

Transcript of the Interview with Olga Madar
Founding Member and Former National Officer of the Coalition of
Labor Union Women

During the NEB Meeting in Washington, DC, May 21, 1994

Conducted by Silke Roth, University of Connecticut

OM: Originally I went to school to become a teacher. And I taught school for about three years. I, prior to that time, while I was going to school I had to make, to raise the money to go to school, and I worked in the auto plants. The only reason I got a job in those auto-plants during a period of time when they were not hiring folks, is because I could play soft-ball and they had a soft-ball team that they were sponsoring and so in the summer-time I could get a job. Those were non-unionized shops and the first one was in a [corporation] and I had my exposure to an old assembly line and the kind of conditions that the workers had to go through. My particular job was putting of fasters on door-linings, panels, door-panels for cars and those panels would come down [not understandable] and you would have to put fasters. They came down at a rate of speed that I was busy just taking them of the line and the women were competing against each other. That's before unionization days. It did not have a opportunity to work a full work week at that point of time. So if you wanted to work extra-days you worked faster and which made it difficult on

the other folks, too. So that you should get these extra-days. In my case I got hired even though they weren't. They were laying off seniority folks, it didn't matter, just because I could play soft-ball. That was a learning experience for me when I went to teach school. And at that time teachers in the United States were not organized and the starting teachers salary was very low. I then decided that I really wanted to change professions. And I thought I wanted to go into program of recreation services, public recreation or industrial recreation co-sponsored by companies, knowing very little what was going on. What it was however was I that was wanting to make a professional change and in the interim with the war coming on they were employing women. And the [plant], [name of the plant] plant in [town in the Midwest] had just been built for the purpose of a building planes. It took a long time in our country to get auto-companies to convert to military manufacturing get away from the domestic profit, that profit making thing. So, I quit my teaching job and went to work at the [automobile] plant. I very quickly learned that the company really wasn't that much concerned about the interests of the employees in terms of providing any of the recreation services or any other kinds of concerns, housing and others that was needed. And I became active in the local union there. I automatically became a member of the [industrial union] because we had just, after long struggle, the [industrial union] had just organized the [automobile] workers. And when

that plant was build then there was automatic right, you were a member of the union when you became employed. So I became active in the local union as a volunteer, organizing recreation programs. And because there was an increase of females being employed. Because the men were all going off to service, they needed someone who would work with the local union on a full-time basis, meeting the social needs and other needs of the women and any other problems that they had. So I was hired as Director of Recreation and of Women' Activities Services for the [industrial union] [local]. And they did that, we found housing for folks, we went to the Federal Government to get federal housing build in that area. There wasn't enough housing in this, there were no decent sanitary facilities, there were not recreation programs for folks who moved from all over, from South, from Northern [state in the Midwest], from the West, to come to get a job with the [name] plant. And they just did not have the kinds of social amenities that they needed to have. Plus, there was some bad kind of programming. I then moved, when the war was terminating, I then got a job with the International Union of the [industrial union] in the Recreation Department. And one of my first assignments was the fact that in the United States the very popular activity of Bowling was controlled by the American Bowling Congress, the Women's International Bowling Congress and the Bowling Proprietors Association of America whose membership was confined to Caucasians only. And meanwhile

our [industrial union] members were participating in these activities and that Recreation Department of [industrial union], of which I was a staff member, was servicing those local unions in keeping their scores for the leagues and in saying that they must be members of ABC and WIBC, so in a sense we were promoting this kind of discriminatory practice. And the rationale was that there was no other recourse or resource. When [former president of the union] got elected president, the first action that we got from that executive board was that we would drop that discriminatory program and run non-sanctioned bowling participation. And we then would join with the NAACP to try to get the American Bowling Congress and the WIBC, what is the Women's International Bowling Congress to change their policy of discrimination. And at the same time we organized committees all over the nation. We had a national committee of which [name] was then the mayor of [city in the Midwest] and who later as you know became a candidate for president was the Congress and [woman] who was a golf professional, co-chaired what we called the National Committee for Fair Play and Bowling. And we carried on this campaign asking other groups to try to get the Bowling Congress and the Bowling Proprietors to change their policy. And ultimately we won that battle in the courts because they were in violation of their articles of incorporation in the state of Illinois and what they said they couldn't do, when we took it to court, that was the NAACP and the [industrial union], they

very quickly did because they were about to lose their charter. That was just one aspect of my work in term of it. Because we then. I became Director of Recreation, when the Director became ill, and [former president of the union] appointed me as director. Now that is in a union that was primarily male, and that was in a union in which they were primarily involved in male athletic competition and we had to change the whole focus of that department. Or, I felt that we ought to, because when a union sponsors activities, they ought to do it based on union philosophy and policy. And that we all should be primarily concerned about the resources for, not only our the members, but for the rest of the people in the community, in the city, in the state, and nationally. So we became involved in trying to improve community recreation services and seeing to it that we begin to preserve some of our natural resources in the whole area of environment and the pollution of the waters and that were some of the things that we were doing.

And so I was active in the [industrial union] as a director of Recreational Services for many years. Now any minority has a difficulty in getting elected to a top policy making position and within our own union the black minority made approaches to, within the political caucus of the [former president of the union] administration, to see to it that a women, excuse me, that's next thing, that a black would be a part of their caucus slate. So that that majority could be persuaded to include a

minority in the top position. And after a number of years they were successful in getting a black minority on the International Executive Board as a Board-member at large. And then indeed they were successful in getting some regional directors also which put them on, additional Blacks on the International Board of the [industrial union]. And so we decided, those of us women who were promoting that cause who were part of the [former president of the union] caucus, decided it was time also for that caucus to put a women on their slate. Now I had no intention of being that candidate. I simply helped to provide the leadership and I started with the staff women and called them together and said, we need to make this move. And we did this in 1964, I believe it was. But we started late for that convention and we formed an organization, I can't remember how we formed it, let me just say that we started late for that convention we had a number of women say, that they wanted to be on that slate of Executive Board Members at Large, but we had to go through the Political Caucus to seek, get their approval. And we did not get the approval, because we had not done our homework in going to the local unions and to get the male leadership out there to help us to do this. But we did have people get up and nominate several of us. I had no intention of running, but we were going through this procedure. So that we could get up and say, no, we decline as members of this caucus, we support the slate, but we decline this time. But next time around, we will have

a candidate. So we spent then the next two years working to convince our leadership at the local union level, who were part of the administration caucus, to convince the leadership of that caucus, that there ought to be a woman on this slate, to get elected to that Board. And we formed a group called "Help Equalize Representation" and we went around raising money and we used the women who were active in their unions. Several of them are here by the way: [CLUW member], [CLUW and NOW founding member], a lot of them. [CLUW and NOW founding member] was a staff member, I only mention them because they are here and you know them as CLUW members, [CLUW national officer], others, some of them long ceased, but we formed from the local leadership women but also men. And we had co-chairs, a male who was president of a local union, [local], and female from [another local] were co-chairs and we raised money to carry on this campaign and then in their own regional caucus, they were trying to convince the regional directors and we met with them and I was, if you please, getting advice from the president of our union, [name], who believed we ought to do this, but said "You've got to do it yourselves, we don't hand it to you on a silver platter, you have to convince the constituency of that caucus out there and that leadership that ought to be telling me and the leadership that this is what they want to do." He was giving us, and he said, "Don't talk candidates", and he was absolutely right, "Talk principle, it's time for the administration

caucus to include that other minority in our union, the females, on the policy making level, okay, and put them on the slate." And we convinced them. And at the point in time that they decided, after we got that done and we had, when they talked, well, who can do this. They always said, we don't have enough capable women. Right from the beginning our approach was to get all of the women who thought that they want to and thought that they were qualified, announce that they would be going. And that would include me too as well, as many women as possible, you see, and then later, the caucus would make the determination. So, we got the candidates out there, we nailed down the principle, okay. And then comes time for the selection of the candidate and then you have to influence the leadership of the caucus on that one. And, you know, that the favorite candidate, the one I think that [former president of the union] would have originally, would have endorsed, had become, was not well at that time. And I was encouraged to stay in the race. And the candidate who had had the earlier support of [former president of the union] and still had it except for the illness, was also saying she wasn't gonna step down, unless the candidate's choice was me, that's why they encouraged me to stay in. So the caucus finally made a decision when she gave a letter, saying she was not running and I got elected by recommendation of that caucus group, I think it was a minority recommendation but I had the presidents support and that caucus, the leadership of the

administration caucus recommended that they put me on that slate, okay. And then I got elected as a Board Member at large of the [industrial union] in 1966, first woman to serve on that board. Now, subsequently there was a decision that the board members at large because they had similar responsibilities to the two-vice presidents that were there that they be elevated to Vice-Presidents. Now my responsibilities were not the same as theirs because theirs was in collective bargaining, mine were in consumer affairs, conservation and recreation, a token directorship of servicing for the technical, office and professional employees. And I say token because the technical, office and professional employees in the larger plants were really being serviced by other Vice-Presidents in [automobile company], [automobile company] and otherwise and what we really had was small plants, small groups and then giving advice and help to, or the staff, and working with those other corporate structures of our union, meaning the once they serviced the corporate structures to help them on, the technical, office and professional workers, as contrast of the auto-plant workers, okay. But on the other hand we also had the responsibility and did do the organizing of what we call our TOP-council, Technical, Office and Professional Council, we set up councils as we had with the auto-council, there was a [automobile company], a [automobile company] council, and there was a [automobile company] council, there was a aerospace council. What we did, is to set up a Technical, Office

and Professional council, at the national level and at the regional level, we instituted that. Which is good thing because now we have a lot of technical, office and professional workers. Now we are organizing in the, we are organizing state workers, the largest local in the [industrial union] is [local] which are the State employees of [state in the Midwest] are organized in the [industrial union] and they are [local] and they are the largest local. And primarily those, the majority of those, I don't know the exact number but I would estimate at least 75% of those 22,000 are females, largest local used to be [local]. Interestingly just to [not understandable] let's go back. At one time [local] the place where I worked with all those females who was employed somewhere between 40,000 and 50,000 people and the vast majority of those were females. And it was interesting how in our country women couldn't do these jobs in the plant until we got into war and we were then, we didn't have the men. And all of a sudden women who didn't supposedly have the skills or know how to learn how to be crane operators were crane operators. And most interestingly after the war the plants were closed and whether they violated seniority provisions or whether they did not have sufficient seniority to stay on the job, those women were out of jobs and couldn't do, supposedly couldn't do those low tasks again.

In 1968, as a member of the Board, we visited the countries behind the Iron Curtain. The [industrial union] was one of the

unions which in addition to being an International Confederation of Free Trade Unions also felt that we ought to make contact with the unions in other countries. And so we organized, you know, a trip there, included in this was Czechoslovakia and at that time Dubcek was there and trying to democratize socialism. And, so I naturally went to Slovakia first when they were organizing this because of my name, even a good friend, [name] who was secretary treasurer of the union, to whom, when I moved to [city in the Midwest] we lived next door to him, thought I was Hungarian because the name [name] is [name] so they were going to send me to Hungary, with the group there. But instead we went to Czechoslovakia. To get back to the point I was making: talking about the forties and how the women were going into the plants and were doing all these things that supposedly we couldn't do and then after that, after the war supposedly, we couldn't do again and I really teased some of my colleagues. The Director of the [automobile company] Department when we went to Czechoslovakia and I pointed out that here we have women who do these various jobs, a lot of plants were really outdated but some of them were new. But even more importantly I saw the crane operators up, and I said, you know, they still have females operating those cranes. But not to leave any illusions, there were also discrimination there because I also pointed out to the Slovakian unionists and the Czechian unionists that was together at that time, Czechoslo-

vakia, but I pointed out to them, that if we went into the modern plants, which by the way were more updated in terms of the new technology, it was a bearing plant, they made bearings. And I happened to work in the summer months at [name]. And I had also looked subsequently in the sixties at the new [automobile] plant that was supposed to be automated and that section that was making bearings and this particular plant in Slovakia had more new technology on the making of bearings than we had in the United States. Not because we did not have them, but because we were not utilizing them, okay. And, but the other thing I pointed out however to the Czechoslovakians, I can understand this on the new machinery, this nice clean work are all of the males and over in the old work and heavy work are all the females. And so I raised the question of their own policies. And they said, no, no, they just don't want to go on those jobs, but I went up to the women, and with the help of the interpreter, although I can understand some Slovak but not the Checs I couldn't and only part of the Slovaks in that section of the country. Later on I could understand everything in the part where my folks were born. But, anyway, point was, I asked one of the women if she had an opportunity, but she told me, "No, those are the mens jobs." What's more, as we were walking around and we are seeing, they are putting out notices, there is a union meeting. And one of the Slovakian brothers said, "You know what this notice is about, what this meeting is about? They

are calling a meeting because women are complaining that they are discriminating against." So, okay, I don't care what political philosophy, communism, socialism, capitalism, whatever, discriminatory processes exist. Anyway, to get back to where we were. What happened then was, you know, I had these other kinds of responsibilities which to this day we have not resolved, okay, in our country. And they are very important, but in our union, as in most unions are basic reason for organization is the collective bargaining. But under [former president of the union] concept of unionism you covered the totality and that's the whole difference, you know. As a union concerned about not just about your own members but the total community, so that although on our Executive Board, we spend time in relationship to discussing collective bargaining we spend more time talking about the political problems that we would have in terms of the policies of the country and the people to be elected, and the pollution and the lack of services and all of these kinds of things. And the, the whole emphasis on the favoritism and the private entrepreneur and into the corporate structure. And we, in fact, as we are still doing more corporate socialism or corporate welfare than we are doing public welfare, more tax money going into corporate welfare than goes elsewhere. But anyway, point of this, despite the fact, that I thought these respond of all of this is, despite the fact that these responsibilities were most important and I really had no desire to become more involved in the

collective bargaining, because I had enough to do. When they made the move to elevate the board members at large to vice president, they were gonna leave me behind and still retain that position and it was the regional directors who in the first instance were not as encouraging about getting a woman on the board, at this time said to the leadership of the union, no way. By the way I did not know about that until the board meeting and they were discuss it but I was told by [name], [former union president's] brother said, this is gonna come up, don't worry about it, just sit there and it will be taken care of and the regional directors really stepped in and said, "You taught us we should treat everybody equally." And therefore then I was included and got elevated in 1970 along with the others along with [name] and others, I don't know who there was, [name] whoever, [name] was already vice president. I got to be then the Vice-President of the [industrial union] along with them, okay?

SR: That was nineteen-seventy..?

OM: The vice-presidency was in 1970. I think somewhere between 1968 and 1970 because shortly after that [former president of the union] [died]. Then I decided, when I got elected in 1972 that I would not run again and I would take early retirement at the age of 59 and I announced that at the first women's conference after the convention that I was elected in 1972 that I would not be running, but I also announced that I would be forming, helping to form a women's caucus within the adminis-

tration caucus of the [industrial union]. And I had four intentions of doing that for the reason that I knew that we would not make additional movement as far as women were concerned until the women officer, the token, had a constituency of women who would agree on the basic kinds of things that we should be concerned about like women's equity within our union as well as emphasis on those issues which are of concern to women. And in addition to that we will have more than one women on that board and I knew you could not do that unless you had a women's caucus within the administration caucus. And I set up the mechanics to do that and was gonna use my staff to do it, but when you are what we call a lame duck, meaning that you are not running again, you loose a lot of influence. And what's more your staff is a little bit leary about doing things that other officers don't want to do.

And so we were starting to move on that, and we were gonna to have a little difficulty but we were still gonna do it. But what happened then was the timing for the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women became ripe. I mean it was the time. And it became apparent because of some other work that I was doing as I was an officer, we were the first, I think the first major union that came out in support of the Equal Rights Amendment. Then there were others, and I don't know if [industrial union] was there before us, I don't think so. But we were also at the beginning like many of the unions who

were following the feelings of some of the women leadership that if you adopted the Equal Rights Amendment that you would loose those state laws which we would call protective legislation. That supposedly protected females, because the numbers of hours you could work were not the same as males could work, the hours the time of the day, evening, you know, supposedly you could not work evenings because of your own protection. The weights that you lifted, there were certain laws, which said we couldn't force women, when of course there were some women who could lift heavier than some men and of course despite the slowness in automating in our country, there were improved mechanics of lifting were there already, you know, and so you know, that wasn't the factor. It was this so-called protective state legislation which didn't, a lot of the unions, did not support the Federal Equal Rights Amendment. And many, man good union women who fought for women's rights were opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment, but some of us knew, and that, the answer was the Equal Rights Amendment which we still have not gotten. Rather than this so-called protective legislation which we had already had a practice and experience of being used to get women out of the work place when there was a job shortage so that when there was plenty of work to do that you needed to hire people for, as in the war, you eliminated all the protective legislation, you worked all night long, women couldn't do this, that's fine. War was over, protective legislation took place, can't hire

women. Can't hire women, because we need somebody at night, can't hire women because she can't lift so many pounds by law and we need someone. You know, that kind of thing. And we knew what that experience was. So, but meanwhile the AFL-CIO. And in fact, even in the [industrial union], as I told this group today, the director of the women's department who was by the way the person who might have been the candidate, had she not become ill, she was opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment. On the other hand a staff member, [CLUW and NOW founding member], who is here, who was for it, and I was for it, too. But I was not, did not have that responsibility at that point in time. Once I got elected I had some authority and responsibility. And by that time we also moved so that we eliminated, at the federal level we got our title VII under the Civil Rights Act which included sex discrimination and so we got attorney general opinions. Including the first one I think was in [state in the Midwest] and we used our influence as a union and also women's organization to get the Attorney General [name] who is still there by the way to make an interpretation that the federal law superseded the state law and therefore the protective legislation was out, the federal was in. And a lot of other states followed suit. So as a result of that when that question of protective legislation became a mute issue in the whole equal rights thing. But in that period of time while we were trying to get the Equal Rights Amendment and there was still difference of opinion between people

like [founding member of CLUW], I saw the tape last night, when the women said, we didn't come here to exchange recipe, [woman union leader], of [service sector union], a strong opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment. These people were opposed legitimately so in terms of what they saw the protective legislation to be, but we did not think so. For instance, and I use this example in my testimony, when the [industrial union] took official position at a executive board meeting, to support the Equal Rights Amendment and then I gave the testimony and I knew that [woman union leader opposing the ERA]'s administrative assistant had testified the day before. And I pointed out that they had testified against the Equal Rights Amendment because of protective legislation and yet the [service sector workers] did not have a weight limitation law, okay, and they were excluded from the minimum wage law, some of these very things, okay.

So, but meanwhile what was happening what you then got what was the women's movement of the sixties and the seventies. And I make this distinction because as you very well know, if you been reading, that in the United States the first women's movement in the 1800's came from the working women at the work place. Those who were unionized and in other words. And it was in the 18 hundreds, okay, and they were the women who hit the picket line when the men did not. And working women when they got unionized, Union women were better off than all the rest of the women. And in fact

what that did was kind of get a plateau, they were better off, so they did not move in terms of the societal discriminatory policies, okay. All the kinds of things like running for office, in the religious sector, and all of these things, we did not move in that sector, as we should have been moving in the union movement. Because we had made progress, more so than other women in terms of equal pay for equal work, the fact of the matter is, before Equal Pay for Equal work went on the books, as they said, with Esther Peterson in the sixties, 1962. I will tell you that when I went to work at the [name] plant under the [industrial union] [automobile company] contract we had Equal Pay for Equal Work in the forties, okay, alright. So there was not this great momentum in terms of workplace equity, by union women, as there was in relationship with other women, but also they were taking on other aspects of women's rights, including the right to choice, Reproductive Freedom other kinds of things. So, I forgot my point here, that I was gonna make, no, I will have a drink of water, turn that off for a little bit

[tape recorder turned off]

OM: So, I make this distinction about the women's movement of the sixties and seventies. Union women were not as part of it as they should be, some of us were. Some of us were, we, I, we helped organize the National Women's Political Caucus, the National Organization for Women, their materials were turned out in the [industrial union] Solidarity House, the Women's

Department. When the issue of the Equal Rights Amendment was there, however, they didn't, and they had their founding convention, they did not allow sufficient time for me to get, after I was elected at the convention, to get the executive Board for us to change our position, and [CLUW and NOW founding member] and other women in the Women's Department were helping them in their organizing. And they were having their convention in Chicago and they wished to go on record for the Equal Rights Amendment. And I had breakfast meeting with [NOW founding member] and a women whose name I should not forgot, but I have forgotten, Hispanic female, [NOW founding member], to try to hold off their action in regard to the Equal Rights Amendment because they were using our resources and our facilities and I had to get our policy making board to change their position. They chose not to do that, so that for that brief period of time, for one year, when I was not a member of the National Organization and we could not provide the resources because, we argued on the convention floor, please postpone, and they did not postpone, and I promised them, that we are gonna change and we did change. And they were there when I testified and one of them came up to me and said "I did not believe that that would going to be happen" when I testified on behalf of the equal rights amendment.

But any way, what was happening at the same time was because of that difference of opinion that women leadership of

the women's movement were talking about people like [CLUW member] and [CLUW member] and others. And [CLUW founding member], you just talked to [CLUW founding member], oh, she was a strong person in favor of protective legislation in [state at the Westcoast] because they had a monitoring system and they a special commission to see that hopefully they did not violate those protective law legislations. That they were truly protective. So she was opposed to it too. But anyway, then the women's movement, we were working with, and National Women's Political Caucus and National Organization for Women they were making remarks about our sister unionists about that they were not really for the women and so forth. And I said this is not so, its an issue that they differ on but on other kinds of issues they are with us. So, it was from that to try to show them we could network with women's organizations on common cause. That in [state in the Midwest] that we organized the Network for Economic Rights and I joined forces with [woman union leader] who was based in [city in the Midwest], okay. And the Network for Economic Rights, was simply just that. A network of organizations, not only women's organizations but other organizations were there were women in as a basic part of that organization that we would select about seven issues, legislative issues that we would work on. And we would stay away from the Equal Rights Amendment because we were fighting that battle out of different areas. And what we would do is, that if anybody was, you know five

out of seven, I might be wrong but that is my memory, but that's also recorded that Network for Economic Rights was recorded by a social work student, and it is in Wayne State University Archives, okay. And you can find that history of what we did, there. And what we did was to take certain issues, the hours issue for instance. We said what we need to do is to have legislation which permits the individual on a voluntary basis to determine how many hours they might wanna work over time and so forth. And then the minimal wage issue which excluded Restaurant Workers and others which they didn't increase and it was totally inadequate and the choice issue and I can't recall of all the issues that we had and then we assigned different organizations. We had the YWCA with us on that one, you heard Dorothy Height mention, my association in terms of the YWCA. But we got these organizations and then we went up and got people to introduce the legislation at the state level in [state in the Midwest]. And then with the help of my staff we moved into [other state in the Midwest] and established a network, and then we went to [state at the West Coast] and established a network. And when you ever get the book "Sisterhood and Solidarity" that's were you read about WAGE. And that's were I went down and met with the founder of that organization to talk about the Network for Economic Rights. Okay, she wanted to make sure where I was coming from, and she wanted to hear this kind, because that was the approach they were

using in relationship to where there were going. And so we used the Network approach. And we, I was in, I think it was [city at the West Coast], but anyway, that was [city at the West Coast] when I went to WAGE and then it was [other city at the West Coast]. When I went to [state in the Midwest] to try to establish a network for Economic Rights there, and there was [woman union leader] help to get a group of union women together but there were women from another women's organization and I put out the proposal of the Network for Economic Rights. [Woman union leader] said, "Here is this young women over here, [activist from the women's and civil rights movement] was her name, who has this organization that we have been working with, with other women's organizations, to work in common cause. Now she says that this is a duplication and why should we go into another network?" And I said "She has a very good point, this is." And [woman union leader] said "What we need though, is to get the union women together." And I grabbed quickly because I knew that was it, that was what I had been hearing, but I needed some support in relationship to this kind of thing that other women's organizations. The other women's organizations put their stuff together, NWPC, and NOW, and there were several others whose name I can not remember, cause I was very active and they were very good, some of them are still in existence. The, FEW, Federal Employees Women, they were around, there were a lot of women's, and there, this networking was going on. But

union women hadn't gotten their thing together, okay, alright. And I said to [woman union leader], "I totally agree with you, and let's explore this." And I knew that this needed to be done. The question was the timing, when was the time to do it?

And fortunately we grabbed the right time. It was the right time. A number of years before that Eleanor Roosevelt had talked to a meeting of the Women's Conference of the [industrial union], I wasn't there but I remember--

[end of tape 1]

OM: Why don't union women organize, okay. So, you know, we've been thinking about this for a long time. And we were thinking too, about what we are going to do in our own unions. And in the [industrial union] we had already started that, we got the first woman on the board. And now we were thinking of making the second step. So what we did was to talk to a number of women from different unions and we organized a meeting at the airport O'Hare, in Chicago. Because [CLUW and NOW founding member] had a friend who could arrange for a meeting room there. [CLUW and NOW founding member] worked in our Political Action Department and I think [woman union leader] made contact with [woman union leader]. But, anyway we contacted people, there was women from the [industrial union], I can not remember, [name] from the [craft union], that list, of the people who were there is in our archives too. The women who were there, there was a letter

which states specifically who was there and that get's mixed up as to what who was there. But we meet there and we talked about whether it was or not a feasible idea to go ahead and organize union women into an organization. Then what we decided to do was, we had to have a bigger meeting, and we knew that we did not want a national meeting but a greater sounding board. So we decided we would do a midwest conference to do one thing. To try to get a representative group there of rank and file women from the unions that were represented and anybody else who was in that area. And the question to decide was, should we organize a founding conference to organize the Coalition of Labor Union Women. From the beginning it was not the question of spontaneous combustion, you know something being put together, illuminates and goes quickly like this. It evolved and then it was planned with a specific purpose in mind and specific objectives to be developed by the group and the basic unique thing, which later caused us two years of trouble because people messed it up. The basic unique difference was that these had to be union members, okay. Now as we went on we elaborated and amplified so we can explain. And that will come a little later. But that was the basic purpose, then the thing to do, was to make sure that we got together a planning committee who wanted to do that, but would be representative. On the founding conference we threw that out there. And coming to that conference was supposed only a small group of

people, basic to all of this was another thing. No union could dominate by their numbers. And we would have to come up with a representative kind of formula. And certainly on this first meeting, despite the fact that we in the [industrial union], because I was a vice-president could get authorization for people to work on this and do that, recruit. I had said don't send out a big mailing. Unfortunately the person who was in charge, who did it, send out a big mailing, it even included Canada at this time. We still arguing about the problem of having Canada in CLUW. From the beginning I have said, Canada ought to have its own CLUW. Point is we get there and here there are all of these [industrial union] members, it was not a big crowd, but a couple of hundred, and over a hundred of them were [industrial union] members. And the other people, including [woman union leader], were upset, how come we had so many, and I said its a mistake and we are not gonna prevail here. And I called the [industrial union] women together and said we are not gonna dominate this meeting, we are just here for basic purpose and then to elect temporary officers and we gonna want a representative group, we want a interracial group, and we wanna, you know all this sort of thing.

So they went on record to have a founding conference, then went, we broke up into different groups doing different things, one to elect temporary officers. And they came back with a [industrial union] staff member as the chair. It wasn't

a balanced slate in terms of race. And three of us who were the coordinators, one from [industrial union], [woman union leader], [woman union leader] and myself, I know [woman union leader] was disappointed, I sure was, and [woman union leader] was about ready to resign. I then, I must admit, became autocratic and said, "I am sending you back again, we are not going to accept this. We want an inclusive slate." And in fact at the point in time the person who should really have been chairing that was [African American woman union leader], okay. Anyway they went back. The [industrial union] dominated, and we got a slate of temporary officers with [African American woman union leader] as the [national officer], [African American union leader] was part of this too, and don't know who else was there, who would be the group to carry on to help the planning. And then we expanded on that planning committee to include others from the midwest. And that's when we got [African American woman union leader] and we always all of the time tried a balance based on different unions, based on racial composition, and ethnic composition. First with that small group, I don't know if that was ten or whatever, and then as we expanded it, I got in touch with women who were active in their unions and.

[interruption]

OM: Expanded, Okay. Even at the point when we took the Midwest group and then got people from the East on that original planning committee of nine and ten, we counted to see who

was who, and how many and what. And then we began to try to expand to the South, we got some representation, and then in the East. Again, a staff member was supposed to take a look around and explore it, but what they did was a conference, they opened it up, ok. But now listen to very carefully to this, because I think you gonna understand it better than some of our folks in the United States. Within the union movement we've got all kinds of political persuasions, okay, but pretty much, if you gonna take a look at it, pretty much in terms of politics, we have Democrats, got some Communists, got some Socialist Workers, got difference, okay. When they had that open conference, and they learned, the people learned, the women learned, that we are going to have a, trying to get a Planning Committee they went through a process of election and opened it up. And what we then learned was that those political organizations who were aware was happening in terms of the women's movement in the United States were also aware, cause it already have been working at the workplaces, to enlist people who subscribe to their political persuasions and they were in respective plants, they were aware before, what I might call our conservative leadership in our unions were, of the need to reach out to the women and be inclusive of the women. Now, I am not saying that these other groups are more inclusive of women, cause I learned they are not. It is dictatorial and, you know, discriminatory, but already there had been in place as we subse-

quently learned as in [city at the Eastcoast], in one of the [name] plants, a woman from the October League which is a part of the Maoist group. And of course we had our own share of Socialist Worker Party, we do. But there were others out working, diligently and different groups, there were so many and I thought I was pretty familiar and I had some, one of the magazines which was doing a discussion of what was going on. And I can not remember which one, had a list of the different kind of split offs. And the names. And I used to carry them with me, because after that Eastern Meeting and we put that committee together and we got all kinds of change our purpose, to open it up, to other than non union folks, you know, working women. Some opposition was legitimate and based on the fact, what are we going to do with these women we helped to organize and who did not win their elections, that was a legitimate protest. But we could not do that because when we open the doors wide open, we are set up for a specific purpose to do it. But then to go on with the whole question of getting the whole planning committee. Then we had to do the west-coast. And I would call different people. And I had staff members who knew someone, somebody knew [woman union leader at the Westcoast], somebody knew [woman union leader at the Westcoast], where I didn't have a name I even had to call officers of unions. So I got somebody who was active in the union should be on the planning committee. And as I was doing this I realized for instance that I did not

have a Hispanic women, okay, and I still got the Westcoast group planning committee to put together. So I talked to a woman of the [professional union], [name], and said, "I got a question, do you have anybody in your union who is up in the Northwest part of the United States and who is a Hispanic?" That's how I got [CLUW officer]. Now she can tell you the story about how I made this phonecall. And we were meeting at the [city at the Westcoast] Airport, which my staff member arranged. And I flew in. And I met [woman union leader at the Westcoast], and [woman union leader at the Westcoast], and [CLUW founding member from the Westcoast], and I don't know, there was a number of women there. And I explained what we were doing and tell that we were putting together a planning committee. Said if they were interested, we would like to have, and I told them a number, I can't remember, I think, I said five. We need five more and we are trying to have working group here. And they were listened. And they said, "Who are you to tell us how many we are going to have? And we talk about if we wanna do this, but we wanna decide, who we gonna have." And they said, "Well, we this by ourselves." They kicked me out of the meeting. They still laugh about this, okay, and then they went and had the discussion. I don't know if they stayed with the number that I suggested or if they increased it. It did not matter to me. I was trying to get cross-section representation.

So we had the planning committee meeting, I mean to plan the

conference we had meetings, a whole number of meetings. They turned out to be contentious affairs because of the people trying to divert us from our original purpose. We had specific objectives in mind. We amplified them, we made certain that it was very clear, that this was not the question of this being an AFL-CIO organization, because at that time the [industrial union] wasn't even affiliated with the AFL-CIO, alright. We had the contentious issue that, persons, who, the Federation was saying the National Education Association isn't really a union. What we then discussed, argued out, and said, anybody who belongs to a collective bargaining association or a retiree of a collective bargaining association or union could belong. Now why did we say union, we said union because we have some unions, and why did we say collective bargaining organization, well, I told you one reason. Another reason is, that we have some people who are members of a union because that union accepts them as members, but that union does not represent them at their workplace. But if that union says, they accept them as a union member, then CLUW's guideline is, they accept them, okay. So then that means however on the other side, if it is a member of a collective bargaining organization, as it can be as with the staff council of a union like the [industrial union], they had negotiating responsibilities, they do not belong to the [industrial union], some of them do, but some of them don't. Vast majority of [industrial union] ones do. But in a lot of the unions they don't. But there are there for the

expressed purpose of collective bargaining they are eligible, okay, and we allow those respective groups, to determine the eligibility and CLUW accepts that eligibility. Because some unions have a ruling that the cause of the corporate agreement, that after you, after you are out of the job for six months, you know, you are not longer an employee here, your on layoff, and the union also may have a provision you are not a bona-fide-member, you don't have to pay dues, you maybe on whatever, withdrawal, that kind of stuff. Everybody got their own set of rules and they vary. So CLUW did not want to get involved with that, if your union says it is collective bargaining organization they represent you there, that makes you eligible, okay. So we nailed that down. We drew up the statement of purpose, to that day it is excellent. Although we were formed on the basis of getting our unions, our purpose, each one of us, within our own unions, is to get those unions to subscribe to those feminist issues, which we consider not just to be women's issues in that they relate to women, but which relate to the family and the total community. And what we also said, we are talking about equity, equity, and therefore, there is no question where we stand on racism, you know, any of the other things, gay-baiting, all the rest of the stuff, okay, anti-semitism, we have to feel the same way on that as we do in terms of being women treated correctly. Then in terms of our statement of purpose as it reflects in terms of our union, in our whole. On the political front, we

are supposed to influencing our unions to take the right position there in relationship to women candidates, in relationship to the issues that we are concerned about, the reproductive freedom, the pay equity. But beyond that the other thing which CLUW brings to all of this is that we wanted to demonstrate that what seemed to be a narrow group of issues that the women's movement was is moving, is much, much broader. And that for instance in 1975, I think it was 1975, 1975, 1976, we had the national women's health conference to show that the whole issue of the provision of health services was a women's and a family issue and therefore a men's issue, but primarily women. And to say women's issues. What is it? You know, and what we were trying to do was to demonstrate. The second thing is we wanted to, from the labor movement to network with the women's movement. And I guess what we said in the ad for the [industrial union] retired workers, if you look at that. What we said there is that together we will make feminist unionists, okay. And we will make unionists feminists. And what happened. The other thing, in the formation and Tom Donahue reminded me of this, cause I had forgotten, as we were doing this, we did ask a group of our people who were affiliated with the AFL-CIO to go in 1973 to meet with Meany or with Tom Donahue. And I don't know to this day whether they were meet with him or both, to say what we were doing. But also, I am sure that they were told exactly, what George Meany told us after the founding conference. Which is, we

went to ask for his cooperation and the support of the AFL-CIO and Meany said, you know, we can't have you as an affiliate because of some of your unions are not affiliated with us and probably never will be. And we said we don't come for affiliation we come for cooperation and support. And then the other thing which gets confused, has been confused increasingly in the last twenty years, but its gonna get straightened out now. George Meany also told us, which I knew, but that some people did not know, that when you affiliate, that does not mean that the AFL-CIO dictates to you. That you can go independently, that they can not tell unions what they have to do. It's only an agreement and arrangement to work together. And what's even more so what people don't know that each union takes care of it's own collective bargaining. And what the AFL-CIO does is to coordinate the respective unions primarily in the legislative and political arena, but if you are affiliated you don't have to go that way. And indeed of course this happened that they don't often go that way. Well some [industrial union] members, I mean some CLUW members get the impression that we have to follow the AFL-CIO policy. We do not have to follow the AFL-CIO policy, we do not have to follow any individual union's policy in CLUW. What we are supposed to be doing is influencing the policy of our unions so they are synonymous with the objectives of CLUW and where we are going. Now as members of that union we are loyal to that union and may support their position in CLUW

but we are supposed to be influencing them, okay. So anyway after a contentious period of time and I am not going through all of that, what made us know that the timing was right was that in a relatively brief time without any money and really on our own, as our men folk looked on, and as a group of women who were naive in the political arena except for a few of us got into that political thing, we fought it out. We warred at that founding conference, and I think we astonished the men and what made us know that the time was right, and but you know, that the time was right, but you know, that's luck, that's just sheer luck. That you just see it, and then, that it was set and it happened. That as we went along and we thought if we had 700 people we do great, if we have 1200 we do great. And we had 3200 that showed that it was time. And so we had that founding conference. But that was also contentious because they tried to get it opened it up, we also had the thorny issue of the grape boycott, and the were not affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The members of Teamsters, and then the Farmworkers did become affiliated with the AFL-CIO and I knew there was a working together of some kind of agreement as far as the AFL-CIO and the grapeworkers and hopefully the Teamsters. And that's why we said we don't want to get involved with the jurisdictional fights, but on the other hand, I did not want to avoid the issue that most of the women from the unions who were coming there were supportive of the Farmworkers Union. But we got through that one

okay. But it was being used against us, and then we elected temporary officers, and the officers structure. Including the [socialist] woman of the [one union] for years we could not organize a [city at the Eastcoast] chapter because the [this union] is strong there and this woman worked there, got elected as one of our officers, was member of the October League, subsequently when we had a constitutional convention in 1975 and that was still contentious. But we had our constitutional convention and she got defeated, and subsequently she moved from [city at the Eastcoast] to some place in [city in the Midwest], but anyway, she wasn't. There were all kinds of things going on. What made us renown is that the various political groups got into their own internal battle they killed themselves of, frankly that's what happened. And the Socialist Workers Party joined us in saying that membership should be what it originally was proposed to be, union women and members of collective bargaining organizations. Some of the women from their organization voted and got into trouble because they went with the October League, but all you got to do, and I learned that, as people kept sending me the newsletters and stuff, and I am reading. I am learning more from that, than anyone who was there, what they believe, who disagreed with whom all that kind of stuff. And I decided to put together all clippings. Not just the ones in the public press but all of those clippings, and I think you probably read those.

SR: No, I only read about them. I could not get a hold of them.

OM: Doesn't the CLUW office have them?

SR: I hope so, but now I am here.

OM: The National CLUW office is here, but if they don't have it, there are in the CLUW archives. Because I had them and made up and put them together and circulated them all, because I thought that our membership should know what it's all about, you know. Take your choices, know what's going on. But they were contentious years. And, but even with, it is not like now, you have officers council meeting and NEB. When we had that coordinating council the officers were fighting me most of the time, they were split up and they would, you know, somebody in the membership and somebody, they had a position, and so we look at what we thought was a right union position and CLUW position, and then there would be changes from outside. And then you can't do that. But that's a compromise, we still got positions, we had one, but we compromise on that one. But we got over that and then what happened and here is back to the other original kind of thing, which is. There was a opposition to the fact that a lot of the officers were full time people, staff people, they were the only ones who could get around. And they were calling us pork choppers and so forth, and its true. It's a dangerous thing and for a while, you know, I began to be concern, I don't think I am as much concerned now. Because we get, we forget the participatory democracy, we come done in the National Executive Board

doesn't have discussions on contentious issues, our Officers Council, tends to keep things to themselves, and that kind of jazz. And I've been having many battles on that score. Gotten into trouble on that score, okay, and I have always said this is being tested and Balser is the one who raises, whether or not, this method of organization is a successful one. And I have always said it depends on the integrity of the leadership. As to them knowing what it is that we are formed for, and sticking with that and not being coopted and working in the best interest of that constituency that we were first established to service and to work with. And I must admit we were becoming a little bit totalitarian I think caucuses are good things for instance as we were able to elect a minority on the Board of the International Executive Board, I think the caucus was a good think in my own union, in the [industrial union], where if you took a strong position against racism and anti-semitism that was a good. The caucus was a good thing and I know the majority of the members were not there at the time we were there, at that bowling fight for instance, they weren't there. In the wartime we had to take a strong position against the [name] plant in the [city in the Midwest], when the white folks said they would not work with the black folks and where [former president of the union], "If you are not working with them, go out, go ahead, walk out, we are not going to protect you, they are gonna work." Same way in the South, this, so a caucus, in doing those kinds of things which

are the right things to do, the majority is way off base and as respecting the rights of the minority is a good thing. But a caucus which is used to keep things to themselves, and to stop participatory democracy is no good. An officers groups which says we'll discuss this, but we don't let the membership or the other policy making group know about this, we'll make our decision and we go in there and we sell that, and this is, you know, instead of having the full blown discussion on it, and you can get to be that way. The most democratic institution in the United States are unions and that's only if they allow participatory democracy and leave it open to the membership and once we loose that kind of thing, we loose the value of unionism. The same thing holds true for CLUW. And women who have not hold, held positions of power, are sometimes, you know, wanna take the easy way around, just like some men, they are not different, you know. But I think, we have gone through twenty years, and then there is the loyalty to our union, unions position rather than what is right for CLUW, you know, that kind of thing, that we have to wrestle through. But I think after this first twenty years, and I think you read what I said in this centerfold. Then I think you see where we are. What we did is to do that process of bringing the labor movement closer to the women's movement, we haven't done it enough. because we have not really sold a lot of the women's organizations on unionism. There is a bias against unionism in this country and some of those, that

includes the members of some women's organizations. But we are now going to work on that. Even though we worked on it, we worked on it early in the stages of CLUW when we worked on the National Organization for Women was with us when we went to get minimum wage increased. On that health conference, a lot of women's organizations with us. On reform of labor law, which we almost won that time, we had women's organizations with us. And now, we are gonna have it again, and its gonna to be better this time, because more women are employed now, more women employed, more of them are beginning to see the value of belonging together, of joining together to be in a union. As a way of getting improvement as the statistics show for union women, in fact as far as whites and blacks, and unorganized blacks and organized blacks, you know, it shows the differentiation, it shows the value of unions. And as the figures show the relationship at the organizational drives, more women are in favor of unions than the men in those organizing drives. So the climate is there, CLUW is there and the leadership we've got is there and experienced, and when we move to get representation on the AFL-CIO Executive Council we had to get them had to break their traditions, not their rules, their traditions and to have more than one person from one union, okay. And then secondly of course, we had to go along with the fact that their constitution says you come there as a representative of your union and therefore you don't come there as CLUW. And

we had to bite our time on that one because we knew we were there because of CLUW. That's why Joyce [Miller] was there, because of CLUW. But now we are at that point were, later as we demonstrated that you know, we not only needed you and need you, but you need us, okay, we have demonstrated this, we have demonstrated that the future of unionism, as they will very well see has to be with inclusion of more women in policy making positions, but also more women in unions and getting women to join. I mean we have demonstrated all of this and we have done enough now, so that when Gloria [Johnson] sits there [on the AFL-CIO Executive Board] she can very well say to them, "You know I am sitting there representing those women from CLUW who come from your many unions and not only labor, but from women's organizations we are working with." And she can say that, as long as these women who come here and the women we organize into CLUW begin to have some impact in their own unions, because until they do, you gonna see what you saw last night [at the Gala Dinner for CLUW's Twentieth Anniversary] and what we've been seeing every time. First place number one, every time we've had an convention, from the time of 1975 on, there is always been this business of its too long, because when you are talking who are gonna be the speakers and you have one president, you gotta have them all. And then, and this is been going on all the time. And what do you get, you get too long of a program, and what do you get, you get all white males up

there talking, okay, unless we bring in somebody from the outside. And that's what we had the last night. What we had are good people, supportive people as they indicated that they were, but the award we ought to really give is when, to the leadership, women leadership of a union who does the work, to see to it that where there a majority from that union they elect a woman. Then we are giving that award. And I am not saying, that we should not elect a man if he is the most qualified but they never look at the business of trying to do that, and when you are a majority of females, and we have a number of women which are majority female, and we still only are electing white males and its two reasons for that. First, number one, the domination of the male is all the time on this one, and they are not ready to move over. And secondly because the females don't have the political astuteness, nor the know-how and go along with this, and until they start making some moves in their union not only in terms of the election of officers, but in terms of some of the issues, like the reproductive freedom issue. When that statement in there says, you know, they listen more to the external institutions, the one in that I made, when I installed the officers, that's in the book, they listen more to external institutions, than they listen to the Coalition of Labor Union Women. And the basic one on that was the whole question of them listening to the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, more than they do to CLUW. And now why do I pinpoint in relationship to the

Catholic Conference? I pinpoint it there because we all know, it is not just the Roman Catholic Church, its all other religious groups out there, religious groups and others, who are in opposition, but because that's the one religious group active within the labor movement that has influence with them, that takes that position. The other religious groups who are active with them and who do not have as much influence as the Catholic Conference they are right on that issue, as well as on some other issues. And it'll come know in relationship to the national health program and that Catholic Conference would assume see national health go down the drain if its gonna have abortion coverage. But let me tell you something, beside the fact that the AFL-CIO took a neutrality position cause as I said, this is a contentious issue. What the hell has not been a contentious issue in the AFL-CIO, okay. Despite that, you know, despite the fact that for years, for years their contracts have covered reproductive freedom, the [industrial union] contracts have always covered abortion, not covered abortion, the contracts we negotiated, okay. And it is true in a number of the others, not just for the members of the family, okay. So for this, for the position of the Catholic Conference to prevail [not understandable] because I don't know another group that has that much influence, it shows that the Coalition [of Labor Union Women] really has not done its work when there is a neutrality position. And it even becomes worse at the point in time when we have three

females there and two of the females vote for neutrality. And Joyce [Miller] was the only female who was right and then several of the men, okay. And these are the only females and several of the men. And even some those whose unions have taken positions, including my own, the president of my own union. He voted for neutrality, and yet at our convention we took a position. And yet it got fudged over and they said we hadn't taken a position. Of course we had taken a position, they can find out easily. So, you know, that's a, that shows we still got a lot of work to do, but I feel confident that we are really gonna move forward, I really do. And I think as we progress on this the rest of the women's movement will progress in terms of the things that need to be done, politically we will progress. And we need to know that were we have the job to do is not so much, we got it on the collective bargaining front things to do, we have to be militant, we have to implement the policies, the contract, see that the men don't violate the contracts, to see to it that the contracts have the right things in them. We gotta do all these rights, that they maintain the decent seniority systems and all the rest of that. We have to do all of that but on the other hand at the bargaining table, nobody, no other institution, no other structure beats us. But when the labor leader puts on his political hat and goes into that political arena, working on the state level or at the national level, he begins to forget. I mean, he forgets the very kind of things that he practices at

the bargaining table, is that he gets all of the same things for all of the workers and you treat them all equally, okay. And he forgets that, when he gets out there in terms of making a decision as to which issues to support, which candidates to support, and there is the compromising that goes on and our failures, are not at the bargaining table. Our failures are in the political arena, in our legislative procedures as we go about them, but mostly in terms of our elections and because of that what is happening now is, as [former president of the union] said, if we are gonna retain what we get at the bargaining table we must be successful in the political and legislative arena, we have not been successful, that's why we have to work, even though we have worked for national health for a long time, that's why we have to work for it now even more than ever, because at the collective bargaining front, we are losing retiree benefits, we are losing, we are going to lose, first the retirement benefits, then of coming retirees and then the active workers, in terms of their health benefits and that's gonna impact on the pension benefits and we are going to lose at the collective bargaining front until we get some of these things like labor law reform. And we are not gonna get it until we elect the right kind of people and stick with the fact, that, it isn't as question of how many people get along with whom we endorse, but how many people get elected who support the positions that we advocate. That's what we got to do. There's the story. What else do you want to know?

[laughs]

SR: How do you,

OM: Do you want to turn that off [the taperecorder] while you think?

SR: No, that's okay. Ahm, I mean when I was at the convention at Las Vegas I heard that somebody said that she was not so satisfied with the officer turn-over within CLUW. Somebody said that the officers in CLUW remain officers for a long time.

OM: Okay, self-perpetuating.

SR: Yes, so that she, some members would have the impression that those who have leadership positions wouldn't move over to make, to let other women in. And I wanted to know, if you could say something about that.

OM: That's true and there, there is, you know, a caucus within our organization in terms of the officers and recommending a slate and all of that. And I think you know, it's a natural thing that you recommend a slate. But what is natural and what is right is that you resist any opposition, okay. And you shouldn't risk opposition particularly because if somebody that you are doing wrong, which we are doing incorrectly, and that is even in the selection of the National Executive Board that the respective caucuses of the unions are too structured. And that the people they choose are people that's kind of hand-picked, you know. And while there is concern about losing an election and having opposition, I don't know, because most of the people who are there are the people they hand picked.

You know, in the National Executive Board that is absolutely true at the convention the same thing happens almost in terms of the delegates selection, because in most of the places there is not need for an election. They will tell you that I am always talking about not having a delegated convention because why do we go through all these rules because you don't have elections anyway. [laughs] So at the point in time when you get more people that might be a different ball game. So there is a lot of truth in the criticism that we perpetuate the incumbents, that we don't allow for open elections. I think, you know, you can, but nobody ever gets up to nominate, [not understandable] they are they are gonna stifle it, they will say, it's because its time, a procedure of time. But it is, it is structured, but I don't think that's gonna change until you get more members and see that's not gonna change until you. A good example of that it, you have a lot of automatic delegates that means these folks are there in the first place, they are gonna be there as delegates, so that you, there should more, enough people running as delegates who are interested for the number of spots that there are, one out of ten, or whatever it is, I can't remember now, for. On you membership, so that you could have a lot of people who wanna go and then you have to have an election, you can't control it, okay. But that relates also to the involvement of the women in the unions. How many have involved in their activity and then come from that union to the CLUW activity. It's gonna be

less. And part of this business of not getting more of opposition in terms of the officers and creating the climate that says, forces them to open up, you know to have an election. It's just not there, it's not out there, so a lot of it gets back to the basic ground roots organizing by the women out there in their unions. But a lot of them want to do it. And as these two women here were talking, "We just heard about this", they said, and they just joined and the are now going to spread the word, so we need to do more organizing. And I think that Gloria [Johnson] has in mind having a staff person who would help and organize chapters and do all that kind of stuff. Before you are talking to criticism of self-perpetuation, yes. They and they will support each other in terms of election of officers but then there is also nobody out there who also willing to run and taking on. And the reason is, because, no one out there is able to mobilize people enough to come so that they would think of doing it. And even though, even if they would loose, somebody should go and run. We haven't had elections in a long time, [laughs] so. I can't recall, but the last time I remember an election when the woman ran against me for president. There may have been one since then, I don't know. There was gonna be one, and I won't go into that story, because that's, who is gonna threatened to run. So, anyway, that's another story, so I won't go into that.

SR: And will this be the first time, CLUW will have a chapter

organizer, or?

OM: Yes, this will be the first time CLUW will have a chapter organizer, but on the other hand, as I told [national officer of CLUW], that I hope that chapter organizer is gonna be a person who is familiar with the unions and is who is an experienced CLUW member. I don't think you get staff just to have staff. And if I was going to make a criticism and I don't make it personally of the persons, we have had practically all persons who have been staff members who have not had any really basic union experience and CLUW experience. In some cases they had neither, in some of them had some union experience and not very much CLUW experience if at all. The only ones we had when I was president and we finally agreed to have executive director and [NEB member] was active in Federation [of Teachers] came on during the summer months to work but then she had to go back to teaching, cause we did not have the money to pay what take. And then I hired [NEB member], and [NEB member] the union experience and the CLUW experience and then, you know I stepped down in [year] and they were supposed to keep the National office in [city in the Midwest] at [CLUW national officer's] request for a while before things got set up like they then here, and we then, gave me time to give [NEB member] notice if she did not want to go to [city at the Eastcoast], if she not wish to go to [city at the Eastcoast]. But then what occurred was, that for some reason, Joyce [Miller] changed her mind and at the end of the

convention and the first officers meeting afterwards she announced that they were moving the CLUW office to [city at the Eastcoast]. And that's when of course Anita couldn't go there and that's when Anita also didn't get notice and that's the last time when we ever had and hired people who had experience within the union movement and experience with CLUW. So, and had to learn and that's a difficult thing to do, ok. And so hopefully if we are going to put on a chapter organizer you gotta have somebody who knows what it is all about. And I would hope they have somebody in mind, I never have believed in still don't, if I can get some money, the [industrial union] retired workers to work on a health to get national health working with CLUW, I would never try to get that money until I had the person who could do the job. You waste your money otherwise, so, I don't know, we have not had one. There have been attempts to assign people to do it, I think we had one attempt once and I don't think that it worked out. I don't know why because they probably pulled her out to do something else at that point, but that does not work out.

SR: And do you expect that CLUW will go on in the future like it did, until now or do you expect changes?

OM: I expect changes, as I said in that statement, I expect that we will begin to be more confident because we have demonstrated to them, we have demonstrated to them that they need us, okay. And we have also demonstrated that future success is

what the cooperative relationship and I think because the current leadership, I think, Gloria [Johnson] believes in more participatory democracy, you know. And I think, yes, I think there are going to be change, and if you are asking me, will CLUW continue, CLUW will continue if we make that kind of change and that kind of progress, but if we don't we kind of fizzle out and be nothing

[end of tape]

OM: If we were to go on as we have been going on - Is it (taperecorder) on now?

SR: Yes.

OM: What happened is we kind of fizzle out and I don't want to disband before we do that. But they have all kinds of indications already that it is not gonna be that way, there gonna be changes. And we gonna begin to, to, you know, to begin to be able to express things. But for example and I criticize the National Executive Board for that, the [city in the Midwest] CLUW chapter being critical of the cost for the banquet and they also then did not like the two-step procedure of the finances which in effect was to go ahead and help people to be here. Well you know, its one thing to be, to protest you have a right to, but the other thing is to make the protest at a time when you can do something about it, now it's true you know that the writer of the letter was not at the last NEB meeting, but it is also true that others who thought that same way and that's my understanding and I wasn't there

at the NEB meeting when they had this session and when the officers came in with the report, that there was a delegate from [union in the public sector] who would raise in her own [union] caucus and was told, if you feel that way, raise in the National Executive Board and it is true that she got up and raised it and Gloria [Johnson] responded in the fashion which the officers had talked about it, And everybody else sat quietly. And everybody else who felt that way should have gotten up and said something and I will bet you every cent I have that Gloria Johnson and those officers would have then said, okay lets have a look at this and see what we can do about this, okay. Now, you know, what they did at the point of time I learned about it at the Officers Meeting there also came the proposal you know the way it was set \$60 discount on the price. What they did not know because they did not know what the background was that we were already making an important step in that as a support group of the AFL-CIO, meaning that they give us money, that we have given up the right to go to the international unions for funds as we had previously done as well as the AFL-CIO at the point in time. When they AFL-CIO needed to have an increase in dues from those affiliated unions they then made a deal to those unions that support groups like the Coalition of Labor Union Women, like the Philip Randolph Institute, like the National Council on Senior Citizens would get an increase in contribution from the AFL-CIO as long as they would not go to the unions for

contributions. At the time we agreed to that, I was critical of the fact, that number one, we were not getting as much money in increase, as we should have, for giving up that right. Secondly, I was already aware that the National Council of Senior citizens has gotten an substantial increase but was still getting money from unions, including my union, the [industrial union], okay. And then in addition to that, I knew that they had been doing fundraisers and what the membership didn't know and if they raised a discussion it probably would have come up. That what Gloria [Johnson] had already done, was to take a first new step, which was to say, I'm gonna find a way in which we can get additional funds like those other support groups are doing and that is, they are holding fund raisers. We'll hold a fund raisers, okay. But in so doing when they set the price and things like that, it would have been better of course to have more discussion, but there was a fund raiser. It's turned out successfully, they moved that first step. The second step which they still do not know about, but which will there, came up again in relationship to the Education and Research Project. It was on relationship to labor law reform, alright. And I asked the question, because we had already gone through with this fund-raiser thing, and I said, "Good, that's great, I am glad you gonna do this," but I also pointed out, I didn't know first how much the ticket was, but I learned, I also pointed out that, that there is a difference in this fundraiser, which was gonna really cause them a problem,

and that was, that they would be hoisted by the home petard (?) because they were using the anniversary as the come on for the fund raiser and we were a young organization with people who come out of sentimentality, who had been to the founding convention or had heard about it and we all would want to be here. And see, so using that 20th anniversary as a fund raiser theme was the one that really caused them a problem, you know. If it is a strict fund raiser like the National Council for Senior Citizens had a month before, which nobody knew about it except the unions who had contributed the money for tickets, which a lot of people didn't even, well, you know, that kind of thing. But this was a little different that, but it was, a step was made. The other step, I was talking about was the whole question of labor law reform as a research project in determining priorities, not research, but as cooperative project with women's organizations that CLUW Education and Research work on this. The, and we were establishing priorities, we all felt that this was a priority, I asked the question doesn't, do the regulation say that we can go to the unions to get something for education for the research and education sector for those kinds of things. And Gloria [Johnson] said, to the best of my knowledge, they don't. "I said, great, because we ought legal to outside organizations for that joined project because it's labor law reform we go to our unions for it." So, there have been a number of things in relationship to how the things are changing. The fact that in

the discussions that Gloria [Johnson] is now able to say, that even though we know that officially, constitutionally the AFL-CIO they have to have representations, she represents IUE everybody now is willing to face up the reality that she represents CLUW and she is willing to say that, she is willing to say "That I represent the women who are part of the Coalition, who are part of your unions, but not only that, but I represent those women's organizations that we work with. And when I speak here despite the fact that officially I come from IUE, I represent them." Now she gets away with that and, while let me put it this way, she won't get away with that unless the women out there do what they are supposed to do in their unions. And when the women's sit here and correctly are critical of what might happen here, they must also be critical of their lack of participation in their local unions or in their caucuses which does not permit them to be elected. And which means that all those people we say on, those white males last night, will continue to be there, until they will begin to do something in their own local unions. And that when they go on various political slates, caucuses, that they don't get caught in that position of opposing caucuses with a female candidate as recording secretary on one caucus slate and a female recording secretary on the other one, running in the recording secretary position rather than secretary treasurer or something else like that, okay. And where they will also insist that they don't just get elected as

trustees but that they get elected on the collective bargaining committees, okay. That they get elected to those positions. You know which are meaningful, seem to be more meaningful in the membership than the positions they are put into. Until they start doing that in their own local unions. And then they come here too and they say hey, we wanna discuss it. Now they will tell you that over the last few years, and I've been in that position, I've raised issues on that floor, in opposition to what the officers are recommending and I have taken the position at the Officers Council Meeting that on any issue which I think is a basic concern to my constituency that means the chapter members, that means the CLUW members that I represent, if they take a position as an Officers Council and I disagree with that position, there are gonna go ahead and propose, I reserve the right to them that I disagree out there. And I also reserve the right to raise the issue if they are not gonna raise the issue, if I think the National Executive Board ought to know it, that if they pledge themselves to silence, I am not pledging myself to silence, if it is a matter of concern to those delegates. And that's the kind of thing that we got to open up, and that's the kind of procedure. I don't mean that you give away things that will be destructive to us but if its something that the National Executive Board policy committee group or the membership need to be, know and be concerned, I am for telling them, not a secret for the officers, that's not our organizations, that's everybody's organization.

SR: And do you see more younger members recently?

OM: We haven't seen enough younger members, there are too many, too many. Well I am not saying too many. Well, I don't want to say too many, because I think we all staying as long as possible, and we have talking about how we can network through retiree groups and work together. So I am not. There aren't enough younger folks, we have to reach out to them. I was agreeably surprised, however to find some more younger folks here because of the fact that we had the health rally, and because we have the 20th anniversary and so on and I see that and I am glad to see that. But I also, and I know what you are going be doing, I think I know what you are going to be doing, we need an analysis of our chapters. Our chapters are not in the status that they ought to be, except for a few, okay. And we have to many chapters who barely maintain their 25 and we have too many chapters in which four, five people run that show and that's all there is, okay. And I think it's good that we expand the participation on the National Executive Board, but then it turns out to be the big thing for the chapter level to be a chapter delegate. Now, being a president, because you are a delegate. And I am not going out and broadening the base of participation. And that's, I just don't know how many and I don't know how you gonna go about it, to find out what the status of the chapters is at this point in time. Isn't that one of the things that you want to find out?

SR: This is one of the things that I want to do.

OM: How you are gonna do it?

SR: I thought that I would mail out a little questionnaire to all the chapter presidents and ask them how big the chapter is and what they do and how often they meet and what unions are in the chapter active. Ahm, I thought I would also go through the files.

OM: Mmm.

SR: At the. I mean the problem is, I mean in [state at the Eastcoast] I participate in the meetings of the three [state at the Eastcoast] chapters and the three chapters are quite different in their activities.

OM: Aha.

SR: And also in their constituency.

OM: Mmm.

SR: But I mean.

OM: You were there?

SR: Yes.

OM: Tell me about it, tell me exactly about it. How many? Tell me who they are, because what I am worried about, you gonna send a survey out, you know you gonna get all the, if you get the answers after you called them over and over and over again, if you got the answers, they are going to, ah, you just, you not gonna know if its correct, let's say, if its correct until you get there and to see what's going on. So tell me what you found in [state at the East Coast] when you went.

SR: Okay. There are currently three chapters in [the state at the Eastcoast], one chapter was founded in the end of the seventies, beginning of the eighties. It's the [Capital] Chapter and it has, Do you know this chapter?

OM: Yes, I know this chapter. I knew most of the chapters when they started.

SR: Okay.

OM: [Capital chapter], what conditions is [Capital chapter] in right now?

SR: [Capital] is meeting every other month, has a majority of AFSCME members. There is one member from the Machinists, there are CSEA which is a State Employees union, and at most meetings there are six to eight members, there was a meeting where officers were elected where some more members were there, there were like 15 maybe. But this was also because members of [Southwestern chapter] joined the meeting. Because [Southwestern chapter] is in a not so, [Capital chapter] and [Southwestern chapter] are merging. It's so that some members say that [Southwestern chapter] is defunct, some [Southwestern chapter] say that, some [Southwestern chapter] members say it is not defunct, they still meet. The fact is that the two chapters are meeting together and it is still so that there is a majority are members of [public sector union]. What I would say what the difference is between [Capital chapter] and [Southwestern chapter] is that in [Capital chapter], there are a lot of, there are more staff

members, like business representatives like [name] and also so that even if the group is not very big, and there might not be planned activities, it is important that these women can get together at these meetings to network, like. I don't know if you know about the pay equity negotiations that have been in [state at the East Coast]?

OM: No.

SR: So there were.

OM: Well we are networking on that.

SR: And so they were networking. And it was important that people met on the chapters, so they didn't set up a conference or so. At first when I got familiar with the chapter I was a little bit disappointed because I was expecting more activities, over the time I thought it is very valuable also, to have this place to get together so that labor union women get to know each other and then meet at other occasions, like the legislative conference of the AFL-CIO or at a NOW dinner or whatever and exchange and network. So, I was at one meeting of the [Southwestern chapter] chapter where there was more information than I was used to it from the [Capital chapter] about activities of other groups like peace movement, so that it was kind of a community work across labor.

OM: Mmm.

SR: And the [Northeastern Chapter] which was founded last year.

OM: Which one?

SR: [Northeastern Chapter].

OM: Oja, [Northeastern Chapter]

SR: Exists since a year. And they meet monthly, so they meet more often than [Capital chapter] and [Southwestern chapter]. And I have been at every meeting since January, So, at four meetings or. It's is very energetic, they are putting together a conference. And I gave the.

OM They are new.

SR: They are new, they will have a conference on organizing, on June 2. And Gloria [Johnson] will give the keynote address?

OM: Who is giving the keynote address?

SR: Gloria Johnson.

OM: Oh, good, okay.

SR: I don't have.

OM: How many members they have?

SR: On the meetings are eight members.

OM: Eight.

SR: Yeah.

OM: They met the 25 members chapter requirement.

SR: Yeah. And what I mean, what I heard at Las Vegas and what I heard here also seems so as if many chapters would be disappointed that the chapters are so small. But I mean when I talk to the activists, I mean I am so amazed that activists who are working full-time, who are officers in their unions, who are also shop stewards and whatever and have 80 hour work weeks. I mean, that they can not meet every month, I mean, I simply understand, I think, so then it is better that

the chapter is small and meets every other month, than as if the chapter would not meet at all. And what I heard also was that [state vice president of a state at the East Coast] told me that she has the impression that it is so that women who have been active and then didn't come to meetings any more because they got children or whatever,

OM: Mmm.

SR: Come back.

OM: Mmmm.

SR: So maybe it is so that it is not so steady, that members stay away for a while and come back after some years. And so.

OM: Mmm.

SR: So my impression, so I heard, at Las Vegas I heard that the [city at the Eastcoast] City chapter which must be very strong, and must have very many members, but this seems to be the exception.

OM: Well, they probably do draw pretty well, I don't, they had some contentious meetings too, you know, but. And then there was a question that came up in this session, apparently people who live in different boroughs, I mean Long Island and whatever, they talk about different, Manhattan and what, they talk about different chapters and splitting up, so I don't know. But it varies. My guess is what you gonna find out if you could do this, if you could visit, if you want, that's the best.

SR: That would be great, but I mean I don't have the time to do.

OM: I know you can't. I am just wondering, if there is a way if you get a key person who in each of these areas who in addition to the questionnaire being send, would visit the meetings and see what's happening at the meetings. I don't know how you would do that, but you know, I have known for a long time that some of the folks they maintain either their 25 or when they have 2 delegates they maintain 50 so that they can have the two delegates, but that they have very few at their meetings. And if took [state in the Midwest], see I know what [city in the Midwest] chapter is doing and what they did was change to have to have a membership meeting every two months and in the other months they would have a Executive Board Meeting. And there, and I forgot to tell this group here, because I was giving them so much of the other stuff. But, what they do of course is to get themselves an Executive Board that consists of representation of all those different unions and you have to have a certain number in order to get representation on the Executive Board, so Executive Board committee meetings are not necessarily small meetings. I think probably the last meeting were they took their action there must have been fifteen executive board members. Their membership meetings aren't that big, but they will I think have some, depending on what they are planning, they will have 35 to 50 and when you go to the Christmas or the Holiday Party, you get more. But one of the things they do at their membership meetings is they do pot-luck, do you

know what pot-luck is? And they, so people bring in things, but the best pot-luck is when they do the Christmas party that's really a celebration form. But if I go out to the [town in the Midwest] and those folks will take issue with me. My guess is that when I analyze [town in Midwest] chapter and particularly as I looked at the program when you can see who signed on, you probably get a hard core of seven or eight people, that kind of thing. [Town in the Midwest] I think has a few more, [Town in the Midwest] from their perspectives have maybe about twenty, maybe fifteen to twenty. And some of those places they have listed I don't think they are even meeting. And one of them just got revitalized, [name] Newman told me she was up to get some things squared away. But there are a couple of them are listed in there, I don't know the [town in the Midwest] had a meeting for a long time and I think you will find that situation true all around. And I think if we were a little tighter in terms of our restrictions to that they comply and submit their reports and what they do, they, they wouldn't be, they shouldn't be listed as chapters but we have a reluctance to disband a chapter. But in some cases however, I think we should because they are not doing anything.

SR: Isn't it better that there is something?

OM: No.

SR: Otherwise.

OM: Then maybe somebody comes in there and does something

about it and organizes a new one. And what generally happens is that you continue on with some few people and nobody does anything and then if somebody comes in they have resistance of new blood coming in and revitalizing. 'Cause the fact of the matter is, and I hate to say this, but the fact of the matter is that most of that is dependent, the reason for them not getting because they really haven't gone out to do their job that they need to do for the very reason, you are talking about, they have so many things to do. But then on the other hand we also find, and I was very critical of the president of [City in the Midwest] CLUW, she was taking on everything, she was active in NOW, she took on a new position, she decided not to run this time, she is active over there in Metropolitan AFL-CIO. And you know my point is I am looking for folks, you know, bless their soul, I would like to have them have as their primary interest beyond their own union is to be CLUW, is to have that as something, not have to be split all over other, other than the things they have to do, which is plenty. Work, go to their union meetings, being active in their union, take care of their kids, God you can not afford any other organizations after that, if you take on CLUW and we just have to keep looking and getting more people, is that on [taperecorder]

SR: Yes.

OM: If you turn that off, I give you a piece of information
[taperecorder switched off]