike. She was a strong, articulate woman and her radio interviews represented a major contribution to efforts to settle.

Lettisha Henderson was the chair of the teachers' negotiating committee during the strike and a vice president for the American Federation of Teachers. The other two members of the negotiating committee were Arthur C. Anderson, a teacher at Central High School, and Mollie Geary, the chair of the Joint Council. A "tell it

Strike Leaders Mary McGough and Lettisha Henderson

In 1946 Grace Benz was the president of the women teachers' union local in St. Paul. When asked about the strike's leaders (interview, September 15, 1994), she emphasized that without Mary McGough and Lettisha Henderson, the strike would have "fizzled." Other teachers who were interviewed reinforced this opinion.

When the strike began, Mary Ellen McGough was a principal at Jefferson Elementary School. She had been born in 1885 and began teaching in St. Paul in 1903. A founding member of the American Federation of Teachers local,

Lettisha E. "Tish" Henderson. Photo courtesy of the author.

McGough had served as its vice president in the 1930s. She had also served as president of the St. Paul Federation of Women Teachers. Thus by 1946 she had considerable experience in union organizing and in representing the teachers with public officials. A skilled public speaker, McGough's dress, demeanor, intelligence, and knowledge of parliamentary procedure had earned her considerable respect from public officials who had dealt with her over the years. In the words of Muriel Korthage (interview May 26, 1993), McGough had a lot of "clout" with officials at city hall.

Lettisha E. "Tish" Henderson, on the other hand, was younger. She had been born in 1902 in Superior, Wis. Henderson earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and had done graduate work in the field of special education at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. In 1937 she became the supervisor of all special learning classes in St. Paul. When Dennis East interviewed her in 1970, Henderson stressed that a major factor in her decision to take a role in the strike was the deplorable physical condition of so many of the school buildings. She felt these deficiencies seriously undermined students' learning and judged they were totally unacceptable for health and safety reasons. The defeat of the V-5 charter amendments convinced Henderson that the teachers in St. Paul had to go on strike. She subsequently chaired the three-person teachers' negotiating committee, a subcommittee of the Joint Council of the individual women and men teachers' locals. Teachers who were asked in interviews about Henderson's role in the strike commented that she had a no-nonsense personality. Her honesty and caring attitude coupled with her passionate concern for the needs of students won people's confidence in her. She was also a skilled negotiator. Both women were intelligent, assertive leaders, but "Tish" Henderson's outgoing style effectively complemented Mary McGough's formal manner.

The strike thrust McGough and Henderson into important roles. Both, however, had the education and experience as teachers and administrators to handle dealing with their fellow teachers and public officials throughout the strike. Even though McGough was not a member of the teachers' Joint Council, or a member of the negotiating committee, or even an officer of the women teachers' union, she became the public voice for the teachers. She regularly took part in radio interviews in which she articulately explained to listeners why the teachers were on strike and deftly fielded questions from her radio hosts. As one retired deputy superintendent later put it, no one was willing to take on Mary McGough "one-on-one." Henderson, in contrast, was adept at

Mary Ellen McGough. Photo courtesy of the author.

working behind the scenes as a member of the negotiating committee. In late November she was able to persuade the Minnesota attorney general to authorize the finance committee of the Joint Council to serve as the bargaining agent for the teachers and then was a key participant in the bargaining that ultimately produced the strike settlement.

Other than St. Paul teachers and their supporters at the time of the strike, few people are aware today of the contributions that Mary McGough and Lettisha Henderson made in 1946 to improve the public schools. Without their leadership, the strike might not have succeeded.

like it is" leader, Lettisha worked long and hard to improve working conditions for teachers.

Most of those interviewed recalled that the majority of leadership positions during the strike were held by women. Only 229, or fewer than twenty percent, of the 1,165 professional teaching positions in St. Paul, were filled by men and a significant number of these men taught vocational classes. Dr. Myron Lieberman (interview, February 14, 1995) a national union expert, called the St. Paul teachers at the time of the strike a "petticoat local" because of the heavy involvement of women.[10]

In 1946 the Saint Paul Federation of Men Teachers Local 43, and the Saint Paul Federation of Women Teachers Local 28, were separate union locals. The Joint Council of Men and Women Teachers was the governing body for the two unions. The two unions subsequently merged on September 30, 1957.

Strike for Better Schools (November 25—December 27, 1946)

According to the November 25th *Duluth Herald*, picket lines were established that morning at each of St. Paul's seventy-seven elementary schools and high schools and three or more were on the line at the larger schools. The temperature was three degrees above zero when picketing began at 7:30 A.M., the coldest day so far that fall.

According to the November 25th *St. Paul Dispatch*, throughout the city, parents, business people, private citizens, and students carried coffee and doughnuts to the picketers or invited them into homes or buildings to eat, drink, and get warm. Parents of students at Maxfield, Crowley, and Marshall Schools set up their own picket lines in sympathy with strikers, and in many instances students carried banners alongside their teachers. Few students expressed opposition to the teachers' stand in calling the strike. The article described picketing teachers walking on the picket lines as early as 6:30 A.M., bundled in sheepskins, overshoes, stadium boots, and wool scarves. PTA groups prepared lunches for picketers and offered their homes as rest stations. The Jewish Educational Center opened its doors to striking teachers on picket lines at Marshall High School and Webster Elementary School.

Shortly after November 25, 1946, when the teachers went on strike in St. Paul, the Associated Press published this photograph of Sara Ryder, left, who taught English at Central High School, with two of her students, Ben Brattner, center, and Harvey Mackay. The photo appeared in hundreds of newspapers across the country and helped give the teachers' strike national attention. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Former Governor of Minnesota Elmer L. Andersen (interview, 1995) stated "I remember the strike keenly because it is inconceivable to people today what a shock it was then to have teachers go out on strike. Teachers just didn't do that—it would be like a priest picketing a church or cathedral. It was just absolutely unheard of. Everybody was in a state of turmoil over the strike." He said that on the first day of the strike he stopped at his daughter's school, Guttersen Elementary to talk to the picketers. He asked his daughter's teachers why they had gone on strike. They realized that it was the only way they felt they could get attention. The situation was desperate, they said. They told him to look at Guttersen School; they needed a new school. In fact St. Paul needed several new schools. They also needed smaller class sizes and many other things necessary to do an adequate job, but nobody was paying attention. In the teachers' opinion, city commissioners were more interested in streets than in schools. The teachers pleaded for Andersen to understand that they didn't want to strike. Making children stay at home and disrupting their education and family life was unheard of, and it was tearing them apart, they said. Governor Andersen recalled that it was a traumatic and emotional situation for teachers.

Mabel Surratt remembered Elmer L. Andersen's visit with Guttersen teachers on the first day of the strike. At the time of the strike, he was president of the H. B. Fuller Company and a well-respected businessman in St. Paul. She felt that the backing of Andersen and his wife was a tremendous boost to teachers' morale.[11]

Harvey Mackay (interview, April 5,

1995) was a ninth grade student at Central High School at the time of the strike. The Associated Press took several pictures of Mackay helping his teachers, pictures which appeared in hundreds of newspapers throughout the country. He remembered that nearly everyone was sympathetic to the teachers and cheered them on. The strike was unprecedented, he said, as before that time, the idea that teachers would strike was unheard of.

According to the November 26th *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, on Monday evening, November 25th, radio station KSTP discussed the teachers' strike during a public forum program. Professor Walter W. Cook of the University of Minnesota's College of Education said that most of the public schools in St. Paul were in deplorable condition. Only in cities in the Deep South were conditions equally as poor, he said, a direct result of the fact that St. Paul had no board of education and that the schools were not financially independent from city government. He felt that no permanent improvement to St. Paul schools would come until these changes had been made.

The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of December 7th reported that the city council had agreed to support an amendment separating school finances from the city activities. The agreement was applauded by the striking teachers as a great step toward the reopening of the city's schools, but the teachers also asserted that the proposed amendment must be certified by the charter commission and returned to the city council for submission to the public in a referendum before they would agree to return to work.

According to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of December 10th, the St. Paul Charter Commission met on Monday, December 9th, in a two-and-a-half hour session to review the proposed charter amendment which had the unanimous approval of the city council. Members of the PTA and labor organizations, parents, pastors, students, and school officials appeared before the Charter Commission to urge the approval of the proposed charter amendment which would then be submitted to the voters to end the teachers' strike. Rev. Alton M. Motter, executive secretary of the Saint Paul Council of Churches, was one of those who spoke at the meeting. He pointed out that the membership of the Protestant churches of St. Paul had an especially strong interest in settling the strike since nearly all Protestants in the city sent their children to public schools. The chairman of the charter commission announced that it would take some time to draw up an amendment and study its effects.

Thousands of letters of encouragement, many containing checks for St. Paul teachers to help them finance the strike, were received from all over the nation. According to the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers records, more than $20,000 was donated by organizations and individuals throughout the country to help with strike expenses. Some of this money was used to make loans at no interest to teachers who needed money for basic necessities, as they received no pay checks for five weeks.[12]

The December 14th *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that the charter commission studied the proposed charter amendment for nearly four hours on Friday, December 13th. The commissioners heard city officials discuss municipal financial needs at length and decided to meet again on Monday, December 16th. On Monday, the commission hoped to draft a plan for a charter amendment aimed at giving the city more money to spend. Unfortunately on Monday, the commission deferred action on the proposed charter amendment. The commission decided to seek further information about the exact cost to the city of raising teachers' salaries as requested. The commission also voiced objections to being "put in the middle" as negotiators in the teachers' strike.

On December 20, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that the Saint Paul Ministers' Association, representing twelve denominational bodies and seventy churches, had issued a statement giving full support to the Citizens Committee for School

This photo of strikers and their supporters appeared in the Minneapolis Star *on November 25. The picket was in front of Maxfield Elementary School and shows (left to right) Earsel Neal, a student at the school; Earl Neil (rear), another student; Grace Carlson, a member of the Parent Teacher Association; Rev. Clarence T.R. Nelson, pastor of Camphor United Methodist Church and a member of the PTA; Milton Siegel, field representative of the United Packinghouse Workers (CIO); and Leona McGibbon, the principal of the school. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*

The Minneapolis Tribune printed this photo of another group of picketers at Maxfield Elementary School. It shows neighbors Mrs. Raymond Sizemore, third from the left, and Mrs. Eugene Grant, far right, serving coffee to teachers Anne Senzer, center left, and Frieda Robe. The two people on the far left are unidentified. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Improvement headed by the Reverend John Edward Thomas. The Citizens Committee was preparing to draw up a petition to amend the city charter, a petition which would be submitted to voters if the charter commission failed to formulate its amendments. The ministers offered their services in circulating the petitions.

The December 21st *St. Paul Dispatch* reported that hopes of ending the strike had been high for several hours the previous day after the charter commission and four representatives of the teachers met at City Hall to discuss plans for putting school finance changes to a referendum. These hopes were dashed, however, when the teachers objected to a no-strike pledge requested by members of the commission.

On December 27, 1946, unofficial negotiations between Clarence B. Randall, a charter commission member, and teacher representatives overcame the negotiating impasse. The two sides agreed on a charter amendment that would increase the existing $30 per capita expenditure to $42, with the schools receiving $18 and the balance being allocated to other city departments. The December 28th *St. Paul Pioneer Press* subsequently reported that on the previous evening, St. Paul teachers had suspended their strike after the charter commission approved an amendment based on these new spending limits that would permit the expenditure of $18 per capita for schools and $24 per capita for other city departments. In effect, this proposed amendment ensured that the resulting new tax revenues would be spread across all city departments rather than just providing an increase in tax dollars to the public schools and the teachers, most of whom were women.

After the Strike

According to the Monday, December 30th *St. Paul Dispatch*, public school children in the city and their teachers streamed back to their classrooms on the coldest day so far that winter. The newspaper stated, "Despite the bitter cold, there was a holiday spirit about the students as they walked toward their school buildings and this persisted in the corridors where they had not gathered since November 22." The newspaper went on to say, "Both the students and the teachers were obviously delighted to return to the school routine and teachers welcomed their pupils enthusiastically."[13]

After two tries and on April 15, 1947, St. Paul voters passed a charter amendment. This amendment, supported by the teachers, provided the necessary short-term relief to alleviate, at least for a time, the financial crisis in the St. Paul schools. More importantly, the amendment separated expenditures for education from those of other city departments, a key issue for teachers throughout the strike.

According to Dr. Marjorie Neihart (interview, January 25, 1995), due, in part, to the lobbying efforts of Lettisha Henderson and the St. Paul teachers, the 1947 Minnesota legislature passed legislation which required school districts to buy textbooks for students in order to receive state aid. This was a tremendous victory for both St. Paul teachers and students because for years St. Paul students had been required to buy their own books.

In 1949, former Governor Elmer L. Andersen, who was a state legislator at the time, prepared legislation that authorized an election in St. Paul to establish a school board. The first attempt in 1949 to establish a school board was defeated, but a second attempt in 1951 was successful; as a result, in January 1952, St. Paul established its first school board. Unfortunately, the board had no fiscal powers. In 1959, State Representatives Karl Grittner and Lyle Farmer drafted legislation whereby the school board could initiate a vote to convert St. Paul to an Independent School District, a move which was defeated in 1960 but approved in 1964. On July 1, 1965, nineteen years after the St. Paul teachers' strike, Independent School District 625 finally became a reality.

When I interviewed participants of the strike, my final question was, "What

was the legacy of the strike?" The overwhelming response to this question was that the strike had led to an independent school district for St. Paul. An independent school district was not established immediately, but during the strike the seeds were planted to strive for granting the public schools in St. Paul fiscal and political independence from city government.

Another common theme among striking teachers who were interviewed was that the strike made them feel empowered. During the strike, for the first time, they felt that they had power as a group. Teachers felt that their strike had made a positive difference in the way St. Paul educated its public school students.

Former Governor Elmer L. Anderson (interview, February 6, 1995) stated that because of the strike, the citizens of St. Paul paid more attention to the public school system. He maintained that as a direct result of the strike, funding for public schools in St. Paul dramatically improved.

Strike Ripples Outside of St. Paul

According to Karl Grittner (interview, January 20, 1995), the St. Paul school strike had national significance in that many school boards throughout the nation as well as in Minnesota gave unsolicited salary increases as a result of the strike. Mr. Grittner is a retired St. Paul School principal and retired state legislator. Agnes Searl (1983) remembered a close friend teaching in East Chicago, Indiana, whose yearly salary was raised by $1,000 after the St. Paul teachers' strike. Ms. Searl also felt that many other teachers throughout the country benefited financially from the St. Paul strike.[14]

Even before the strike began, the debate in St. Paul had had some influence in other Minnesota cities. In November 1946 Albert Lea teachers were given a $300-a-year raise. All school employees in Stillwater were granted cost-of-living increases of $15 to $25 per month. The school board in Sauk Centre granted teachers pay raises ranging from $100 to $200 per year. Although the teachers in these cities might have received these increases anyway, the newspaper report implied that the negotiations in St. Paul indirectly influenced the decisions in those communities.[15]

During the St. Paul teachers' strike, Karl Grittner was teaching at St. Claire, a small town near Mankato, Minnesota. He remembered that the Mankato newspaper printed daily updates on the St. Paul teachers' strike. He said that for the duration of the strike, it was the talk of almost all school districts. Dr. Marjorie Neihart (January 25, 1995) remembered seeing weekly national news updates on the St. Paul teachers' strike at movie theaters before the feature movie began.

In the 1940s, the Associated Press political reporter for Minnesota was Jack Mackay whose wife was a substitute teacher for the Saint Paul Public School system and whose children, including Harvey Mackey, attended public school in St. Paul. Jack Mackay gave extensive international wire service coverage to the struggle in St. Paul to provide adequate public education to the city's students.

Conclusions

The St. Paul teachers' strike exposed the weakness of a system which gave fiscal controls for education to city officials rather than to responsible educational authorities. At the time of the strike, St. Paul had no board of education. The complexities of the needs of public education demonstrated the need for a board of education that could focus exclusively on educational funding, budgets, and policies.

Unfortunately, the nation's first teachers' strike was needed to awaken the St. Paul community to the reality that their public schools were grossly underfunded compared to those in the rest of the state and the rest of the country. The strike was a result of the failure of St. Paul government officials to address the city's educational needs as uninformed St. Paul voters failed to see the needs of education. St. Paul voters defeated several charter amendments aimed at improving educational conditions for St. Paul school children before they were educated by the St. Paul teachers who planned and organized the first teachers' strike in the nation.

Fortunately, the strike caused many St. Paul citizens to begin to examine the inadequate funding of their public schools and to see a need for change. As the strike went on, more and more citizens pledged their support to the striking teachers. Finally, with extensive support from St. Paul citizens, St. Paul teachers were successful in *striking for better schools.*

Endnotes

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2. Michael McDonough, *St. Paul Federation Teachers: Fifty Years of Service 1918–1968* (St. Paul, Minn.: St. Paul Federation of Teachers, 1968), 11–12. During the strike, McDonough was the chair of the teachers' picketing committee.

3. Millard D. Bell, Paul A. Rehmus, Eugene S. Lawler, George W. Rosenlof, director, under the Authority of the Citizens' Committee Appointed by the City Council of the City of St. Paul, *Your Schools and Their Needs: The Report of a Survey of Selected Areas of the Public Schools of the City of St. Paul, Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1945).

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5. Matilda Kramer, *People's V-5 Report* (St. Paul: V-5 Charter Amendment Committee, 1946).

6. Wayne J. Urban, *Why Teachers Organized* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982)

7. Fred Strong, *The First Step Up* [special bulletin] (St. Paul: Teachers' Joint Council, October 1946).

8. "Warning Against Intimidation," *The Federationist*, November 19, 1946 [special issue], p. 1.

9. For information on the strong support that that the teachers received from organized labor in St. Paul before the strike began and while it was underway, see *Minnesota Labor Review*, November and December 1946, and Cheryl Carlson, *Strike for Better Schools: The St. Paul Public School Teachers' Strike of 1946* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of St. Thomas, 1995), 94–95, 122–23, 128, and 131–33.

10. Myron Lieberman, *The Future of Public Education* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960). Dr. Lieberman is an expert on teacher unions and during 1948–49 was a teacher in the St. Paul public schools.

11. Mabel Surratt, *Voices from 1920–1930*, in A. Fisker, A. Gilsdorg, and M. Golden, eds., *A Collection of Memories from 1910–1960 as Volunteered by St. Paul Educators* (St. Paul: St. Paul Retired Teachers Association, 1983), 69–70.

12. Carlson, 130.

13. *St. Paul Dispatch*, December 30, 1946, p. 1.

14. Agnes Searl, in A. Fisker, A. Gilsdorf, and M. Golden, eds., 116–121.

15. Carlson, 102–03.

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