

L I L L I A N H E R S T E I N

Oral History Project in Labor History

Book I

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Interviews with Lillian Herstein

by Elisabeth Balanoff

Total time - 13 hours

307 pages

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Appendix

Oral History Project

I, Lillian Herstein, hereby direct that the interview
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Date Location

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Elizabeth Balanoff
Director, Oral History Project

Lillian Herstein
Signature of interviewee

Respondent: Lillian Herstein

Interviewer: Elizabeth Balanoff

Date: October 26, 1970

Tape 1 - Side 1

- R. I am the child of immigrant parents who came from Lithuania near the German border. My father's mother seemed to have had some money, because he got private lessons in English; so he knew how to write and read English before he came to America. He was born not too many years after the Civil War, and he had read about how Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. Abraham Lincoln was a Republican, and then and there, before he set foot on American soil, my father became a Republican. By the time he came to America he and my mother had a son who was born in Lithuania, the only one in the old country. He (father) came first, as so many immigrants did, and then sent for my mother and the boy. My mother had a sister who was younger than she, but quite enterprising, who lived in Pittsburgh. And my father stopped there. I don't know for what reason he didn't settle there. He settled in Chicago. He became a sort of sexton, we call it, of a synagogue in Chicago, one of the first in Chicago; and then, in connection with that, he opened a bookstore of Hebrew books. Of course, there was a demand for that. With the salary of the sexton and the little he made in the store, he made a very modest living. He was like a great many Jewish men of that era, very much interested in scholarship, and not in those manual occupations, which were in demand in America,

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a relatively new country, and would have brought more lucrative rewards. He brought my mother over, and we lived in the store. We lived behind the store and had some rooms upstairs.

I. What year was it that they came?

R. Well, I can almost figure it out. I've got that written down somewhere. 1868 I think was when my sister Gusta was born. She was the first child born in America.

I. That's good enough.

R. Now, it must've been before that.

I. It was after the Civil War.

R. Oh, yes, it was after the Civil War, maybe ten years afterwards. That was 1865. That would have been 1875, because the memory of that period was very strong in my father's consciousness. He was not acquisitive at all. In fact, our store became the center for the immigrant Jews that came from that synagogue. They would stop at our store. They would send money back to their families in the old country. He'd write letters for them to their

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wives in the old country before they brought them over. Now, if he'd had an instinct for making money, he would have done what many immigrants did, Italian, Jewish, They went into the steamship business and some of them even became bankers. But he was doing this as a favor. He never even charged them anything, and that used to annoy my mother because the family began growing and needed more money. He made a meager living, and he was a respected member of the community. The men from the synagogue would come, and he would tell them who was running for office. There was a Jewish paper then, The Courier. This is before the Socialist days that brought Sidney Hillman and Dubinsky and that group. They were already oriented in the Socialist party. They were a younger, much younger generation. In my father's days most of the ethnic groups had foreign language papers, and they really rendered a service. There was the Abendpost, the famous German one. There was a Bohemian one, the Daily Svonhost, and my father knew and admired the editor. But they gave information to their people that they needed. They rendered a real service. As time went on, years after, as their children learned English, the need of the foreign language papers grew less and less, until they have practically no need now, though some still exist, written in Yiddish or German.

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I don't know whether the Abendpost still exists. It was the big German paper. The foreign population of Chicago was largely German. In fact, Bill Thompson was supposed to have declared the neutrality of Chicago in World War I when he was going to hit the snout of King George. Remember? They were a very big group. Then there were those whom we called Bohemians, who were Czechs really. My father made his meager living, was respected as the sexton of the synagogue. And then there was one of these internal political cabals against him, and he was defeated for that job, which was a very great blow. Together with this Jewish bookstore that he had, my parents were ahead of their time, They used to make grape wine for the Jewish holidays, and everybody bought it from them. They were the predecessors of Mogen David. Mogen David got their push from Hitler, which had made the Jews very race conscious. They came much later. My mother was a wonderful winemaker. And all these Jewish people used to buy wine from us for the Jewish holidays. Then for the other holidays, succos, they would bring these luloffs from Jerusalem, and then these sort of like a lemon, and they sold that, too. With the store which sold Hebrew prayer books and the selling of wine and luloffs twice a year they made their living that way.

Eventually there were six children in the

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family and I was the youngest. I was only twelve years old when my father dropped dead of a heart attack. He was about fifty-three. I have his picture here, I'll show you someday. But he left a very deep impression on me and all of us. We used to gather around the table, a big kitchen-dining room table, back of the store, and he would tell us about what was happening in the world. I remember his discussing the Dreyfus case. And from the time we were children we were oriented in the conviction of participating in the activities of this great country. He believed in it, and he was a Republican. One of the interesting stories about him that my niece cherishes -- when the Democrats ran William Jennings Bryan, the gold and silver tongued orator for President in 1896 -- 16 to 1, and they came to my father and offered him a bribe if he would use his influence with the Jewish people of the synagogue to switch from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party. He scorned it! My mother had brothers in this country, and she had one who lived in the East. He was fairly well-to-do, and my niece was trying to get him to vote for Roosevelt. Oh, he would never do that. "You don't know what your grandfather did, the sacrifice he made for the Republican Party."

Then as far as unions were concerned, he would think they were terrible. Why these poor immigrants come to this wonderful country and we have to go and have unions! And you see, he was long before

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Dubinsky. You had what they call the Bund in Poland, and they were Socialists; so was Sidney Hillman, avowed Socialists, before they came, in fact such nationalists and internationalists in the Socialist philosophy that they were against Zionism. They were against Zionism; they were strong Socialists. But my father wasn't. If I thought anything about unions, I thought they were a lot of nuts that ought to appreciate this great country.

One of the regrets that I have is that I was the beneficiary of everything, because I was the youngest. The rest went to work at the age of fourteen and my mother had to carry on this business. We were socially minded, but this was a wonderful country. About that time women in Illinois were given limited suffrage, the right to vote for University trustees, and my mother was the only woman in the precinct that went to vote.

I. Really?

R. Yes. And she took me by the hand. I was about five years old. And the clerk, when he was registering her, said to me, "What about you, little girl?" "Oh, I'm going to vote. I'm going to be President, some day." We had that consciousness. We would never miss an election to vote.

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- I. Your father didn't disapprove at all, of your mother voting?
- R. Oh, he wanted her to. He was for all that. He just didn't see the labor movement. He didn't see the economics. My oldest brother was to become a citizen; he's the one that was born in the old country. Next to us was a feed store owned by German immigrants, not Jews. The name was Edsel, and they had a son who was to become a citizen. My father went with this oldest brother and Mr. Edsel with his son. And when they went with their sons to become American citizens, it was just almost a sacred ceremony; so a feeling of what it meant to be a citizen of this great country with all its opportunities was early inculcated in them. Then, as, time went on, the generation gap between us and the older generation was on a different basis than what it is now. Our parents, being older and more sophisticated, would talk about some evils in America, corruption, etc. Oh, we'd say, "Not in America!" We were the 100% Americans, optimistic about America, against our parents more mature judgement. They weren't bitter at all, but they had maturity. As I said, all the children in the family went to work except me. I was just 12 years old when my father died and I must've been in eighth grade. Then I went to high school, the only member of the family that went to high school. I went to the Medill

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High School. Oh, I loved it! I can recall, in the four years that I went to high school, I missed one day when I was really sick, and in my senior year when my oldest brother died. There's an interesting story connected with him. He was only 23 when he died. But this family of ours became very American, baseball fans. This oldest brother was a remarkable baseball player; and he joined a team that subsequently became the Cubs.

- I. Really?
- R. But he didn't tell my father, because my father thought it was terrible in a country like this, with all the opportunities, to go and be a baseball player. He went under the name of Charles Babb. Now, in those days, some of the men of the congregation, the younger men, younger than my father, went to the games and saw him. And they said, "That's Mr. Herstein's son." And, "Oh, no!" The whole family were baseball fans. But in those days they didn't take care of the players the way they do now. They were used to the full limit. He developed heart trouble, and he died at the age of 23. My mother was left with six children, five after he died, and this precarious business! The oldest was a breadwinner, too. She had \$500.00 insurance, that's all!

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The problem of providing for the family became a real problem because these orthodox Jewish people were reluctant to deal with a woman in these religious activities. My mother went into business with a Mr. Friedman who was the man that displaced my father through synagogue politics. My mother's going into business with this "enemy of our father" was a shock to us. But she had a family to support. We were in St. Patrick's parish; I remember a lot of funny stories connected with that. The priest would come into the store and read the Hebrew books. At that time, only the Catholic clergy knew Hebrew. You know who brought about the reading and learning of Hebrew by the Protestant clergy? Harper, at the University of Chicago.

- I. I didn't know that.
- R. Well, Harper graduated from Yale, got his doctorate degree when he was 19, in Hebrew. And he felt it was outrageous that the Protestant clergy, by and large, did not know Hebrew and were unable to read the Bible in that language. And he started the movement. But the Catholic clergy always did. And the priest would come in our store and look over the books, and he and my

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father would engage in conversation. In back of the store was my mother, cooking supper or dinner, wondering how much business he was doing. And she realized he wasn't. I can remember her crossly saying, "That priest! He has no children to support. But you have a family. You've got to sell the books, not talk about them." She had to be practical. Then, as I said, my brother died in my senior year, and that was the week I was out of school. In four years I missed one day and a week. School meant everything to us, just everything! By that time, my oldest sister, Augusta, the first one born in America, worked in Mandel Brothers as a saleswoman, and in Field's, In those days they worked 12 hours a day. They had no stools to sit on. When they worked overtime they got 50 cents for supper. And she developed, late in life, very bad arthritis. I always put it back to those years of standing on her feet. She was very fond of me, and there developed between me and her a very close relationship. By that time she was the oldest and I was the youngest; and there was a younger brother, younger than she, Louis; my sister Ann, who's still living at home, and my brother Bill. They're all dead except Ann and me. Gusta, if she'd had a chance! I remember hearing that when she graduated from grammar school she went over to the old West Division High School. Then we had the

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West Division and the South Division, She wanted to go to high school. When I think of the inflexibility of principals! She wanted to register and the principal thought it was too late. How different her life might have been! She was very bright. If people think I'm bright, she was the same. She just didn't have the opportunity. She worked at Field's and about that time, Mary Dreier Robins had organized the Women's Trade Union League of America. She was of a very rich German family in Brooklyn. I've got her book here.

I. I saw it.

R. That's right. She even spoke with a guttural "r" like the Germans did, but they were very wealthy.

I. And she was the primary organizer?

R. She went to England and saw the British Woman's Trade Union League. So did Jane Addams, and they organized the Woman's Trade Union League of America with the idea of doing something for working women. She was a remarkable woman, just fascinating! Good Republican, also. And from the beginning, those wealthy women who organized the Women's Trade Union League were determined that the power should be in the hands of the working women. They designated the women who joined the Women's Trade Union League who were not working women as "allies," For many years, Mrs. Raymond Robins was the president. They wrote in the constitution that the control of the executive board should be in the hands of the working women.

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These women organized the Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, and then the National. The headquarters of the ~~Ma~~ National were also in Chicago for many years. Local Leagues were organized in Boston, in New York City, and Kansas City. Somehow or other, my sister Gusta, the oldest one who worked in Field's, got in touch with the League. The League would meet on Sunday afternoons, and Mrs. Robins would speak, and that proved a great inspiration to my sister. That was her first contact, really, with the labor movement. In those days saleswomen didn't belong to unions. My brother got some job in the Banner Waist Company, and nobody was organized or even thought of those things. But all the principles that Mrs. Raymond Robins presented meant a great deal to my sister. Incidentally, at one time there was a parade of I.W.W.'s in Chicago, and Mrs. Robins marched in that parade, and the Chicago Woman's Club read her out of their club.

- I. Is that right?
- R. She was a millionaire, She was a very courageous, very fine woman, and developed a very close relationship with all these local Leagues and their presidents. One of the best local Leagues developed was in New York City; the head of it was Rose Schneiderman. She was an immigrant, and went to work as a capmaker when she was 12 years old.

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She was a fiery, red-headed, beautiful girl and she developed a wonderful League. She was much better than Agnes Nestor of the Chicago League. And she had not the favorable conditions, because the central body in New York City was in the hands of some very shifty people, whereas in Chicago the president of the Chicago Federation of Labor was the great incorruptible John Fitzpatrick, Rose Schneiderman and her group were very enterprising and had great initiative. They bought a house; they served lunches to working men and women at nominal prices; they organized many classes. Very early, Eleanor Roosevelt became active in the Women's Trade Union League of New York and subsequently in the National women's Trade Union League.

I. Did Rose Schneiderman work at this full time?

R. After a while, she worked full time. She had been a capmaker. The League never could afford adequate salaries or anything like that. And I remember that during the Depression everybody was broke. Unions didn't meet; they skipped their national conventions. Then the Roosevelt Administration came in, and it was decided that they would have a convention, the National Women's Trade Union League. By that time, the National office

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had moved to Washington. Its secretary (oh, she's still living! She's blind.) was Elisabeth Christman of the Glove Workers Union.

I. She came up through the ranks.

R. Yes. She worked in glove factories in Chicago when they charged the workers for the needles they used.

I. I've heard of this.

R. And she was a very remarkable organizer and administrator.

I. Can you tell me a little about her, describe her a little?

R. She was from a German family. Apparently in the old country, when her father and mother married, it was considered the father married beneath him. In the old country they were Catholics. And then they came to this country. It was a large family, and the father was a musician and belonged to the Musicians Union. Elisabeth was always very proud of that. Elisabeth was a glovemaker. And then she finally became the secretary of the National League. She was very good at fund raising. And, without salary, she was the secretary of the Gloveworkers Union. She did that, all that work.

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She was very, very capable, very much unlike Agnes Nestor, who was the president, who got a lot of attention. Now, Elisabeth went to a Lutheran school when she came to this country and always regretted her lack of education. In the midst of a big campaign, I'd go in to see her about something and she'd ask me, "Now, make it clear to me the difference between the uses of 'will' and 'shall'", She was very modest and very eager to learn and very capable, very capable. And, then, subsequently, the National office was moved to Washington, D.C. During the depression, as I was telling you, hardly any union conventions were held. But the Roosevelt Administration came in with all its promise. The Board of the League decided to have a convention. And as they were sitting there, Mrs. Roosevelt said, "My, I wish you could bring some of those textile workers from the South." The textile industry had resisted organization for years. Ainsworth was in that business. Elisabeth said, "Oh, we'll try to bring some of them but their unions have no money, Those unions, they couldn't send anybody." I think it was Mrs. Brandeis who said, "Oh, I'll contribute \$50.00," and so on. They were going to bring these girls from the South, the working girls from the textile industry. Plans for the convention were being made and one day Elisabeth ran into Mrs. Roosevelt on the street somewhere

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in Washington. Mrs. Roosevelt said to her, "Oh, Miss Christman, how are you getting along with the convention?" She said, "Fine." And she said, "I have everything for the southern girls. I've got the money for their transportation. Now, I'm working on their hospitality, where they'll stay." Mrs. Roosevelt said, "Just wait a minute." And she went to the telephone and came back, and she said, "Miss Christman, you know that top floor of the White House where there are these big beds? I just talked to them," (Major Homo or somebody from the White House). "How would the girls like to stay there?" I thought Elisabeth would die. She said, "Oh, Mrs. Roosevelt, that's too much!" She said, "That's all right. I've got the place and enough beds for the southern girls. And then I want Rose Schneiderman to stay at the White House, and Molly Friedman, who is in the International Ladies Garment Workers in New York." Mrs. Roosevelt knew them personally. And so they came to the convention. And it was a marvelous convention, the first one in a long time. And the day before it was over one of President Roosevelt's secretaries got hold of Elisabeth Christman. He said, "Miss Christman, I'm talking for the President. He feels very sorry that affairs of state were such that he couldn't meet his guests. He wants to meet them tomorrow at tea." And Elisabeth

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said, "oh, that's too much. We don't expect it and you don't have to do that." He said, "Listen, Miss Christman, you can't tell the President who his guests are to be. At three o'clock." And they gathered in the blue room, as they usually do for teas. Soon President Roosevelt was ushered in, in his wheelchair. He was most gracious. Elisabeth said he couldn't have been more gracious if he were entertaining the most important ambassador of an important country. They had a wonderful tea. It was written up in Time magazine, but not as fully as I'm telling you. That was a never to be forgotten event for these working girls. During their stay in the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt put in their rooms little mementoes that they could take home and cherish all their lives.

Now, to get back to the Chicago League and my sister's work in it. An uncle of mine put it into my head that he was going to help me go through college. Nobody in my group went to college. There wasn't a girl in our group that went to college. I went to Northwestern. In the summer, my high school teacher who was very fond of me, got me a job at Sears, Roebuck. And I got \$6.00 a week. And I could walk to work there. My older brothers would give me money, ten cents, a quarter, and so on. So with this attitude

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towards participating in things, I went through Northwestern University. And, it was then the leading Methodist school in the country, and they had the Four Mile Act. I don't know what's happened to that, but no intoxicants could be sold within four miles; we went to chapel three times a week. We hear much of counseling these days, usually for poor students. I have come to think that a good student needs counseling as well as a poor one. Why did I go and major in Latin?

- I. Is that what you majored in?
- R. That's right. I had Latin all through high school. And I majored in Latin in College and also took Creek. My most distinguished professor there -- I'll tell you about him -- was John Adams Scott, whose brother eventually became the president of the University. And I also took history, but it was always ancient history, or medieval. Towards the end of my college career, however, I realized the one-sidedness of my education, so I took German. I had had no modern language, and I did very well in German. Walter Will Scott was then professor of psychology, and he subsequently became the President of Northwestern. He was the brother of John Adams Scott. John Adams Scott was my professor of Creek, a most remarkable man. We would meet and we would read, translate 200 lines of the Iliad in every class session. And then he'd tell us about things going on in the world. At

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that time, the governor of Illinois was not nominated by a primary; we didn't have the primaries then. We was nominated at a convention. The convention that year was in Springfield. And there was a fight royal between the three candidates running for the Republican nomination for governor. And of all things, John Adams Scott was a delegate to that convention. Now, can you imagine this great scholar? I remember this was the time that Schliemann had done the great excavations about Troy, and he'd tell us about that. Then he goes to the convention. And, oh, it was deadlocked.

- I. You got the past and the present pretty close together.
- R. Now, wasn't that remarkable for that man! And he came back, and we'd do our translating, never shunted the work, and then he'd tell us about the convention. This was before the day of ghostwriters, known as ghostwriters. He had poked around in Springfield, met all the fellows that were writing, and so he discovered that the same man was writing the speeches for the three fighting each other for the nomination. He was a very great influence in my life. Another great influence in my life was Arthur Wild, who was professor of ancient history, a typical Bostonian with the typical fairness of the Puritan. I remember once at a reception he took me aside. There

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were three Jewish students on the campus at Northwestern. One was Jacobson, who subsequently became a distinguished psychiatrist, and another girl by the name of Yetta Sheftel, whose parents were very religious (she used to have to get special permission to transfer examinations listed for Saturdays) and I. I was at this reception, and he took me aside. He said, "Now, Miss Herstein". He said I was one of his good students, and asked, "I'm wondering, do you feel any discrimination here because you're Jewish?" I said, "No, I don't." And I didn't. The discrimination at Northwestern was not on the basis of race, although there weren't too many Jews or Catholics, but money. The most snobbish sororities and fraternities that I knew of were at Northwestern University. They were very, very bad. And I blamed the University because they didn't develop activities for the "barbarians," for us. In fact, I had a friend, Cora Ellis, who has since died, and she was a brilliant girl. She went to college for three years and then dropped out to make money and she came back her last year. She was Phi Beta Kappa. We were very great friends. Well, then she graduated, and she taught at LaGrange High school, and she had two children. And she had a son, James, who was a wonderful football player. And she, like all the alumni, got letters from the Northwestern about the games

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and, you know, you could get tickets, and so on. And she wrote back; she said, "I am going to attend the Northwestern-Illinois football team game, but I shall not sit on the Northwestern bleachers. I shall sit on the bleachers of Illinois where my son plays fullback. I used my influence for him to go to Illinois instead of Northwestern which was so ridden with prejudice against poorer students." And she wasn't Jewish, no.

Well, then, when I was a student from Northwestern I lived in a dormitory, Chapin hall. It was quite remarkable. We did all the work. I think our board and room was about \$3.50 a week. The work was so organized that every girl was expected to do an hour's work a day; but it often didn't amount to that, it was so well organized. And we had a matron, kind of a top cook, I'd call her, and then a preceptress, these fancy names. She came from Colorado; Grace Harris was a very lovely person and very close to the girls. Her people were well off, and she was working on her master's degree and living there and she was quite an influence.

As we got to the senior year, we were all applying for jobs to teach. And we all joined teachers agencies. I joined the Fisk Teachers Agency. One day, I got a letter from George Palmer who was a former Northwestern man and head of the Fisk Teachers Agency. He said, "The next time you come to Chicago, I want to talk to you.'" And he said, "You know, Miss Herstein, I've been baffled by how you haven't gotten a job. And now I know why, and I think you're big enough to

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tell you the truth." He said, "I have sent your papers when they said they wanted somebody like you, who could teach six subjects and everything, just the person they wanted. And then they didn't take you, because in one of the letters John Adams Scott, in recommending you, called you 'a brilliant Jewess.'" And when he heard that, he wouldn't change that letter; he was furious. And I couldn't get a job. I learned the geography of Illinois by the places that wouldn't hire me. The only time I got a job was in Frankfurt, Illinois, near Dixon, because the person who'd accepted the job dropped out the last minute. But once I got the job, they said I did so well, (I was the only Jewish person there), that I was wanted in other nearby towns. But I was advised not to go but to get two years in Southern Indiana. There I met Laura Blackburn, the daughter of a Baptist minister, who was one of the great influences in my life.

There was an incident that happened at Northwestern, that somehow I had forgotten about until recent years. When I was at Northwestern, it must've been my third year, there was a Jewish girl enrolled as a student. She had emigrated from Russia, and she was very odd compared to the rest of us. We were typical American Jews, or Americans. And she was this very peculiar (we didn't know the word "radical") radical person. She was in an English class at Northwestern. I think now, how did it happen that I didn't

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cultivate her; she was Jewish and I was Jewish. But we were worlds apart, One day in the English class an instructor by the name of Odell, a very nice person, reminded us that we're supposed to correct our themes and send them back corrected. He said, "Well, some of you are not returning your corrected themes; you're absent or absent-minded," he said. He read the list of the students who hadn't returned their themes, called them "absent-minded." And this Russian immigrant student arose furious. She didn't know what "absent-minded" meant. And she said, "That's a terrible way to treat anybody." and she dashed out of the class. Later that day she committed suicide.

I. Oh my!

R. And it wasn't for that reason. She had been in the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, upon which the many idealistic people had pinned their faith. And it failed. And like all revolutionists, she carried poison with her, to be able to commit suicide before the police would get her. (You see, she did this all her life.) Then somehow, she came to America; her father had a humble job like killing chickens the way the Jews are supposed to do it. This was 1905. And she was so upset she thought absent minded meant insane. But before she died she sent for the Dean of Women. She said, "Tell

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that dear professor that what I did had nothing to do with what he said. It was the failure of everything I'd worked for all my life." And I remember, Mary Ross Potter was the Dean of Women; she felt terrible. And then she sent for me. She said, "Lillian, did you ever know this woman?" I said, "I hardly ever saw her. I was hardly ever in a class with her." People that were in her history class where we had that bumptious guy, (he was such a 200% American -- waved the flag) said she had learned American history in Europe, and she disagreed with him several times. That wasn't done in those days. And who knew American history? Who ever told us that we stole one third of Mexico; we stole it! That's what General Grant tells us. We stole it. Abraham Lincoln said so. That's why they didn't elect him. But she knew that and questioned the professor.

Well, I finally got this job in Franklin Grove, Illinois. But during the summer, the head of one of the Jewish agencies asked me to work because their people were on vacation, and I could speak Yiddish.

- I. What was this, a welfare agency?
- R. Oh, yes. At that time, the Welfare Department was separated from what we call the Bureau of Personal Service, which rendered legal

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aid to poor Jews. Just look how advanced they were. For instance, a Jewish man would get arrested for peddling without a license. And they had lawyers who would give their services gratis, usually very fine ones. Or, a Jewish man would work, and the boss would say, "You're fired," and he wouldn't pay him. You'd be surprised how common that practice was; he just didn't pay him. So what could the poor fellow do? He would come to the Bureau of Personal Service. And we would try to get his earnings for him. Then, we had a lot of domestic difficulties. The Jewish husbands didn't beat their wives, and they didn't get drunk, but they deserted. They knew the Jewish charities would take care of their families. And one of our jobs was to bring the husband and the wife together in our office and see if we couldn't make a reconciliation. Minnie Lowe was the head of the organization, one of these kind-hearted women, and she was very fine. That was the day before we had a school for social service administration. The relief office was a few blocks away, and that was under Miriam Kalisky. Very often, the relief department got mad at us because they thought we separated the families and they had to give them relief. That was an interesting experience. In the meantime I'd got this job in Franklin Grove, Illinois, ten miles east of Dixon, Illinois. Miss Lowe tried to persuade me to

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stay in social work. But I thought being a teacher was the most wonderful thing in the world. I remember, she went on her vacation, and she wrote to her assistant, "I'm sorry, Miss Herstein won't stay with us and is going to that little town to teach." I was only there for the summer, you know, eight weeks. But she said, "I want her to have a week's vacation with pay before she leaves."

I went to Franklin Grove, a town of about a thousand inhabitants. They had a story there that they once had a Jew who was a banker. It so happened that the president of the school board who engaged me was what was a liberal in those days. Most of the inhabitants were "drys", they were teetotalers, and he wasn't. His name was Dr. Banker. The Christian Endeavor, the church societies, were very much shocked at this man because he drank beer; and then he employed as teachers one Jewess and a girl who was a Catholic. She taught in the Grades. One man was the superintendent; I was the principal -- two teachers! I taught all the subjects. Miss Weels, the other teacher, and I became very great friends, and Dr. and Mrs. Banker used to entertain us often at their home. He always remembered that when I came for the interview, before I got the job, they had pork dinner and that I didn't eat it. I didn't know it was pork.

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I never saw it. I was too excited. And he said, "Well, this must be Passover. Miss Herstein is passing over the food." We became very good friends. I worked hard, prepared my lessons every evening, and was regarded as a fine teacher. There was a little kindergarten teacher, too. She and I were friends. Immediately, I began to get offers from towns around there, I remember, there were these book agents; they know everybody. And this fellow came to me and said, "I want to tell you something. Mow you're making a big hit in this town. And you'll be offered several jobs." But, he said, "You know, one of the reasons why women fail on jobs is because they try to do two jobs." He said, "You take a man. If he earns \$15.00 a week, he doesn't iron his shirts. But women do; they do the two things." He was trying to warn me. He knew I would get offers. I remember I got an offer from Sycamore, Illinois. But at that time, if you wanted to get into the Chicago schools, be eligible for examination in Chicago schools, you had to have two years of experience in the same school system. I stayed the two years, After that, I went to Mount Vernon, Indiana. At the end of the first year in Mt. Vernon, I tried to get a job closer to Chicago. The teachers agency sent me to apply for a job in East Chicago, Indiana. This same Mr. Palmer of the Fisk Teachers Agency (it was only two years) said, "Oh I've got just the job for you."

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And I went down to East Chicago, Indiana, was interviewed by the President of the School Board. It was after I had been in Mount Vernon a year, and I had a very bad case of malaria down there. They had swamps, right on the Ohio River. He was trying to persuade me not to accept that job. He said, "Oh, you'll get malaria again." And he was wonderful, just wonderful. I realized I had made a good impression on him. And he was so impressed. After all, I was an attractive little girl, 22, you know, with rosy cheeks and black hair. And I had a lot of intellectual qualities which he seemed to recognize. He was really an educated man, probably the only educated man on the board and was eager to employ me. But much to my surprise, I didn't get the job. I went back to Mount Vernon, Indiana. In those days, teachers used to jump their contracts. In the middle of the year, at Christmas I get a letter from Mr. Palmer. He told me that the board of East Chicago, Indiana was very eager to have me, that the teacher that was in the job had left. Mr. Palmer wrote, "Now, I want to tell you why you didn't get the job last summer, not because they didn't appreciate your educational qualifications but because of your religious connections." I was urged to break my contract in Mount Vernon and accept the job in East Chicago, which paid more and was closer to home. I'll never forget the letter I wrote.

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I. What did you say?

R. I said to them, "If anybody's church relations make any difference in East Chicago, East Chicago is sinking in the mire of medievalism from which I do not want to bring them out." I didn't take the job. And they learned that a Jewish woman who was offered a job at a big salary wouldn't come. And, you know, Mr. Palmer told me he would see the president of that board, who had wanted me in the first place, read that letter. So you see, when I read about these people that have become so radical, sometimes it is due to some race prejudice from which they had suffered, Well, we had it. We had it a great deal. So I went back to Mount Vernon, and I had my second year there. After two years in Mount Vernon, I decided to come into Chicago and try for the exams. The exams were offered in December. Again Miss Lowe of the Bureau of Personal Service got after me and said, "Come and work for us." I said, "Well now, Miss Lowe," (this was June), "I want you to know I'm planning to take the Chicago exams which come in December. If you want me for just a few months." "Oh," she said, "you won't pass." She was a typical German Jew, you know, who felt superior to Jews of Russian Jewish extraction. I remember one of the Russian Jews in the office was simply furious at her and at me because I didn't get mad. Miss Lowe mentioned Hortense so-and-so of a very well educated

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German Jewish family, who took that exam and didn't pass, so how would I? So, I took the exam in December and I passed. But I had told her that I wouldn't quit. She heard that I passed. She had a sister who was teaching in the elementary schools in Chicago. One day she said, "You know, Miss Herstein, my sister says that I'm doing you a great injustice, because since you passed you're eligible for substituting. And unless you substitute four months in the same school, you don't get an assignment. And it's no telling what you will miss." So she said, "Suppose we agree that you stay until March and help to train your successor." And that was Irene Kamin, who subsequently became deputy chief of the juvenile court.

So, I said, "All right." So I stayed until March. I was very lucky, because people used to substitute all over the city before they were assigned. I substituted at Dane Technical High School for Boys three days. As soon as they saw me they began celebrating. They informed me that their teacher never got sick and they never had a substitute. Now they had one, and they were going to make life merry for me, It so happened that a teacher I had had at Medill High School was teaching there. He came to my room and said, "Now, listen, if this gets hard you call me. Don't let these boys try to get advantage of you." I was there three days. Then I was called up to go to the Wendell Phillips High School.

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I wondered how they would know on Thursday that a teacher was going to be sick on Monday. But this was the situation. Wendell Phillips was a marvelous high school then. It had one of the best faculties-- probably the greatest number of Negroes, but only about 8%, who went there. They had a very good faculty. And they were always pioneers. They pioneered, that faculty, and they pioneered through their English clubs and so on, to have every teacher have only five classes. The usual number then was six classes. They were the first high school that had it. Because they were given five classes, one teacher had to take a class from each teacher. When I came, I was given an algebra class, a German class, a class in what they called business English, and physiology, four different assignments. To make my program equal five classes I worked for two hours in the office, which was a very good experience. I learned how in a big system one erratic teacher can upset the whole school. I went to Wendell Phillips, and those teachers were wonderful to me. They had known that I had worked in social work, had done work in the Juvenile court. They thought it was wonderful to have such an addition to the school. They were just wonderful to me. It was a wonderful faculty. They kept saying to me, "Why hasn't your appointment come through?" It wasn't quite four months. And wouldn't I go to Mr. Lipsky, who was a member of the school board and whose father

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in-law was the editor of the Jewish paper, The Courier. "Oh," I said, "I wouldn't think of doing that." "Well," they said, "if you were Irish you would." In those days, there were very few Catholic teachers in the high schools. Many of them were in the elementary schools. There was quite a furor since 70% of the girls going to the Chicago Normal College to become teachers in the Chicago public schools had never gone to a public school themselves.

After my four months I was assigned to Wendell Phillips teaching these various subjects, Finally I got a job just teaching English, and I enjoyed the experience very much. We had some of the finest students.

Side 1, Tape 2

- I. Now, the teachers had no union.
- R. Oh, I was going to tell you about that. I almost forgot. At that time there were two teachers organizations: the Principals Club and the High School Teachers Club, and Margaret Haley's famous organization, the Chicago Teachers Federation, the first one in the world affiliated with labor.

- I. Oh, it was already in existence?
- R. Margaret Haley was a great dynamic dedicated teacher. All her papers are at the Chicago Historical Society. She was a remarkable woman, Irish, and with an economic background. She would reveal the taxes

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that some of the rich firms did not pay. The Chicago Teachers Federation was for Elementary School Teachers. And there was the High School Teachers Club. The president of the High School Teachers Club was a bright little woman that taught chemistry at Wendell Phillips. She was a real person, and she came and asked me to join. True to my training to share responsibility, I joined. I think the dues were three dollars a year. Part of my training is that you always participate. My father used to say that these people carry the flag so far, you must pick it up there, like a relay race. Without any hesitation, I joined the High School Teachers Club. The age range between the teachers in Wendell Phillips went all the way from 22 to 65 or 70. We had no retirement laws. One day, one of the men teachers came to me and said, "We're getting another organization, more effective than this one, and that's affiliated with labor;" and it was the Men's Federation and they were affiliated with Labor.

- I. Why did they call it the Mens Federation?
- R. Only men were members. They had to have it separate groups and they said they were organizing a union for the women and it was called the Federation of Women High School Teachers. He said, 'Why don't you join?' "Now that sounds good." And I was having lunch, I remember, with Genevieve Sullivan and Mary Burhoe. We were the three

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young, very stylish teachers, so I told them about it and I said, "I wonder what it's about. I'll tell you, girls, it's only three dollars a year. I'll join and I'll tell you about it." I entered the labor movement as casually as that! And I was a member of the Federation of Women High School Teachers. I remember a teacher I knew, who was older than I, who taught at Medill High School. She taught Latin. She called me up, and she said, "You must join." I remember when I became very active in the labor movement I said to her, "Listen, you led me astray! Don't forget."

I. Let me ask you why they had separate unions for the men and women?

R. Well, that was always.

I. You mean just custom?

R. Always, just custom. In fact, Boston men left their American Federation of Teachers because it stood for equal pay for men and women. That was the way, it took a long time to get over that, but the two organizations cooperated very well. Well, I was in the Federation of Women High School teachers and a lot of interesting things happened there about the war in 1916,

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- I. Tell me about that.
- R. No, that's a separate story. Put I want to tell you this. Now, we're in the war and I'm teaching at Wendell Phillips. That is World War I. We became the arsenal of democracy. We manufactured all the things that the warring nations in Europe needed. We didn't get in the war until 1917.
- I. Right.
- R. One of the products we manufactured for the warring countries abroad was canned food, needed for the soldiers. The packing houses were all on the south side of Chicago. They couldn't get workers because many of them were in defense industries. Some of them were in the war. They recruited workers from the South and that was the beginning of the end of Wendell Phillips. When the Negroes who had been recruited by the packing industry came and brought their children to Wendell Phillips a great many white pupils got transferred. The kids told me the truth. They went to Hyde Park, which was more recent than Wendell Phillips (the building) and the enrollment of the school went down. Not enough colored children of high school age came in to take the place of the white children that left, and therefore the younger teachers at Wendell Phillips were super numeraries.

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- I. Oh, they let you go, then?
- R. Yes, it just so happened that in one of those summers while I was still teaching at Wendell Phillips, my former high school teacher from Medill High School was teaching in the summer school at Crane and had to give it up and she recommended me to the principal of the Crane Technical High School and he called me up and asked me to teach there, which I did. When it came to be known among the high school principals that there were super numeraries at Wendell Phillips they all came out to make their pick of them. I remember one man, I was so mad at him. He was the principal of a high school and he looked me over as if I was a piece of cattle and I told the principal of Wendell Phillips High School, 'Well,' he said, 'You know you aren't a bad looking little girl, you know.' So this man at Crane wanted me very much. That was in 1917, a year the war was still on, And he asked me how I liked the school one day and how I liked the work. At Crane Technical High School four shops were required, one shop every year, and theoretically they were supposed to have an academic program, which they had. They had history, English, German and French. In fact, the assistant principal was a Frenchman. Mr. Martholf, the principal, asked me one day what I thought about the work there in the English Department.

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I said, 'Well, it's very good but its not quite as good as what we had at Wendell Phillips, because there the teachers have only five classes and here they have six and it makes a difference." He said, "Yes, I'll work on that." One day he sent for me. "I got the program, so I can give one of you 5 classes, and I want you to have it." I said, "Oh, no. If there's a chance for an English teacher to have a program with 5 classes I want it to go to the oldest teacher in the English Department." That seemed just to me. So I taught there and after a few years in the high school, I was promoted to Crane Junior College, which shared the same building with the high school. Crane Junior College was abolished in 1933 in the worst wrecking program of a public school system. I was abroad that year. Now in the meantime, I have neglected to tell you about my labor connections of that time. I became the delegate of the Federation of Women High School Teachers to the Chicago Federation of Labor during that period, before I went to Crane.

- I. This is while you were at Wendell Phillips?
- R. Yes. Then, I was elected on the Executive board of the Chicago Federation of Labor. I was the only woman on it for 25 years. The person before me was Mrs. Raymond Robbins and before that I think Wary O'Riley of the Chicago Teachers Federation. Miss Haley

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was still living at that time and was very active as business agent of the Elementary Teachers Organization. I became very active in the labor movement. I always think of this incident which indicates again how casual my entrance to the American Federation of Labor was. I joined the Womens Trade Union League of Chicago which was conducting classes for workers. We had a committee consisting of representatives from the Womens Trade Union League and the Chicago Federation of Labor. I've got all of those pamphlets for you that tell the courses in labor history, parliamentary law, English, that we offered. One day, I think this was before I was on the board of the Federation of Labor, I was still the delegate and also a member of the Womens Trade Union League. The Federation of Labor used to meet regularly the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. No exceptions. Oh, the Sundays I spent there! This Sunday schedule was adopted because workers used to work long hours and Sunday was their only free day. This schedule prevailed for many years. Agnes Nestor, President of the Chicago League said to me, "The Federation of Labor is meeting, as you know, on Sunday. Please go over there and announce our classes and urge the delegates to come to enroll in our classes." I took the leaflets, went over to 175 W. Washington where they met and the meeting room was blue with smoke. The delegates were mostly men, just a few women, because

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there were very few women organized in unions at that time.

I timidly approached the president, John Fitzpatrick, who was very gallant and Ed Nochels, who was secretary. Nochels looked at me. They were having a hot debate before a city political election. They were having this hot debate and I was waiting to be called on. And I heard Ed Nochels say to John Fitzpatrick, "Hey John, what's that damn skirt here for?" John Fitzpatrick politely glossed that over and called on me. I faced that large group of men in fear and trembling. I thought, "Will they listen to me?" When I began to talk I thought they wouldn't listen to me. After I talked a little while however I was scared to death, because they were hanging on my lips and I said, "My God, what do they think I'm saying?" After my speech they all applauded and up walked several men and they said, "You're the person we're looking for." We have women working in our industry and we can't get them to join the union." And one was the clothing industry, the International Ladies Garment Workers. This man said to me, "You know, we have girls working for these fashionable dressmakers." The dresses sell for \$150.00. They are beaded by hand. It is very hard on the eyes. When we try to organize them, the head of this beautiful dressmaking establishment said to the girls, "You don't want to belong to a union with factory girls. You here are artists." He said their wages were very low but the owner kept saying, "Who wants to associate with factory girls?" The union had organized the girls working in factories.

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So this man said, "You're what we want. If we can get you to a meeting and if you can tell those girls that you are a High School teacher, a college graduate who belongs to a union, that will turn the trick." And that really was my real push into the labor movement. After that I became on demand all the time. I can't tell you how many union meetings I spoke at. They all wanted me, you know, the Carpenters Union, this union and that union.

- I. Obviously not only to speak to women workers. They wanted you to speak to the men workers too?
- R. From then started my second career -- one of great activity in the labor movement. About that time I met Tom Tippet in 1918 in the steel strike. Tom Tippet was a coal miner in Peoria, Illinois and had a very interesting history. I've got his book. His father was a preacher in England and at that time the English clergy were more favorable to labor than the American clergy. He emigrated to America. The mining camp where he settled was called Horseshoe Bottoms. His father became a miner and was a silver tongued orator according to the miners. By the time I met Tom his father had died after a long bout with T.B. There were 8 children in the family and of course, when the father died, they all went into the mines to work. Tom worked in the mines and his history is a very interesting one which I can tell you about. At any rate, at this time the steel

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strike was announced. There was a steel mill in Peoria and the men were going out and Tom came to Chicago and spoke to John Fitzpatrick. He wanted a good woman speaker. John Fitzpatrick said, "Oh, we have a wonderful one, if you can get her. She's a high school teacher." "Oh," said Tom, "I don't want anyone like that. I want a working woman!" Later that same day, I had lunch with Tom and Ida Glick, a member of the Women's Trade Union League. She was from a poor Jewish family in Baltimore. I think she went to Goucher College. She got interested in the labor movement, was very much more left than I. She and Tom and I were having lunch together and he was telling both of us about the steel strike as it was developing in Peoria and about how angry the miners were and that they were going out before the date of the strike. Then I entered the conversation and he looked at me. "Are you the person John Fitzpatrick talked about?" I said, "I don't know" and then he told me. He said, "Will you go?" It was Saturday afternoon, I remember. I went over to Marshall Fields and I bought a nightgown, toothpaste, and a toothbrush and called my family -- went with him to Peoria.

- I. Without even going home.
- R. When we got there, there was a great big meeting and there was a great deal of talk about violence. The miners know how to use dynamite because they have to use it to loosen coal and I knew

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about all of this. I went to this meeting and the place was lousy with Secret Service men, just lousy. We'd always know it. And there was a picture of me, I remember, (I had a tri-colored hat) on a poster announcing the meetings. They'd take it off the wall and put it in their pockets. And so I had to make a speech for peaceful picketing without letting on that I knew there was danger of violence. I said, 'The men who are coming in here to take your jobs don't know that you're on strike. They are poor devils out of jobs and these detective agencies, like Hargrove Detective Agency of Chicago, have hired them and have not told them there is a strike situation here. I'm sure that if you go up to the top of the mine at 5:00 a.m. in the morning when the miners come for work and go with your children and when these men approach the mine, say to them, no you want to go in there and take the bread out of my children's mouths?' Oh, I was like Joan of Arc. Somebody once said at that time, that I was a cross between the Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc. I was very eloquent. I always tell that I got the youngest picket on the picket line. She was 6 months old and her mother and father did what I said. They joined the group 5:00 a.m. in the morning with the baby in their arms and as these scabs came in (and it was true that they didn't know there was a strike), they said, "Now you're going to take the food out of my baby's mouth." So, I always tell that I got the youngest picket,

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6 months old, on the picket line!

- I. Did the scabs turn back?
- R. Some of them did. This was just a few days before the Steel strike started. And then when it started, I was deeply involved in it. John Fitzpatrick had been appointed by Gompers as chairman of this effort to organize the steel workers; and Bill Foster, not then a Communist (he was in IWW from the west) had been appointed secretary. He managed the activities in the East, Pennsylvania, and Fitzpatrick in the Illinois area. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, who'd been kicked out of the Chicago Federation of Labor or got out of it, were a very successful union and because they thought the world of Fitzpatrick, gave \$10,000 to the strike. Fitzpatrick told me the story of his connection with the Amalgamated. It was a fight between the United Garment Workers, who were mostly old Scotch and English and unprogressive and the immigrant groups who were very much more militant. And when the fight occurred, the group under Sidney Hillman and Bessie started the strike.
- I. Mr. Rosenblum told me she was almost better than Sidney.
- R. She was working in Hart, Schaffner and Marx, and things got so bad that she jumped out on the sewing table and said, "We don't have to

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stand for this! Let's get out!" And they marched out. She was Bessie Abramowitz and Sidney was leading the strike and subsequently they were married. She's still on the board of the Amalgamated and whenever she goes to Washington she goes to see Elisabeth Christman and she says, "I have to stand up and tell them where to get off at when it comes to women." Well, it was a bitter time, you see, and the story is that in some way Sam Gompers had been obliged to the president of the United Garment Workers and then this thing happened and he came down to Chicago. Fitzpatrick had no use for him and he said to Fitzpatrick, "I guess the garment workers are having a hard time." (And don't forget they were out of the Federation by that time).

- I. This is when the garment workers were on strike?
- R. That's right. Seventeen weeks I think, and Fitzpatrick said to Gompers, "You bet they're having a tough time, and my place is standing shoulder to shoulder with them on this." And here he was an official of A.F. of L., and he took a stand with the rebel union. It was the proudest achievement of his life he often said, really, working for the garment workers. It was a long and bitter strike.
- I. But they won.

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- R. Eventually, Sara Levin told me that Hart, Schaffner and Marx gave in first and were called traitors by all the rest of the manufacturers. Just in recognition of a union. They won the strike, but the agreement conceded only meager rights to the workers. No union person was to be allowed to walk into the factory. And how could you organize anybody? And Sam said the first break came once when one of the supervisors in the factory came to him and said, "Look Sam, I'm having an awful lot of trouble and I just can't handle it." Two factory workers were fighting with each other. It wasn't so much about the union as dividing the work, so he said, "Will you come in and help us?" Sam said, "You know, according to the agreement no union man can come in." "Well, we'll fix that," and that was the first time he went into the factory. He said when he thinks how impatient people are, that each victory came inch by inch. But they won. It wasn't so easy.
- I. There's something I want to ask you, I've read different opinions on this. Some people think that Hart, Schaffner and Marx came around a little faster because they were Jewish and the workers were Jewish and other people say it made no difference.
- R. Well, all the manufacturers were Jewish.
- I. Do you think if they had been something else, it would have been a little harder? Or was it just as hard?

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R. Overall the clothing manufacturers were all Jewish. It was Abt and Sons, Harver, Decker and Stein. They were all Jews.

I . Was there any way in which religion helped persuade them to give in?

R. Oh no, Rabbi Hirsch the noted Rabbi of Sinai Temple, gave a sermon during the strike. He said, 'Well, this is a case of the rich Jews persecuting the poor.' Oh, the manufacturers were furious! No, it was probably better judgment and realization that the time had come for unionization of the industry, and here's another thing. One of the big clothing manufacturers was J.J. Abt and Sons. Isaac Abt was the famous pediatrician in those days. The Abts were a very wealthy family. He was the twin brother of Jacob Abt. They were the wealthy Jews, you know. Now, the other members in the family were in the clothing business and one of these was Jacob Abt, and now his son, John Jr. is the lawyer of the Communists.

I. Oh, is that the same Abt?

R. I'll tell you a long story about that.

Oral History Project

I, Lillian Herstein, hereby direct that the interview
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Director, Oral History Project

Lillian Herstein
Signature of interviewee

Lillian Herstein

October 30, 1970

Tape 2 - Side 2

- I. Do you want to tell me the story about the Abts?
- R. In 1916 there was a bitter feud between the Board of Education and the Chicago Teachers Federation, which was the union of elementary school teachers organized by two great leaders, Margaret Haley and Catherine Goggin. The issue was that 68 teachers were dismissed for belonging to unions. They didn't quite say it that way but all the officers of the Chicago Teacher's Federation were dismissed and just a few that weren't connected with the union thrown in extra. At that time Jacob Loeb was on the School Board. He opposed the teachers union in this whole fight, and he was very close to the Abts. In fact the Abt children called him Uncle Jacob. In the summer of that year I went with some friends to Estes Park, and among the people that we met there were Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Abt and their two children, Martin Abt, who was about 16 or 17, and Johnny who was 14. There were other people there, friends of ours, and we began discussing the teachers' fight. I remember that Marian sent a card to her uncle, Jacob Loeb, who was president of the School Board and fighting the teachers. She said something like this, "I've met one of them and I think they're fine." We became quite friendly. I wasn't trying to convert them but they were very open-minded and socially conscious people. Johnny, then, was about 14

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and had not been very well and his mother was very solicitous of him. I remember that one time we went horseback riding and we were caught in one of those quick hailstorm in the mountain. I drove with him and Regina Stulz, who was his age and the daughter of Rabbi Stula, and I chaperoned them back to the inn where we stayed. Well, after we got back from Estes Park we kept up a sort of a desultory relationship. Of course they were wealthy German Jews and I was a Russian Jew, but our relationship grew. As time went on, one of the people in our group was Ethel Kawin who was engaged to Walter Bachrach whom she subsequently married. Through Ethel, Marian met Arthur Bachrach, who was the brother of Walter, and they were married. I heard of them occasionally and the first thing I knew as the years went by, was that Johnny had married Jessica Smith, who was thought to be a very active member of the Communist Party. Marian and Arthur had sons and they had become very proletarian, especially Marian. This boy, from a family where everybody went to college, got a job as a seaman and the first thing I knew was that Marian had joined the Communist Party, very openly. Subsequently she and Arthur were divorced, but she was very active in the Communist party which was a shock to all their aristocratic German Jewish friends.

I. I can imagine.

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- R. She was very active. And every now and then she would get in touch with me and ask me something, I knew she was a member of the party and she'd ask me certain things; something she'd want to get into a labor paper, and I'd say to her, "Marian, you can't get that in a regular labor paper. Everybody knows that guy -- somebody from Milwaukee I remember, is a member of the Communist Party and the American Federation of Labor repudiates the Communists."

Johnny became more and more involved in the Communist party and his father died rather suddenly. He had a gall bladder operation or something like that and somebody said at the time the trouble was there were too many doctors in that family. He died rather early, unexpectedly. Of course the uncle, Dr. Isaac Abt, continued as the great pediatrician and his son, Arthur Abt, also studied medicine at the University of Chicago and became a well known pediatrician. Marian's mother stuck with her children, not that she was converted to their cause, and Johnny drifted farther and farther away from them, but Johnny went up and up in the Communist Party. He's their top lawyer now. I remember there was a case here about a fellow by the name of Claude Lightfoot. He was a member of the Communist Party. There were some charges against him some people thought not justified. I think the ACLU was interested. They weren't taking a part in it

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but they decided they'd hear both sides. At one meeting of the regular mid-monthly meetings of the ACLU a representative of Johnny's staff came. We had had the government tell its case the week before, and he was discussing the case and I said, "Well, you know maybe Johnny got corrupted by me. Guilt by association." I said, "I could find you a picture of Johnny and Regina Stulz and me together at Estes and he laughed. Well, later when I got home my sister told me that Johnny Abt had called, and I was sorry I wasn't there, but I have never heard from him since. There was the Smith Act which made membership in the Communist Party a crime and Marian Abt was called before that committee. They asked her, "Are you a member of the Communist Party?" She said, "Yes and I'm proud of it," and then, I think she was found guilty and the case was being appealed. In the mean time, she became very ill with cancer and everybody felt very bad, and somebody got up a petition to urge the government not to prosecute, not to carry out the verdict, because she was really dying of cancer. I was so surprised at the people who signed and didn't sign. Now, a lot of the families' friends, people from Hull House signed it. They weren't Communists, but it was the humane thing that appealed to them. There were some people that were so bitter that they never would sign it. She died soon afterwards; she never went to prison. Her mother is living in New York and I understand in very humble circumstances -- separated from all the

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people that she knew. Just call the roll of the upper class German Jewish families and that's what she belonged to. I've always been sorry that I didn't realize that she was there and I haven't seen her in 25 years. But I used to go to New York every year as a member of the Board of the American Labor Education Service. We'd have our board meeting, and they always wanted me to be there although it was expensive for me to come, expensive to the board; and I thought after a while, I wish I had thought of her and I would have liked to call on her. I know some old friends have called and one of them even gave her a coat that they thought she needed. Now, as far as I know, she is still living, but Johnny is very prominent as the lawyer of the Communist party and he's the lawyer now for Angela Davis.

I. Do you think that his parents' or friends' anti-union attitudes had anything to do with him. going so far in that direction?

R. Well, they weren't so anti-union.

I. Oh, they weren't?

R. No, that strike was one of the inevitable things in the development of trade unionism. Marian and Johnny got interested, you see, somehow or other in the Communist party and then the father died. And, as Len Dupres often says, when you think back you have to judge peoples actions in the milieu in which it took place. Now some

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of these wild radicals that are scornful of us previous reformers don't take into consideration what was happening at that time and how courageous it was to take that position. The Jewish settlement was called the Maxwell Settlement. It was called that because it was on Maxwell Street. Now to go and to have a class in a social settlement in those days was quite the liberal thing to do. And Millie Abt, her name was Millie, and her husband Jacob, who was a Yale graduate, belonged to this prosperous firm, but both of them had classes at the Maxwell settlement. And as Len said, for that time, that was the liberal thing. Their friends were being debutantes and having their coming out parties and all that sort of thing. I suppose some day we'll run across Johnny again. They say he's a very, very good lawyer.

I. That would be interesting, to see him again after such a long time.

R. I would like to see him again and I'm sorry I didn't take advantage of the times when I was going regularly to New York to go to see Millie Abt. I'm always the kind of a person that goes to see the guy that's supposed to be down and out. Sometimes I hear about Millie through Mrs. Samuel Altschular; she has friends that knew her and occasionally have seen her.

I. That's a good story. I'm glad you remembered that one. You mentioned at one time making a lot of speeches at the time of the 1919 steel strike.

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R. Oh, yes.

I. I wonder if you could tell me a little bit more about what you recall of that.

R. I told you how I casually entered the labor movement that day when I made the speech for the classes at the meeting of the Chicago Federation of Labor and all those men came up and wanted me to speak to their unions. From then on I was steeped in the Labor Movement and I was always in demand and always making speeches for unions. I remember one time a member of the carpenters union asked me if I would speak at his union at a certain night on some educational subject. Oh, yes, I said, and I went and very foolishly I was trying to almost review in a way Dewey's book, Education and Democracy, Of course, Dewey was a very hard writer, very hard to understand, but I digested it and took sections of it. I remember the meeting was in Wicker Park Hall on the Northwest side, I sat there and they introduced me and I looked at the audience and I thought, "My, these poor fellows have worked all day and they're bored with this." So after about 20 minutes of speaking I brought my speech to a close. The next week I met this man, this carpenter who had asked me to speak, and he said, "Miss Herstein, there must have been a misunderstanding. Why did you leave so soon?" He said, "You know, we made it a special order of business for you to speak. All of the business

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was suspended." And I said, "Oh, I looked at them and they looked so tired. And I thought how terrible to inflict more speaking on them." He said, "The trouble with you is that you don't know how Swedes listen. You're used to more of these excitable Russian Jews." And it turned out that they were rapt in attention and I thought they were bored. That's one time that I mistook my audience!

- I. That's an interesting ethnic difference -- the difference in the way people listen.
- R. Wasn't that interesting? I very rarely misunderstand an audience. I've often stopped before because there's just a point at which you can't go beyond that. You can't hold the interest beyond that. And from then on I was very active, always at the command of anyone that wanted me. I'd say for ten successive years on labor Day I spoke in the coal fields of southern Illinois through the efforts of Tom Tippett. And I have spoken at Mount Olive.
- I. You have?
- R. Oh my, that's a very interesting story. I thought I would dig it out for you. Tom Tippett wrote an article about it and I've got it somewhere and you ought to hear it. That's the Virden Riot.

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- I. Can you tell it now or do you need to look it up?
- R. I'd have to look it up. There apparently was a very bitter strike situation and there were workers killed. It was very bitter and every year after that to this day not a mine works on the 12th of October. It so happens that October 12th is a school holiday in Chicago, Columbus Day. Of course, I took advantage of it and every October 12 for years found me speaking at the memorial services for the victims of the Virden Riot in Mount Olive. At the time the steel strike occurred, I was very much enmeshed in the Labor Movement and very close to John Fitzpatrick. I told you the story about how Tom took a group from Peoria and I got that youngest girl and the baby on the picket line. There was a steel workers union in Joliet, Illinois, in those days. They were organizing and the men, the members of that union, used to have me come out during the strike time to talk to their people. John Fitzpatrick, a chairman of the organization, was in charge of the midwestern area. There were several steel mills in this area -- in South Chicago and Gary, Indiana. Foster was in charge of the eastern area, Pennsylvania. The first places where they could have meetings was Youngstown, Ohio. They had the State Constabulary in Pennsylvania -- I don't know whether they have it now. The police rode horses and would break up meetings. There's another little interesting story. Several years after that Tom Tippet was telling me he was making a speech in Pennsylvania and through the corner of his eye

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he could see the State Constabulary coming down; so he thought he'd better finish his speech quickly before they broke in and interrupted him, forced him to stop. But they rode up and they said, "Say, young man, is anybody interfering with your speech? We don't have that here! We have free speech." And he nearly keeled over. The answer was that Gifford Pinchot, the great conservationist and liberal had become Republican Governor of Pennsylvania.

- I. And it made a lot of difference.
- R. It made a lot of difference. Well, the strike went on for several weeks and we lost the strike.
- I. I wanted to ask you one question about how it was financed. i remember that the clothing workers gave a lot of money to that strike. I read somewhere that there were about 24 different craft unions that were involved in it and they only gave about \$100 a piece. Was it because they were that poor or were they not that interested?
- R. Oh, yes, they were poor and the financing was very honestly done.
- I. Did the craft unions support it as well as they were able, financially? It seems to me that the clothing workers were doing more than they were.

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R. There were a lot of liberals, too, that gave money. William Foster was the secretary and in charge of the funds and was very circumspect about the funds. At the end of the strike there was a hundred thousand dollars left and Foster returned it to contributors. He was an interesting character but, alas, became a Communist later. That was too bad, because it ended his usefulness in the American labor movement.

I. Can you describe him a little bit as you knew him?

R. Oh yes, I will. Now, I'll just tell you one other thing about the strike. Some time after the strike was over, I was in Joliet again with these men that were the local officers and I began to reminisce about the strike and I said, "Oh, say, I remember this one and that one, but what about the fellow that was the president of the local, what about him?" Well he was lucky to get off with his life. It turned out that he was a spy.

I. The president of the local?

R. He'd sit next to me at all these meetings and was vociferous in attacking the steel bosses. The way they found out that he was a spy was one night, late at night, he was handling his stuff, mailing

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it to headquarters in Pennsylvania. For some reason or other they had come back to the union hall for something and they caught him. They caught him right then and there handing over his spy stuff. And he dashed away. They would have killed him, I think, and it would be understandable. All those weeks he had been there betraying them.

William Z. Foster, of course, became a very interesting person. William Z. Foster apparently grew up in the west and he was a Wobbly, I.W.W. Then he drifted to Chicago and was a member of the Carmen's Union and was a delegate of the Carmen's Union to the Chicago Federation of Labor. He was a very meek looking person and he was prominent in the Packers strike. The federal mediator that was appointed in that strike was Judge Samuel Altschuler. The evidence about conditions in the yards was pretty shocking. Foster said to the judge that there was a demand of the union of these workers. He didn't think it was quite reasonable, but Foster said they wanted that and he presented their claim. That impressed Judge Altschuler with his integrity. After the steel strike, there was some big railroad accident. Trains were derailed, but they blamed William Z. Foster for it because he had been the leader of the strike. Foster had become a national figure, but, alas the target for blame in every industrial dispute, or even accident. At that time the steel industry

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was very powerful and the press was with them. He was the meekest looking person. He was married at that time to a woman who had been the wife of a man in California who was a noted Anarchist, Fox, I think his name was. These stories came to me later. There was quite a radical group in California around Emma Goldman and this man Fox. She was his wife and she had two children, a son and a daughter. The daughter was married to a Lieutenant of Foster's, Joe Manley. He was Irish. He was in the union and worked valiantly in the cause, but he was attacked by the Communists who resented their practical exclusion from the strike activities. He went back to his job, which was a structural ironworker -- very dangerous. He fell from a high scaffold and was killed. He was Irish -- very interesting. Then along came Earl Browder who was an avowed Communist. I told you something about his history, didn't I?

1. No. I don't think so.
- R. Well, Earl Browder came from the area of Wichita, Kansas and his father was a fundamentalist preacher, non-conformist. When the sects of this fundamentalist church had some dispute about the "second coming" or something concerning theological dogma, he left in protest. The family was very poor -- very poor. And Earl was married to a farmer's daughter. They were both about 19. I think she was an epileptic. There was a child born to that marriage.

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He had protested the war, not as a pacifist, but as one who would fight in the war when the workers arose against their masters. He was tried and sent to Leavenworth Prison. He told me once that he, as a young boy, wanted to take lessons on some musical instrument. It cost about a quarter a piece for the lessons, but the family didn't have the money. But when he was in prison and was asked what he would like to do, he said, "Well, I'd like to play the flute or some other thing." So they had him play when the prisoners were having their meals. He went to prison in protest against the war; his brother went to prison and also his brother-in-law. They were very outright in their opposition to the war.

- I. That was World War I.
- R. World War I. After Earl got out of prison he drifted to Chicago and somehow or other he met William Z. Foster and he worked on him, and he, Earl, established the Labor Herald -- sort of a little magazine. Well, at that time a lot of the secret service men or F.B.I. had infiltrated the Communist party. I remember that Ed Nochels, who was secretary of the Chicago Federation of Labor, when he let some of the unions come and talk to them he'd say, "Well, I don't know which one of you is an F.B.I. agent." And it was true. They were in the unions. And they do that now. But the stupid thing is for the union not to be able to spot them. The Communists decided to

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have a convention and where did they hold the convention -- of all the stupid things you've ever heard of -- at Bridgeman, Michigan. Bridgeman, Michigan is a farming community where everybody knows everybody, and when one of these long haired swarthy Commies came from N.Y. they spotted him right away. Really the purpose of the convention, the big resolution, was for the Communist Party to stop being underground and come out publicly. Of course, the party was full of government spies and the spies gave them away and they were all arrested. Now among the people arrested were Bill Foster and Earl Browder and several others. The first one that they arrested and wanted to try was William Z. Foster, and the reason was that he'd become very prominent as the leader of the steel strike. To be able to prove that he was a Communist was a feather in the cap of industry. The trial was held in Michigan. That's where they were arrested. And John Fitzpatrick went out to that trial every single day and he persuaded Frank Walsh, the distinguished lawyer, a man a good deal like Clarence Darrow, to come to defend Foster. It was because Fitzpatrick urged him to do it. Walsh had done some very fine things for labor. Now, most lawyers didn't want to touch the thing, but Walsh took it because Fitzpatrick asked him. There was a jury of 12 people and one was a woman. She was a typical American, long American ancestry. Somehow or other Walsh sensed that she had a sense of fairness and his whole defense

was this: that they had no proof that he was a member of the party, that he went there to make a speech, which he had a right to do. Most of us thought he wasn't even there, but that this was the way to crucify an effective labor leader, a method tried again and again in the history of American labor. You singled out the leader and made some fantastic charge against him and thereby you killed the effectiveness of this leader. Well the jury split 11-1.

I. And the one was the woman?

R. And the one was the woman.

I. Was she the only woman on the jury?

R. I think so, and of course he'd have to be tried again. Incidentally, he never was tried again.

I. Was this right after the strike or during the strike?

R. Right after the strike. It was after the strike, and he gained distinction because, although the strike was lost, it was recognized that it was one of the most effective attempts. One day, I was walking down the street with Tom Tippett and all of us were great admirers of William Foster. He was such a good organizer and Tom said to me, "Lillian, what would you say if I told you that Bill

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Foster actually had been at that Communist meeting?". I said, "For heaven's sakes, why did he go?" "Well," he said, "It was one of the mistakes." There were some very left wing Commies in Minnesota. They were Trotskyists and the Dunn brothers -- they were in the Teamsters Union -- I think they goaded him, taunted him with being afraid to come to talk to the convention. He didn't want to be yellow, he said. Then Fitzpatrick told me the same thing, and he said, "Well, that was a mistake he made." He said, "In all the time we were defending him, we didn't know he'd been there but being there didn't make him a Communist." Well, it was after that, that William Z. Foster made his trip to Russia and that's where the conversion took place. When he was there he met John Reed's widow. Did you read about John Reed?

I. Yes.

R. I have his book, Ten Days That Shook The World. He belonged to a very prominent family.

I. Did you know him?

R. No. But in a book about him Clarence Darrow writes a preface in which John Reed's father talks to Clarence Darrow. This young man was a student in an eastern university; he was very idealistic. His father said to Darrow, "Help him. I hope you'll help him if he needs it,"

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John Reed went to Russia and was very highly regarded by the Russian Communists. He got typhus and died. He was the first of the heroes buried at the Kremlin. Later Foster came there and met John Reed's widow. They came back to America, and I remember a big meeting at the auditorium where he spoke and she spoke. And she said John Reed died because America wouldn't send medicines to Russia or something like that. But by that time Foster had become a member of the Communist Party.

At that time many of us were engaged in organizing a really big Farm Labor Party. There was a man by the name of Brown, I remember, from the far west who was in our group and John Fitzpatrick. It was going to be a very effective party and the unions were asked to send delegates. I spoke to various meetings asking them to send delegates, and John Fitzpatrick and I were National Committeemen of this newly organized party. I was teaching for a living all this time. I was doing everything gratis and I would rush into a meeting. I came to the Chicago Federation of Labor for a meeting with the executive committee of this newly organized Farmer Labor Party, just as this convention was convening, and as I walked in I realized the atmosphere was rife with anger and terror. I heard John Fitzpatrick say, "The head of the Communist party has no responsibility; I have responsibility for 506,000 working people." This was the repudiation of Foster and the activities of their group. There were delegates

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from Minnesota who were bitter against the Communists. They'd had their troubles with them, with the Dunn Brothers of the teamsters. Well, it was a shocking thing, and the next day the convention started. I was sure that this was not to be a Communist convention but a big convention to found a great Farmer-Labor Party.

- I. The Farmer Labor Party.
- R. That's right. I was on the credentials committee. I remember there was a very fine man by the name of Rodriquez, who was a good Socialist, and he'd been a member of the city council, elected on the Socialist ticket. He was very handsome and very intelligent politically and a very popular speaker. I was on the credentials committee and I would read the credentials of so and so from some organization to be seated as a delegate. And I'd say, "Well is that a union? What do they make?" They had packed the convention -- workmen's circles -- and I questioned every one, not realizing what had happened. Someone said to Rodriquez, "My God, someone ought to tip the gal on that committee, tip Lillian Herstein off." And he said, "The way she sits there and doesn't seem to know a whole lot, she's ten times better, when she innocently says, "Is this a union?" And then when it came to vote I wouldn't seat these so-called delegates. I'd say, "I never heard of that union!" What do they make if its a union?" I was overruled many times and the credentials of those I had questioned

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were nevertheless seated. Then we come to the day of the convention. It was very sad. Everybody was broken hearted, the liberals, because here was John Fitzpatrick and Foster, whom the liberals all over had learned to worship because of their activity in the steel strike and in packing strikes, and when there occurred the split a little later right on the platform between Fitzpatrick and Foster everybody felt terrible. But at a certain point at the convention, it was apparent the Communists had the majority in spite of all.

I. In spite of your not seating?

R. Yes, oh, yes. They packed that convention, and there was a resolution brought in and our group, really now in the minority, wanted the resolution to be referred to a committee and then be brought back to the convention. The majority group wanted it passed right away. I tried to get the floor and Foster said to Tom Tippett, 'What's the matter with Lily?' "What's she doing? Tell her not to ask for the floor." And Tom said to him, Tom was still a great admirer of Fosters, "Well," he said, "Bill, you can't tell Lillian what to do." He said, "She admires you a great deal and was influenced by you a great deal, but she did it because she believed in you." I got the floor and the chairman said, "Let's have Miss Herstein come to the platform; she's so little nobody can see her." I got up on the platform and I said, "There may be nothing very important in this resolution, but why not defer to the request of the minority to refer it to a committee?" I said,

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"You people are in the majority but there's nothing much at stake except a matter of procedure and it would make for a more peaceful discussion of things." The story of the convention was written up in the New Republic. And I said, "It's just like a good salesman who's trying to sell a woman a new washing machine and she's just frightened. She's afraid the thing will cut her hands off. A good salesman wisely gives into her fears and says, 'Let's try it another time -- so why not do this?'" Well, they all began to cheer, since I was the first speaker of our side who didn't damn the Communists; therefore their own Communist group applauded me. That frightened Bill Foster and he got up innocently and asked for the floor and the chairman said, "I think you're out of order, Mr. Foster." Foster quickly said, "That's alright, I only wanted to speak against Miss Herstein's notion." You see that was the sign to all of them not to vote with me. That's how he did it and so we lost. This convention, including this incident, was written up in the New Republic.

- I. What was the resolution?
- R. Oh, it was nothing very important. It was just one of those things, and they could have referred it back, but they were drunk with power.

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- I. Now, what happened between Foster and Fitzpatrick on the floor?
- R. At one point in the convention Fitzpatrick just repudiated Foster. There occurred the memorable confrontation between Fitzpatrick in the Great Steel strike of 1918 and he earned the great admiration of all liberals and progressive elements in the American Labor Movement. Fitzpatrick had supported Foster all through his trial connected with the Bridgeman Convention. I always tell people that when you think how far Fitzpatrick went in defending Foster all the time that the trial of Foster was going on and went where the trial was being held in Bridgeman. He got Frank Walsh, the distinguished labor lawyer, to take on the case in defense of Foster. Emmissaries from Gompers would come down to Chicago to warn Fitzpatrick against playing with these wild people. And all the time he stuck to his guns, which was really very remarkable and then to be betrayed this way. You see -- incidentally that's one of the reasons when people want me to write a biography of Fitzpatrick, that I feel so bad about what happened to him subsequently. He got so bitter over all this that he was bitter against any innovations and that accounts for his bitter opposition to the C.I.O. when it was formed.
- I. Anything that Communists and other reformers had to do with?
- R. Yes. "I was burned once." he would say. It was too bad. Well, Foster then became very prominent in the Communist Party and so did

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Browder.

I. Did this ruin the Farmer-Labor Party?

R. Oh, yes, I said to Earl Browder at the time, "Earl, this is what's known as a pyrrhic victory, a victory gained at too great a cost. You won the convention, but you lost the cause."

I. Browder?

R. Browder. Browder had also been arrested for attending the Communist Convention in Bridgeman. Foster's case was never continued after the jury split on conviction: 11 for, 1 against. That ill-conceived convention in Bridgeman. This was before the split happened. Right after the Bridgeman case, we needed bonds for Browder. A big meeting was held. I was asked to speak at the meeting, and by George I did, and I remember Browder saying to me at the time, "Lillian, this was the most dangerous and the most typical thing for you to do," and that was before this split. Well, both of them, Foster and Browder, became very prominent leaders in the Communist Party of America. Of course, I'd always had the feeling that the real Communist Party in Russia never had much respect for the American Communist movement because the Russians felt they didn't amount to much. They were too small. I wish these young radicals would understand that. It didn't amount to anything because the American Labor Movement was conservative.

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We want more now. It was accepting capitalism; their slogan was Gompers statement. Politically the A.F. of L. said, "Elect our friends, and defeat our enemies in the existing parties; Democratic and Republican." I was moderate myself. I didn't fall for any of this. I was open minded. I would listen. So they, Foster and Browder, became leaders in the American Communist Party. Eventually, I don't know what the issue was -- Browder and Foster split and there was another Communist leader called Lovestone. There were now two dissenting Communist factions: the Trotskyites and the Lovestonites. Subsequently, Lovestone left the Communist party and later became the advisor of David Dubinsky, throwing the Communists out of that union. The Communist controversy nearly killed that union. The union turned to Lovestone for advise and he became their advisor on international affairs and I know many a fine Socialist or a liberal whose request for a visa to go abroad was spiked by J. Lovestone.

- I. They seem to spend more time killing each other off than anything else.
- R . Well, he was through, you see, he was through and he went regular, was an informer from his earlier experience and the International Ladies Garment Workers had a terrible time. The Communist controversy nearly ruined their union.

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- I. They don't seem to want to talk about it. I know there was a tremendous squabble in that union. Tell me about it.
- R. They were a very big union, a very strong one, and many of them were Russian Jews and when the revolution occurred, everybody was glad because they felt this meant the end of Czarist tyranny, of pogroms and serfdom. President Wilson declared "the acid test of the cause of the allies will be the treatment of Russia by her sister republics." Everyone knew of the tyranny of the Czar, and they were glad, and then came the disillusionment. At meetings of various locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers bitter conflicts arose between those who had become disillusioned and those who followed the Communist line. One of them that belonged to the Communist party, or was controlled by them, would bring in a resolution on foreign policy -- something in favor of the Soviet Union which had nothing to do with the problems of the union. He would tell about what a wonderful place it was. Then another delegate would get up and say, "It's wonderful all right. If I didn't send my sister in Russia food, she'd be starving." and the fight was on. It wrecked the union, brought the membership way down.
- I. Members couldn't talk about anything but foreign policy then?
- R. Anything that the Communist Party ordered their members or fellow

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travelers to do, they would do, and that would split the union, They pursued such tactics in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers which had a large membership of Russian Jewish immigrants. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers under Sidney Hillman had been very friendly with the Soviet Union and started banking relations with them. Unfortunately, in the International, the president of the ILGWU died in the middle of the controversy, a very strong man he was. The second president died. It was not until David Dubinsky became president, Dubinsky was a Labor statesman, that the situation stabilized. And, of course, there was bitterness against the Communists who'd wrecked their union. There's no question about it. From 175,000 they got down to 50 or 75,000. Dubinsky proceeded to kick out the Commies, which he should have done, because they were wrecking his union and that's the time he got help from J. Lovestone. There's nothing like these reformed Communists! You know what we have in the A.C.L.U. with Ira Latimer. You know that story. Lovestone had led a faction of the American Communist Party, but lost out in the fight and left the party. Latimer, who had been Executive Director of A.C.L.U. in Chicago, later left the party and now he agitates for "right to work laws" and other reactionary legislation. Earl Browder was one of the leaders of the American Communist Party and became the head. He made frequent visits to Russia. On one of these visits he met and married a Russian girl, a Jewish woman. She had belonged to a wealthy Jewish family. She had graduated with honors from the University

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of St. Petersburg before it became Leningrad and Petrograd. But when the revolution came she got interested in the revolution and became an ardent Communist. She and Earl married, and they had three children and I'll tell you about that. Russia, in the second world war was one of our important allies. After the war, Earl was the proponent in the world Communist Party for cooperating with the western allies. Stalin was opposed. Russia wasn't in the war long. Their country was devastated, that seige of Leningrad was terrible. Stalin went out immediately after the war to fight the West. By that time he was paranoid, and his whole policy was to fight the influence of the United States. Earl Browder thought that was a mistake and in the International he preached the other gospel. Therefore he was read out of the Communist Party. Now; subsequently I don't know when it was that Bill Foster died. But it was Earl who was the head of the American Communist Party. I didn't hear about him for years. I used to know him very well, and I used to preach against his influencing Foster to become a Communist. I said Foster could have been a very effective leader in the American Labor Movement, but he lost. In spite of my differences with Earl Browder, we remained friends. About three or four years ago I received a telephone message. My sister said, "Somebody by the name of Browder called you up and this is the number." I never thought of Earl, so I called and the maid

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answered and she said, "I'll call Mr. Browder." The man answered and I said, "My name is Lillian Herstein, and I received a telephone message from somebody by the name of Browder." He said, "That's right, I'm Felix Browder. I'm a professor of Mathematics at the University of Chicago and my father is Earl Browder. He is visiting me, and he's very eager to get in touch with you.'*

I. Did you see him then?

R. Oh, I was so much surprised. Mr. Felix Browder said, "I'm having a group of my friends and colleagues at the U of C at my home to meet my father. He is very eager to see you. Can we come and get you?" I said fine, so he came and I went over and there was Earl. He's younger than I am, not a whole lot, but younger, but much more frail, and he walked with a cane. We had a lovely visit -- he and I. There were members of the mathematics department and I remember the little hor d'oeuvres that had flags of every country and so on and they were talking, you know, and I said to Earl that I hadn't any idea what they were talking about and he said, "No, it's all mathematics. It's Greek to me." We had a very pleasant evening, and then Earl told me the story of the family. When they came back from Russia this Felix was about 7 years old and they had two other children, three boys, and they moved to New York. I don't know what the community was -- a public school -- but certainly very intelligent teachers.

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This boy couldn't speak one word of English, just Russian. He was seven years old and they began teaching him and he was a whiz. Just a whiz! He learned English right away. He learned mathematics. He was brilliant. And then he went through high school. He got a fellowship to M.I.T. Later he was in the American army, and when it came time for him to be discharged from the army the officers didn't want to give him an honorable discharge, because as they said, "He had associated with people who were Communists and who advocated the over-throw of the U.S. government." The army appointed a lawyer to defend him. He wasn't a very brilliant lawyer, but one of those very consistent people who revered the U.S. constitution and knew the Bible. Felix was asked whether he had associated with people who were Communists and advocated the destruction of the U.S. He said, "I associated with my parents, my mother and father who were Communists and of whom I'm very proud." The lawyer turned to the Bible and to the constitution of the United States and he said, "Here's the Bible, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.' There's nothing in the Constitution that forbids a man associating with his own parents." So Felix got an honorable discharge. Then he got his Doctorate Degree in mathematics with great distinction, but he had a terrible time getting a job. The mathematics department of the University of Colorado voted unanimously for him to be employed.

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When they learned that he was the son of Earl Browder the trustees threw it out. He had a very bitter experience, and his first job really was at Brandeis University. Then he went to Boston University and now he's one of the top men in the Mathematics Department of the University of Chicago. The two other boys are mathematicians too, and one teaches at Princeton University. That's the one that Earl lives with. The other one teaches at Brown University. I said to him, Earl, how did it happen? Weren't they interested in politics?" "No," he said, "they weren't." He said as kids they were always doing crossword puzzles and anything that had to do with mathematics. Now the reason Earl was here was that the University of Illinois at Champaign had invited him to make a speech. Of course an ex-communist they weren't so afraid of. That's why he was here in Chicago. About a year afterwards he wrote me again that he was invited to speak at some college at Iowa. By that time his son, Felix, from the University of Chicago, was visiting professor at some California University, maybe Berkeley, and so they weren't here. Earl was staying at the Sherman Hotel and he invited me to have dinner with him. I had dinner with him and we had an interesting visit, and then he took me to the bus. That's an interesting story, isn't it?

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- I. It surely is.
- R. And you know I was telling this story once when Ab Mikva was around and Ab said, "You don't mean to say that this Felix Browder was related to Earl?" I said, "It's his son." And the reason he knew the family was that they'd bought one of these university houses and when the wife wanted to have the lease looked over, whatever the legal business was, she engaged Ab Mikva. He had no idea who she was. She, by the way, is a Ph.D. from M.I.T. in something called Crystallography. You can have some fun with that one -- Crystallography. I don't know what that is, but she has a Doctorate degree in that. They have a couple of children and the other son had children too. The one at Princeton, Earl lives with, unless he's dead now. I ought to call them and find out.
- I. And none of them have anything to do with politics?
- R. No, they're not interested. And he said, "We didn't try to influence them either way, but I guess when you have a couple of little geniuses around who are grabbing everything that has anything to do with mathematics there is no time for political propaganda. When Felix was being questioned, the head of the Mathematics Department of M.I.T. testified for him and said, "In the 77 years of the existence of the Mathematics Department at M.I.T., Felix Browder was the most

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brilliant one we have ever had." The experience made him very bitter, being turned down again and again for a job. His younger brothers had an easier time. At this party at his house, where all these mathematicians were around, I got introduced to a mathematician by the name of Issac Herstein.

I. Related to you?

R. No. So he said, "Ever since I got here, Miss Herstein, they've all asked me if I knew you." "Well," I said, "you should have gotten in touch with me." He was a Polish Jew and had to escape when the Nazis came there. He escaped to Canada and apparently studied mathematics there. He's one of these brilliant guys, and he lives at 5000 East End. But I've never seen him since and I'm sorry, because I really would like to. We talked about the name and he said there probably is a relationship, because there was a Herstein family. Although we came from Lithuania, he came from Poland.

I. Probably a distant relative.

R. That's right.

I. Did you ever see Bill Foster after that split?

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R. I never saw him after that. And I didn't see Earl all those years until this incident of his son's party. Earl has large grey eyes, and you know he had very little formal education but he certainly made up the gaps. He was a voracious reader. I'll tell you another interesting man of that group. When the Bolshevik Revolution occurred they sent their people all over to win people over to the cause. The man put in charge of the American program was an Italian Communist by the name of Louis Fraina and he was the official from the Communist party to do their work, Then a split occurred and he left the party, because he split with them on policy; they accused him of embezzling funds and all that sort of thing. But he left the party and took the name of Corey, Louis Corey. Subsequently he studied and he taught at Antioch College. Finally he drifted to Chicago and was the educational head of the Amalgamated Butcher Workmen. He had a daughter. You may have heard of her, Olga Corey. His wife was a Russian Jewess. He was very bitterly anti-communist. I mean he was the kind, by this time, that could see a red under the bed. But he lectured several times for the Janitors Union Local 25, invited Peggy Bausch and a friend of mine in charge of education of the Union. Corey was one of the few men I have known who never had a formal education who gave a historical survey in which there were no gaps. He was very good. Well, a very unfortunate thing happened. You know I hate to tell you about these gods that have wooden feet.

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- I. Well all of them do, so we might as well accept that.
- R. You'd better believe that. Corey was educational director for the Amalgamated Butcher Workmen, of which Patrick Gorman was secretary-treasurer and the powerful head. Pat began getting dissatisfied with him. No special reason. Pat was a very fine man but tempermental. Corey didn't know this, but I learned of it. Just at this time it was discovered by one of the good spies that Corey never had become a citizen of this country, which was a very stupid omission on his part, and the Federal Government was starting a suit to deport him. Len Dupres said at the time, "There is no chance that the government would deport him." They hadn't any more chance of doing anything to him, you know, and damn it all if Gorman didn't make that an excuse to dump Corey. We felt terrible about it. Corey picked up and went back to New York. Olga stayed here. Olga worked for Roosevelt University and in several liberal organizations. She was a young girl, you know, and subsequently she went back East where her father died of a heart attack. But people who've been making a study of the Communist Party in America have come to me and said, "Do you know there was a man by the name of Corey, who was very prominent in the party?" and I said, "Yes, I'd heard about it." "And did you know that he was Olga Corey's father?" I said, "Yes, sure I did." As I have pointed out, Earl went back to Russia after they had dumped him to try and convince Molotov they were wrong in their opposition to the Western allies but he wasn't effective.

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They had decided on this policy of fighting the Western democracies and pushing the United States out of Europe. That's what they'd like to do now, too. And we've been so busy with this darned Viet Nam thing, where we have no interests, and neglected the Middle East which is where they are going to fight us. That's what they want, right there. That's what the Czar of Russia wanted always. We're back to the Czarist days. The Russians have swung back -- real nationalist in spite of all that they say. Maybe it was a mistake that we didn't let Patton go into Czechoslovakia and let the Russians go in. So there we are. What do we do from here?

- I. There's one thing I was going to ask you. I didn't want to interrupt the stories because they were good, but I wanted to ask you if you could recall anything about the 1919 steel strike and race relations in that strike. It seems there was racial strife in the packing strike which preceded the steel strike.
- R. Oh, it was certainly Negro antagonism in the packing house workers strike.
- I. Yes, it made racial tension, I suppose, much worse. What about the steel strike?
- R. I don't know.
- I. Was there anything at all?

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R. I didn't feel that at all.

I. Did you ever travel to Gary when you were making your speeches during the steel strike? You said you went to Joliet which is pretty far away.

R. Well, I think I may have gone to Gary. I was in South Chicago. Now, about the Packing house workers strike, I told you about that Master's thesis that deals with that subject.

I. Yes.

R. Now, that shows the whole racial problem. The thesis was written by William Tuttle and the strike when we had the race riots.

I. Yes.

R. Oh, they were terrible. And this thesis deals with the question as to what extent the bitterness between the Negroes and the white workers contributed to the violence of those terrible race riots which occurred in Chicago often. The packers used the Negroes as scabs. John Fitzpatrick long ago told me that any man who wouldn't scab to give his wife and children food isn't a man and you couldn't blame the Negroes for scabbing since they were kept out of the union.

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By the way, I told you that I have the original agreement of the Packing House strike?

I. No, I don't think you did.

R. Yes, it's called "Over the top" and John Fitzpatrick gave it to me once.

I. You mean you have the actual document?

R. Yes.

I. In your possession?

R. The actual document and he tossed it over to me. There's his picture in it and a picture of Samuel Altschuler, who was the arbitrator in the case appointed by the U.S. government. Altschuler at the time was a Federal judge.

I. Yes.

R. I have the whole thing, the word for word agreement.

I. One of the things I was wondering was whether or not any of the leaders of the strike did anything in the steel strike to try and prevent the racial feelings that had developed in the packing strike?

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R. Well, I don't think it was an issue in that strike. Many of the strikers were Poles.

I. In Gary they did bring in quite a few Negroes during the strike.

R. During the steel strike?

I. But still there seems to have been no real racial explosion.

R. No. No.

I. And I just was curious to know if they had gone out of their way somehow to try and forestall it.

R. I don't know. I don't recall that feature of it. The strike was spectacular and attracted world wide-attention. I always said to the C.I.O. when they finally organized the steel industry in 1936 that we'd paved the way for them, because we'd dramatized for America that 12 hour day and the other terrible conditions in the steel industry.

By the way, just let me say something about that before it escapes my mind. When I was at Northwestern University, I had a classmate by the name of Frank Morris. He was engaged to a girl from his hometown. They subsequently married and he went to Gary and worked as an engineer in the steel mills. He knew nothing about unions. The time came when they had three boys, three children,

He was working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the whole situation just crushed him. He quit and I remember his coming to Chicago, to Evanston, with those three boys and they hardly had anything to eat but he could stand the work and conditions no longer. Years afterwards I was lecturing at Brandeis University and I got in touch with Frank and Edith Morris; they were living in Boston then. They called me and took me out everywhere and they talked about those days in the steel mills of Gary. After fifty years, without thinking of unions or anything, he still talked about what a terrible situation it had been, a nightmare, such a terrible thing that a man with three children had to quit the job.

- I. Can you tell me a little more about the teachers union? You talked about just the beginnings of it, but there must be a lot more you could tell me about the teachers union.
- R. Oh, my, a whole lot. Now back in 1916 when the 68 teachers were fired for belonging to a union, they were out a whole year. We were already organized in the Federation of Women High School Teachers. But we weren't very large, and nothing was done to us because we were too insignificant. There was the Men's Federation. But Margaret Haley incurred the wrath of the rich tax dodgers because she had exposed their terrible tax dodgery, In fact she pointed out the infamous 99 year lease of the Chicago Tribune. According to the ordinance of 1787 a big section of Chicago was allocated for educational purposes and as the city grew this became valuable property, right in the loop.

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One site is at Dearborn and Madison, where the old Tribune Building is. At that time they had 21 members on the school board and the representative of the Chicago Tribune held out for the lease until they got the last member. They called it the "Midnight Lease" and they got a 11-10 vote and the board granted that lease. They leased that land to the Chicago Tribune for 99 years at a rate about half of what the rent around there was, without a revaluation clause. A lot of the property! Lewis F. Post was at one time a member of the school board of Chicago. He was a single taxer. & used to say that that ordinance that left that property to the Board of Education for educational purposes could bring the revenue almost enough to support a public school system in Chicago without any other taxation. But a lot of it is gone and that is why the vested interests were fighting Margaret Haley. She was quite a leader. In the midst of this fight Katherine Goggen, the secretary of the Chicago Teachers Federation was run over by a truck and killed.

- I. Katherine, what was her name?
- R. Goggen. She was the secretary. Margaret was the orator and the organizer. Katherine was the quiet administrator, a wonderful team. And Miss Haley would go to Springfield and bring in legislation to get the 69 teachers back, but lost every time. But they stuck it out till the end and this is what happened. There's always a difference of opinion as to what should have been done, and those teachers were out of a job.

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- I. How did they live?
- R. Well, just on anything that we all contributed. The story that we got was that the labor leaders, John Fitzpatrick, advised the Chicago Teachers Federation to drop their affiliation with labor and in that way the teachers got back. Some people feel that if they'd held out a little longer they wouldn't have had to do it, but that's really what happened. But Margaret Haley's influence with the labor group still held, because they remembered her many services to labor and she used to lobby for labor legislation in Springfield. Someone once said she'll die talking to the legislature, but you see nothing was done to the other teachers' unions. We were too insignificant. We just didn't say anything about it. We just stayed on. This, in spite of the Loeb rule passed by the Chicago Board of Education that teachers couldn't belong to a union.

Mrs. Trowbridge, who was the President of the Federation of Women High School Teachers, my union, was going to go to a National Convention of the Women's Trade Union League and she had to get a leave of absence. She went to see the superintendent, and he looked at her and he said, "Well, what about the Loeb rule?" She gave him a clever answer, she said, "It has not been operative against us," and she went. Then of course, when we weren't paid in the '30's, efforts were made to form one union that all the teachers could belong to. A big agitation was started for us to give up our charters and all

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go into one, the Chicago Teachers Union. That was '36 or '37. And that's what we did, and that's when we got John Fewkes. But there were people in the Chicago Teachers Federation, a little group, that held out and had their office at 127 N. Dearborn.

- I. So they still had a separate union?
- R. Well, they met. They were sentimental and they had all the records. By now, most of them have died, but the few that were living recently gave all their material to the Chicago Historical Society. That would be very interesting to review.
- I. And Margaret Haley? I think somebody is writing a book on the Chicago Teachers Union right now. Isn't there a woman who is writing a book on it?
- R. Well, I met somebody at the Citizens Schools Committee. Her name is Kamin. I think you are right. She was writing something on the Chicago Public Schools or something. Seems to me several things have been written. A man from the American Federation of Teachers came to see me and he was writing the history of the A.F. of T. He went through all this material and he told me he found a lot of interesting things. He told me things I never knew. He said that Miss Haley had traveled all over the country trying to organize the Elementary teachers. He said she was quite remarkable and she was opposed to

World War I.

- I. And was she part of the Women's Trade Union League, too?
- R. No, she wasn't. I think she was a member, but not active. We organized the Chicago Teachers Union and by that time the C.I.O. had been organized and the C.I.O. was built along industrial lines. There was no question that either steel or meat packing could be organized except through an industrial union. The liberals were all very enthusiastic about the C.I.O. A movement was started to have the Chicago Teachers Unions, A.F. of T., to join the C.I.O. and we had the convention in 1937 in Madison, the Joint Convention that the large United Chicago Teachers Union had attended, I just got back from Europe. I was in a minority and on the resolutions committee, there were fine Socialists, like Joel Seidman, whom the Commies hated like poison but who were for the resolution that we join the C.I.O. And I said, "Look Joel, our people won't do it." And I said, "You might as well look at the facts. The help that a teacher's union gets is not from the National American Federation of Labor but from the local one, because education is a local matter in America, and in many cities where you have a strong teacher's union, like Chicago and St. Paul, you don't even have a C.I.O. council." Even Sidney Hillman, who was one of the strong men on the C.I.O. saw that, and he hoped that we, in a way, wouldn't. We had no C.I.O. council in Chicago. Who would you go to for help? So that resolution was brought

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to the convention floor and I presented the minority report against our going into the C.I.O. and subsequently I did write an article about it for the union paper. I think I have it. There was an article pointing out the other side. And then a very bitter fight developed in the New York Local. They had a lot of Commies in their union and it was a bitter internal fight.

- I. Over the same issue of joining the C.I.O.?
- R. No. No. Something else. Well, it's the same stuff as the Commies trying to bring into the union whatever the Russians tell them, similar to the problem of the ILGWU. There was a very bitter fight. Lindville and Leftkovitz were the people that had built the New York Teachers Union from the beginning. They were all Socialists, and they were all, I think, more socially minded than we middle western people were. It was a terrible bitter fight and the question was what to do with this faction. Well we had public meetings where both sides were discussed and some very fine people, who were not Communists, objected to having the group thrown out. Of course they'd always tell you they weren't Communists, but Bella Dodd was one of them. Remember Bella Dodd? She with the big black eyes? She was the leader of the Communist group. But there was this other matter of throwing them out of the New York union, or the A.F. of T. They succeeded in defeating me for president. I'll tell

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you that incident. We had meetings. We had one in Orchestra Hall and the people who were opposed to throwing them out spoke and the people who were in favor of it spoke. Then, we had articles in our magazine. And finally we had a referendum of our entire membership. They voted to throw them out, but the fine liberal group got so weary of them that they withdrew from the New York local. That left the union to these Commies, and it didn't amount to much.

I. You mean they withdrew from leadership in the union?

R. No, withdrew from the union.

I. Clear out? withdrew from membership and everything, then?

R. That's right and I remember one New York teacher told me, "Oh, it feels so good to be able to go home and read a book." She said, "You'd come to school, you'd been at a union meeting and the next morning when you'd come to school the principal shows you the headline in the New York paper: 'New York teachers union endorses Soviet Policy!' and I'd say, 'They did not. I was at that meeting.' and he said, 'Now, wait a minute, when did you go home? "

I. They did it afterwards?

R. Why, yes, they'd have a caucus, enough to do it. We were sorry that

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they dropped out. Now they're a very big union, but of course they're in this awful situation about the Negroes. There's no bright spot anywhere. There's no spot where there's any solution. You don't know what to do. You take big communities like Chicago and New York, you have solid blocks of Negroes.

I remember when Kelly *was* Mayor of Chicago and it was a hard time for schools. There really was an oversupply of teachers and they could do what they wanted with us. Kelly conceived to out-wit us, and he got this man, McKay as president of the school board. It was the time of the depression and he was going to get us out of a financial jam. We were paid in tax anticipation warrants, which is the way the board always pays, and they carried 6% interest. But who could keep them? Teachers were selling them for \$75.00 which, meant they lost \$25.00.

I. Oh, my.

R. Oh, my, it was very bad. Well, t&en there were all kinds of proposals what to do--abolish the teacher's college or the junior college or what? And I had lobbied a bill through, although Margaret Haley at that time thought it was not necessary. The Junior college had been in operation for 22 years, but there was no law that created

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it and so we introduced a Junior college bill and I lobbied it through successfully. Then, Kelly began wrecking the schools. It was terrible! He had the bright idea of having a fund. The big football game of the year was between the champions of the public high schools and of the parochial schools. It was a marvelous game, you see, because whatever team won in each league was a pretty fine team. His proposal was that all the teachers buy tickets, and from that fund he would send provisions in baskets to the poor families, delivered by his precinct captains. Don't you think that's cute? Well, we opposed it. There had always been a fund for years. We used to pass the hat around. And the children contributed and then, through an authorized social agency, the money was distributed to the poor families on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We did it every year. We had the approval of the Chamber of Commerce and every social agency.

- I. This puts you on the same level as the precinct workers who have to contribute to the slush fund.
- K. So we objected. It came up at the Chicago Teachers Union meeting, and we said, "Just don't buy them." But the teachers would say, "But my principal came up with tears in his eyes; he had been given 50 tickets and if he didn't sell them to us he'd have to buy them." So we said, "Let him buy them." But they felt sorry for the principal and at that time I said there's no point in our contributing to the political slush fund of Mayor Kelly. That got to Mayor Kelly. He

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told John Fitzpatrick that after all he did for labor to have a member of their executive board to say that. Well, Fitzpatrick said, "I don't know about what you've done for labor, but I'm certain that if Lillian said that, she probably meant it and she probably knew what she was talking about." While he was mayor the pressure was brought on the principals to sell a certain number of tickets and the teachers would buy them. They felt sorry for the principal. Well, he finally went, so that went with him, but Mary Herrick and I and several of us never contributed to that slush fund.

I. When Mayor Kelly went, you mean, that was the end of it?

R. Yes.

I. And the next mayor didn't try it?

R. Not until the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities came out with the statement that they would take the Chicago High Schools off the accredited list if these practices continued, and that's when Kelly had to step out and we got Kennelly as the reform man. By that time Daley got ambitious and wanted to be mayor and he defeated Kennelly in the Democratic primary. By a small margin, he defeated Robert Merriam for mayor, one time Democrat and now Republican.

I. How did the union operate when you got the unions together under Fewkes?

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R. Well, that's a sad story. He was a handsome hero and these elementary school teachers, you know, they just oozed admiration and he did a lot of things I didn't approve of. I got off the board. I was on the executive board of the union then.

I. What kind of things did he do?

R. Oh, several things on his own. I mean, he didn't consult the union. There were several of us. I told the rest to stay on but I got off. I was so active in other things that I didn't want to bother with it much more. Then, you know, he did the dirty trick on me. When I retired I'd been their delegate of the Chicago Teachers to the Chicago Federation of Labor for years and their Federation spokesman. Anytime the teachers wanted anything they'd have me present it to the Federation. Then when Fewkes became president we were entitled to more delegates, about 15 or 16 and they never opened their mouths. Then I retired from teaching in 1951 and, by George, he brings in a motion that I should be dropped as a delegate because I was retired and that was contrary to the union constitution. Alice Gordon, one of the delegates to the union's house of representatives, put up a big fight for me, and somebody said that's the meanest thing, to think of Lillian's connection with the Labor Movement all these years. Len Dupres took up the cudgels for me. There's nothing in the constitution that forbids a retired teacher from being a delegate to the Chicago Federation of Labor. So then the various unions in the city met and they said, "Well, to hell with him. We'll make Lillian our delegate."

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Well, finally it was decided I should go in as the delegate of the Women's Trade Union League.

- I. Oh, that makes sense.
- R. That was in all the papers, and shortly after that there was a big dinner in honor of Dr. John A. Lapp, who was a lay Catholic and a very fine liberal. He helped to establish the Citizens Schools Committee. Mr. Fewkes's secretary called me and said, "Oh, Miss Herstein, Mr. Fewkes is in Springfield lobbying and he can't use the tickets to Mr. Lapp's banquet. He wants you to use them." I said, "You tell him that the game is over. All these years that he's been mistreating me in the union, I never told my union friends because I didn't want it to hurt the union, but now that's over. I'm going to Dr. Lapp's dinner, but not with a ticket from the Chicago Teachers Union." He got cold feet and one of the newspaper men said to him, "Gee, you were a fool, Fewkes, to drop her from the executive board." About that time they were getting ready for my banquet. "Why," he said, "Everyday there's another story about her banquet in the papers. You don't have any sense of press relations." Fewkes had ambitions; he pushed John Desmond for President of the Chicago Teacher's Union, and he ran for the presidency of the American Federation of Teachers against Cogan. He was a union teacher from New York, a Socialist probably. The election was to take place at the American Federation

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of Teachers Convention which was held in Chicago at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. One night there was the usual banquet and they invited me. Fewkes was thoroughly defeated by a 3 to 1 vote. There was nothing for him. He'd put Desmond in as President of the teacher's union. I think he once flirted with the idea of being the legislative representative of the A.F. of T. in Washington. But that already was held by another former president, who still holds it. And so he is out. Somebody told me that he was selling automobile accessories.

Now there is a Black Caucus in the Chicago Teachers Union and in the American Federation of Teachers. There is this order of the Federal Government to the Chicago Board of Education to integrate. The teachers that were teaching longest had the right to choose the neighborhood in which to teach and that's only fair. But how can you unscramble that whole thing?

I. That's pretty complicated right now, I guess.

R. We got Willis for Superintendent of Schools, who turned out to be a racist.

I. Who is Mary Herrick? I've heard this name a lot.

R. Well, she was the president of the Federation of Women High School Teachers three times in succession. She really established the Citizens Schools Committee with Dr. Lapp as president and Mrs. Yarras as

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Executive Secretary.

I. Is she still around here?

R. She died. Tess died.

I. Oh. This was one of the things I wanted to ask you about. How much did the union actually accomplish in terms of the people who were in it wagewise, pensionwise and all that sort of thing?

R. What do you mean? How much did I accomplish?

I. No. When you went into this one big union in the 30's, did they do a better job of bargaining for things, for wages?

R. Well, they never had bargaining rights until recently, but they were quite effective.

I. All teachers unions are limited by the city budget and that sort of thing, I suppose.

R. Oh, yes, That's very common. In fact the budget of the public schools in any big city is the biggest part of the budget. And we had a president who was in for just one year before we combined in the

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big union. That was Helen Taggart. She was very good on finances. Poor thing, she's now in a nursing home somewhere and hardly knows anybody.

- I. There were a few things I wanted to ask you about the Women's Trade Union League and the Chicago Federation of Labor in terms of this early legislation that the state passed to protect women.
- R. They did a lot. I think the unions were almost afraid of fighting for child labor legislation.

- I. This is one of the things I wanted to ask you about, because I got the impression from talking to you that some other groups were really more aggressive in terms of pushing hard for action on certain issues than the unions were.
- R. Well, you see they had a different kind of influence. Don't forget unionism wasn't popular in this country and was not strong and had to fight for its very existence. And you take this group from the Women's Trade Union League, like Mrs. Kelley and Mary McDowell and Mary Dreier; they had an influence really because of their status. And in addition to that, they were very genuine and self-sacrificing. When any great reforms happen, everybody tries to claim they did it, but its many forces in society that bring reforms about.

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I. Right.

R. Like now, there are many forces, aren't there?

I. Sure.

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Tape 5 - Side 1

- I. Now do you want to talk about the Women's Trade Union League or the Consumer's League today?
- R. As I have told you previously, my oldest sister, who was employed as a saleswoman in Marshall Fields, became interested in the Women's Trade Union League. They had interesting meetings on Sunday afternoons and she was very much inspired by the national president, Margaret Dreir Robins. Then I became interested in the League also. The original Women's Trade Union League was organized in England, in London, and on visits on which Jane Adams and Mrs. Robins and others made to London, they were impressed with this organization and they worked to establish a similar organization in Chicago. They organized the National Women's Trade Union League with headquarters in Chicago. In addition, they organized local leagues. There was the Women's Trade Union League of Chicago; the Women's Trade Union League of New York City, the Women's Trade Union League of Boston and one in Kansas City, Missouri. The purpose of the National and Local leagues was to work for protective legislation for women and for children. Membership was limited to women trade unionists.
- I. So strictly speaking Jane Addams herself couldn't belong?

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R. At this time, the failure of the A.F. of L. to work hard at organizing women in unions and to include Negroes in their unions created a pool of "scab" labor for employers. The other group of women who were admitted to membership in the Leagues, national and local, were socially minded influential women like Mrs. Raymond Robins, and Jane Addams, who really founded the organization; Mrs. Amy Walker Field, whose husband was a professor at the University of Chicago and whose father was a distinguished and highly respected Judge in Chicago; Mrs. Katherine Dummer Fisher (the Dummers and the Fishers were among the oldest Chicago families; one of the Fishers had been Assistant Secretary of Agriculture under Woodrow Wilson). They all were people of means and devoted to the commonweal); Mary McDowell, Head of University of Chicago Settlement; Ellen Gates Starr, cofounder with Jane Addams of Hull House; Brace Abbott, chief of the Children's Bureau of U.S. Department of Labor and many others. These women were designated as "allies." They served the cause, but insisted that the power reside in the women trade unionists, who were to be the only representatives on the board of the League. They not only contributed funds generously, but were influential in setting a hearing in many a labor dispute. They had status and prestige in the community. Sometimes a hard-pressed union of men appealed to the League for help, and our influential "allies" were able to get them a hearing.

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At this the the "Consumers League'" was operating under the leadership of Mrs. Florence Kelley. Although the two organizations were working for the same causes, there was no formal cooperation.

I. Did these two organizations co-operate?

R. well, I wouldn't say they cooperated. They were each working in their respective fields and working on the same problems. The conditions would be different. In some places the Consumers League was very effective like in Cleveland, Ohio, where the headquarters were; in other places the Women's Trade Union League was more effective.

I. What kind of women belonged to the Consumer's League?

R. Oh, they were very fine, like Mrs. Kelley.

I, What I meant was, did they include working women too, or were they more of a middle class group?

R. Well, they were both, They got up what they called a White List and no industrialist could be on that White List if the conditions in his industry were bad for women or children. In this way, the Consumers League was not guilty of boycotting, which was illegal; they just had a white list. Many owners of industry improved working conditions for women and children so they could get on the White List. The Women's

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Trade Union League, worked and got the reduction of the working day first to ten hours a day; it had been twelve.

- I. Was it by state law that they get the ten hour law?
- R. oh, yes, by state law, and then they worked for the eight hour law and they won in some states, in New York and in Illinois. The Illinois law was declared unconstitutional. And it took twenty-seven years actually to get the eight hour law in Illinois. But of course in those twenty-seven years many women had got the eight hour day through their unions and various activities. It was a great blow to Mrs. Kelley when the Illinois law was declared unconstitutional. Working conditions and laws affecting working women and children were very different in different states. The standards in New York were probably the highest. They were high in Illinois and in Massachusetts. But the Southern states -- there was a time when some of them had no child labor law. If a manufacturer observed the good law of New York City he was penalized, and the temptation was to move his factory to New Jersey where they didn't have as good a law and therefore his labor costs were lower. In fact, for an industry to move from a city where there is a strong union and therefore good working conditions to another city is quite

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common practice, exercised even now.

And so the realisation came after many years that we ought to have a Federal child labor law that would apply to all the states, and a Federal child labor law was passed. It operated a little while and then some taxpayer protested its constitutionality. That's the usual procedure, to Set a taxpayer to protest, and it was declared unconstitutional.

- I. In Setting it passed in the first place, were these organizations working for the federal law?
- R. Oh, yes, very much, because they saw how their efforts were defeated by the different conditions in the different states. It was just like the textile industry which simply moved from New England to the South to escape the union and good working conditions. Indeed the textile industry to this day is largely unorganized because it has moved to the South.
- I. Right.
- R. They saw that their efforts were defeated. One Federal law was passed. It operated for about a year and a half and then it was declared unconstitutional. Then another law was passed that tried to avoid

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what had made the other one unconstitutional, but that was declared unconstitutional. They proposed an amendment to the Constitution of the United States which would enable Congress to pass a federal child labor law. It was an enabling act; it was not a law. Well, everybody was for it -- the President of the U.S. was for it. It was therefore a great shock when, on its first test, it was defeated.

I. How do you account for its defeat?

R. Well, I'll tell you what happened. Massachusetts had a very good child labor law, so did Illinois and so did Ohio. And they had nothing to fear from a federal law because neither of the two federal laws that had been declared unconstitutional went as far as the Massachusetts law. Much to the surprise of everybody, because everybody was for it -- I mean the President, all of Congress was for it -- when it came up for ratification before the Massachusetts legislature, Bishop O'Connell of the Catholic Church, appeared against it. Robert Watt, who was a top official in the Massachusetts Labor Movement (he was a painter and decorator and he was subsequently the worker delegate to the I.L.O.) appeared for it. He, too, was a Catholic. That group of Catholics represented by Bishop O'Connell, called it the "Youth Control Act" and he raged. At that time Illinois had a most liberal

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Archbishop by the name of Mundelein. He was socially minded. And Monsignor Ryan who was in the Catholic Welfare Council, stationed in Washington, was another great liberal. Both of them declared, "Bishop O'Connell is not speaking for the Catholics of America. He's speaking for himself." The amendment was defeated in Massachusetts. Illinois ratified it with the help and influence of Mundelein. In New York, Al Smith, who was a Catholic and a liberal came out for it, but it was not passed in New York. I don't know if they ever got it passed there. It's been going the rounds. That's the 20th amendment to the constitution. Other opposition that developed was from certain farm organizations. The amendment would give power to Congress to pass a law regulating and limiting the work of children up to 18 years old. At that time there had developed large farms owned by absentee landlords, where children were exploited. In Illinois boys of sixteen could work in coal-mines a hazardous occupation. That was the reason for the limitation to youngsters of the age of 18. Of course it was charged that the amendment originated in Russia, although Russia at that time didn't have a child labor law herself.

I. Who brought this up?

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- R. Oh, the opposition, of course. The Communist thing -- that was the classical procedure used to defeat any liberal legislation or liberal community activities, and it still prevails. The Soviet Union couldn't have much of a child labor law, because they didn't have schools enough to which to send the children. And then the opposition concentrated on Mrs. Kelley of the Consumer's League. They brought out the story that she was married to a Russian.

There was another organization, the National Child Labor Committee, which had always worked for child labor legislation. Finally, we had to set Mr. Owen, who had been head of the National Child Labor Committee for twenty years and had come to Chicago to speak, and he made a very fine analysis, answered every argument. Then in the question period a man got up and said, "How about this Mrs. Kelley's husband? Wasn't he a Russian?" After the painstaking speech that Owen made and answered the questions, he pointed out how many irrelevant things had been brought in. He said, "This is typical of the irrelevancies brought into the discussion. Now for the sake of this gentleman's question I'll answer that. Mrs. Kelley's husband, from whom she was divorced 25 years ago, was a Pole." "Now," he said, "I suppose if Mrs. Kelley's husband twenty five years ago was a Russian the amendment is no good, but if he happened to be a Pole, it's all right."

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I spoke in some town in Indiana, a farming community where the farmers had been made to believe that if the amendment passed, (they couldn't get into their heads that it was not a law, it was an enabling act) that it would mean that farmers couldn't make a daughter under 18 milk the cows or the son under 18 do the chores on the farm. It had the farmers all worked up and I remember at time in this rural Indiana community, after I got through speaking, an embattled farmer arose just livid, "I'd like to ask the lady a question." I said, "Very well." "Where was you born?" I knew what he expected, so I played with him a little while. I said, "Now that typical of the irrelevancies that have been introduced in this campaign. What difference does it make to an exploited child where I was born?" I kept playing with him and showing its irrelevancy. Finally, I said, "I'd just as soon tell the gentleman where I was born. I was born in Chicago." And he simply collapsed. He just couldn't come back.

Then we actually had to get Miss Jane Addams in the campaign. A meeting was arranged in one of the buildings at the University of Chicago and many students had come. Miss Addams explained the law and the exploitation of children and made a very good speech. Then in the question period a Mr. Taylor arose; he was the lobbyist of the

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Illinois Manufacturers Association and Agnes Nestor, President of the Chicago League, often encountered him in the Illinois legislature when we were lobbying. Taylor said, "Now, Miss Addams, since we have such a good child labor law in Illinois, why do we have to have a federal law in Illinois? And went on and you could see that his argument impressed the audience as logical. Miss Addams, as you know, was a Quaker and a pacifist, and people always misunderstand pacifists. They think they are meek pious people when they are real fighters, only they don't believe in violence. She fixed Mr. Taylor with her eye and said, "Mr. Taylor's tender solidarity for a state labor law wouldn't leave us so cold if we didn't remember his efforts over the years to prevent Illinois from passing a child labor law." He just went to pieces and the students howled. Of course, conditions for children have improved everywhere since than.

Then the League offered courses, night courses, to their members.

- I. You mean the Women's Trade Union League?
- R. That's right. I was very active in that, and we had a joint committee of the Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, and the Chicago Federation of Labor. That was v&y handy, because we could announce the classes at the meetings of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Federation met the expenses in printing. We usually held the classes in the had quarters of the Women's Trade Union League. The courses that were popular were English, Parliamentary Law, Public Speaking, and Trade

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Unionism. For many years I taught English and Public Speaking in the Chicago Labor College. One time we had a marvelous woman who was a wonderful parliamentary and that course was very popular. Then the students wanted a course in Economics and we got Paul Douglas to teach it. This went on for several years. When Mr. Bogan was Superintendent of School, he was very friendly and he liked to feel the public schools could do everything. He said, "Lilian, what do you give in the night school in your trade union, classes that we couldn't give in the public school because I'd like to do it." I said, "Well, in the first place, as you know, Mr. Bogan, the clam load is limited in the public night school; it must have 15 students, and the League will give a class if there may be three or four, . And the amount we could give to the teacher was very little." I often tease Paul Douglas about the low wage he accepted; we gave him three and a half dollars a night. Subsequently Paul Douglas became U.S. Senator from Illinois.

I. Three dollars for one class?

R. Yes, and many of the teachers who became members of the Federation of Women High School Teachers, which by that time were affiliated with Labor, took the courses under him in the Women's Trade Union League. We used to say, "Paul, you organized the Federation of Women High School Teachers." Well, we did that for many years. In strike situations, the League was very helpful. I remember when we had the

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big waitresses strike in Chicago at Henrici's Randolph Street. Henrici's now at the O'hare airport. Ellen Gates Starr, who was closely associated with Miss Adams in Ball House and came there almost the same time that Hiss Addam did, was picketing as a member of the League in that strike. One day she was walking with the pickets on Randolph Street, and a policeman got hold of her, was going to arrest her. And as she was walking along, whom does she meet but Mary Anderson? Mary Andersen was a Swedish immigrant. She was a boot and shoe worker who had come to America when she was about sixteen. We had helped to organize the boot and shoe workers and Mary Anderson was a member of the League. She was walking down Randolph Street, and she was just horrified when she was a great big policeman holding Ellen Gates Starr by the wrist. She said, "Miss Starr, what are you doing there?" "I am exercising my rights as a free-born American citizen," Miss Starr replied. It was really very funny. And there were several times when we had to deal with very intransigent employers who would not confer with labor people. But an ally like Mary Walker Field, because of her status (as I said her husband was a professor at the University of Chicago and her father was a prominent, highly respected Judge) could get us an entree. The League, through the prominence of its allies, helped many a men's union.

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I. Can you give me some examples?

R. I don't remember, but I can remember that they helped in that way. And I remember at that time, Rabbi Hersh of Sinai Temple was very much interested and Father Seidenberg of Loyola. Because of their positions in the community they could often get a hearing for a Labor group.

I. What was Seidenberg's connection with Loyola?

R. He was dear. He built the School of Commerce of Loyola. He did a marvelous job. He was a very remarkable person. He was Swiss, and a convert. Very often there would be an intransigent employer, who happened to be a Catholic, and Seidenberg would be called in. The man wouldn't talk to the working man or to labor. And Seidenberg would say, "Now, son, where did you get that idea that you can't talk to anybody?" And Rabbi Hersh rendered a similar function. Seidenberg was so tactful that he was on the board of the Chicago Public Library, a very difficult place for a Catholic, because of the Catholic Index with its list of forbidden books. But he functioned so fairly between the Catholics demands and the demands of a democracy that he always was greatly admired. He did it very well. And I remember, too, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; that was Miss Addam's favorite organization, you know. That was a peace

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organization.

- I. They did work with these trade unions?
- R. No, no, this was a different organisation, but they always meshed in, bumped into each other.

- I. They had overlapping memberships?
- R. Well, yes, you see, if you belong to one "do-good" organisation, you'll always meet the other do-gooders. The Womens International had a convention in Mexico, and I went to that convention, and Father Seidenberg also went.

- I. This is the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom?
- R. That's right.

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At that time there had been a revolution in Mexico, and a big revolt against the church. And the revolutionary government that was in power had passed a law that no priest or nun could appear on the streets of Mexico in their clerical dress. It was a very interesting time. I remember that we had a conference on labor, and Father Seidenberg; was the main speaker, and I introduced him. The Bishop of Mexico, who was the chairman of the meeting, said he could make a good speech like Seidenberg, too, if he had such a charming person to introduce him.

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This period was very trying, as many of the members of the American Federation were Catholics, and pressure was brought to bear that the A.F. of L. interfere, but the pressure was resisted.

- I. Going back to the Women's Trade Union League, where their classes only for women?
- R. Oh, no, for both, probably more men than women. You always found a group that pathetically, was eager for education. It was all very sad, because a lot of these people would go to night school. But who were the teachers? They were tired teachers trying to add to their inadequate salaries teaching tired workers. They never corrected their papers. You could tell, when I got them -- such spelling that you never heard of. They spelled phonetically, the way they talked, but how did that escape the teacher? It escaped them because they never read them. In addition to these night classes there was the activity of the National Women's Trade Union League, which inaugurated in a modest way, the first Resident School for Workers.

At this time, there were several activities arranged to give workers, (many of them had gone to work at the age of 12, many were immigrants) opportunities to study. There were the night school classes conducted

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by the public schools and taught by public school teachers who needed the money to eke out their inadequate salaries. Then private schools were developed, which tried to improve on the public night schools. They charged tuition. Some of them were quite good, and the more ambitious workers enrolled in them.

I myself at this time had been a teacher in the public high schools of Chicago for many years.

The union people interested in education for their members insisted on the distinction between what was usually called Adult Education and Workers Education, which they felt would concentrate on the needs of workers in our highly industrialized society.

The National Women's Trade Union League, which was still situated in Chicago, would recruit about four working women and bring them to Chicago, at first almost for a year, then for six months, for very carefully planned courses. I remember Agnes Burns, who was the symbol of the exploited, daughter of an Illinois miner, was one of our students. We made arrangements with Professor Millie or Professor Douglas to have these girls in their classes. Of course it was very hard for them; it was a regular college class in labor problems or trade unionism, but we had a tutor to help them. Our wealthy allies

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were very generous in providing the necessary funds. One year when I was teaching at Crane College, I said, "why couldn't they take English in my classes; then I would give them the extra help. The burden would be on me, and it would be easier on them!" They were in my class. That was probably against the Illinois tax law to take non-Chicago citizens and put them in a public school, but I never learned that until many years afterwards.

I. Nobody ever told on you?

R. No. The National Women's Trade Union League did that for several years. One of our trainees was Fannia Cohn, who subsequently became, and was for many years) Educational Director of the International Ladies Garment Workers. The local leagues had their own classes as we did. We were the center for any trade union group that wanted a meeting, and were available for any services a union needed. The New York league under the presidency of Rose Schneiderman did a much more stunning job than we did in Chicago. They bought a house, and they used to serve lunches for working people. They had many activities. Mrs. Roosevelt was very much interested in the New York league and she was a great friend of Rose Schneiderman's. Mrs. Roosevelt brought in a great many allies. But the one thing about Rose, she was very active.

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I. Agnes Nestor was not personally active?

R. Not as creative. As a matter of fact, Rose had a harder situation to work with, because at that time the president of the central body of New York was such an old crook of something that the League couldn't have anything to do with it. Here, we had John Fitzpatrick, the most militant, honest labor leader in America, so it would have been easier to carry on activities. Eventually the National League moved its headquarters to New York and Elizabeth Christman, the very able secretary, she and Agnes; they had both been glove workers in Chicago. That was the time when the worker paid for their needles if they broke. Elisabeth was a very competent person, very modest; she went to Washington, and did very effective work. She would raise the money for the national budget. And you should see the letters she would write; they were marvelous. Neither Agnes Hector nor Mary Anderson were as eager to learn as Elisabeth was. I remember when she was one of the important people in the country, she'd say to me, "'Lillian, sit down and explain to me the use of will and shall.'" That's how eager she was to learn. I remember one time when I was on the west coast, there was a woman teaching in the University of Washington, and also her husband. He was in history, and she was in economics. They had no children, but they were very much interested in labor. She went

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to the IWW trial on the west coast; her chief told her that she'd be fired but she went anyhow. She was very interesting, very stimulating, and very interested in labor and in young people. I visited her once, during the war. She and her husband lived on Mercer Island. You know, Seattle is surrounded by islands. She was telling me about a letter she got from Elisabeth Christman recently, about funds or something, and she said to me, "I just wonder, I'm no intellectual snob, but I just wonder if a person who had not had college training could have written a letter like this." "Well," I said, "as a matter of fact, Miss Christman didn't even have high-school training. She went to work when she was twelve years old." Oh, she's a wonderful person. She's still living.

- I. Where is she, in New York?
- R. No, no, in Washington. The headquarters moved to Washington. During the lean years, she would take a leave of absence from the League so they wouldn't have to pay her salary. She worked in a war industry for a while, and then the big fight with the C.I.O. came. The C.I.O. was organized and the glove workers, of which she was secretary, and of which Agnes Nestor was a member, considered joining the C.I.O. By that time Agnes had gotten very conservative. They voted on whether they should join the C.I.O. or not. They voted by a big majority to

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join the C.I.O., and they became part of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

It was some time before that, that there were two attempts started at resident schools, where the workers would actually live and study without working during the day. One was the Bryn Mawr School for Women Workers in Industry, and the other was Brookwood, at Kotonah, Hew York. Bryn Mawr was the brainchild on M. Carry Thomas. M. Carry Thomas was one of those feminists who wanted to So to college, like Alice Hamilton. M. Carry Thomas and a friend got into some men's college in Baltimore. She was a Quaker. A curtain was put between them and the men. Later she went to Germany and got her doctor's degree . Her field was English Literature. When she came back to America she was one of the original founders of the Bryn Mawr College, one of the finest colleges for women. First she was dean, and then she was president. She was very creative. Bryn Mawr college was limited to about 400 girls, but among that 400, they would have at least 75 from European countries. She would bring them over. At the end of her career, after the experience of the war, she decided that the roots of war were economic, although her specialty had been English. She decided that the trade union movement would be an effective instrument against war. She conceived the idea of having a summer school

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for women workers at Bryn Mawr. She was a strong Feminist and wanted to give the opportunity to working women. I'll never forget our first meeting at Hull House. She wrote to us of the local league to gather a group of working women there. They were all trade unionists. Miss Thomas told of the plan. In the question period Hilda Shapiro, a member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, said to her, "Do you think that we working women would fall for a fake like you're talking about? We know all about the welfare plans of employers. The game is to break up the unions. I'm onto your game That's an old one," she said. Well, Miss Thomas took the attack with dignity and understanding. She said, "I don't blame you for being suspicious. My class certainly has not been fair to you working people and has tried many schemes to subvert trade unionism. So I don't blame you for your suspicion. All I can give you is my own word that this is a sincere effort as I have described it." Well, subsequently, Hilda Shapiro was in the first class. I came to Bryn Mawr as a teacher in the third summer of its existence. There was formed an administrative committee of the project which met once a year which consisted of representatives of Bryn Mawr College and also of the trade union movement. Subsequently I became a member of the administrative committee as a Labor representative and later taught the third summer. At first there were enrolled one hundred women from the whole country -- from Seattle to New York. They were all

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working women, and they had to be women who worked with the tools of their trade! Nobody in a supervisory capacity was admitted. And that was good.

- I. Now did the women set time off from work?
- R. Well, we got scholarships for them, and in some instances we even paid their wages. Those were the days when our allies were very affluent. A scholarship amounted to two hundred dollars. I was on the committee in Chicago and I'll never forget this ally on t&e North Shore. She was a Bryn Mawr graduate herself; she was very much interested. "How many do you think we should send from Chicago, Miss Herstein?" she said. "Five", I said. "All right, I'll get you five times two hundred dollars," she said. That was before the depression.

I taught in the third summer, and I remember I said that was the best teaching I ever did. I had what were called the "language handicaps," the immigrants. I taught that time the way I never have been able to teach since. I had an interview with every girl. I'd get her to talking and I'd say, "Now, that's something you should write about," -- their first day at Ellis Island or the first accident that the girl witnessed. They were getting ready to leave, this girl was brushing the lint from her dress and her fingers caught in the machine. I said, "Well, you must write about that." There was no protective machinery. At the end of the summer, when we selected the material, I think we called

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that magazine, The Script (most of the material came from the "language handicaps" because they wrote so well). At first, a lot of the women from the Women's Trade Union League, I mean the presidents and officials, everybody except Rose Schneiderman, sort of resented the intrusion of the residents classes. "Here we've been doing worker's education all these years and they came in, both Bryn Mawr and Brookwood." I'll tell you about Brookwood later. But Rose Schneiderman, president of the most successful league, and that was the New York one, said, "Times have changed. If these people can do the job better than we, let them do it." She supported the residents schools and she was on the board. There were some very interesting developments, and of course, the Philadelphia newspapers, (Bryn Mawr is near Philadelphia) saw the school as a Communist revolution. We had a time! We would be written up in the newspapers and some of the Bryn Mawr alumni were alarmed. We had some very hard times with publicity. Of course, you always found somebody in the papers that were friendly. The head of the Bryn Mawr School for Women Workers was Hilda Worthington Smith. You know the Worthington pump that earned so much money during the war? Those were her relatives. She had been the Dean of Girls or in the English Department or something at the regular Bryn Mawr college.

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She's very plain looking -- her hair was stuck back. When she came to college as a freshman, a lot of the other girls would say, "Well what do you think of that girl? Who's that Jane? We ought to call her Jane." And they nicknamed her Jane, so it's always very hard -- Jane Smith or Hilda. She could write well; she has written several good poems -- she was indefatigable. Then we had students from other colleges, volunteers from Vassar, from Mount Holyoke, those eastern colleges. Those kids were great. They helped us to tutor the girls. They did everything under t&e sun. Each group was there only for four weeks, and oh, when they'd leave, there'd be the greatest outpouring of tears! The working girls adored them, 'they were so genuinely democratic, so genuinely helpful! It was a great experience in their lives; it's the thing that kids want nowadays. It was a very full faculty, you see, faculty members, tutors. I remember Hazel Kyrk who was a professor in the graduate school at the University of Chicago. She was a great authority on the Consumer, and she was one of the tutors. When I came, I came as a tutor, but immediately they made me an instructor. Josephine Colby and I were t&e first union teachers that were engaged. Both of us taught English, different groups. It was a very heartwarming experience.

- I. What finally became of it? Did the depression kill it?

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R. Well, it operated a certain number of years. Then after I had taught there, I was elected on the joint administrative board, and we met once a year at Bryn Mawr to determine the policy of the school. It was very interesting. One year the big argument was on admitting waitresses. The working girls felt, many of them, that the waitresses were immoral.

I. Oh?

R. They made dates with men whom they waited on and so on. You always got the split between the radicals from New York and Chicago, the Jewish girls who worked in the clothing industries, and the more conservative Southern girls. And I remember when they were discussing this thing. We finally discussed it on the board, and when we did, one of the radical working girls from New York said, "If they're immoral, it's because of the conditions under which they work. If they got wages instead of tips and didn't have to smile at every man that they waited on, they wouldn't be tempted. We should not keep them out of this school! What we should do is to change their conditions of work." That was a very good argument. So that was one hot argument.

I. How did it come out? Did they take the waitresses?

R. Oh, they took them in. But the hot fight was the admission of Negroes.

I. I can imagine.

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R. That was hard. We discussed it. I was teaching then at Bryn Mawr and I remember when we had the discussion at the school, by the whole student body. I remember Katharine with the lovely red hair. She was from the south, she was lovely. There were two things that happened at that session. One was the speech on child labor that was made by a southern girl. She got up and told about when the child labor law was operative, before it was declared unconstitutional, how she went to work and she came back, and it was still daylight. She was only fourteen years old and there were her dolls, and there was time to play with her dolls. And then one time they were told that the law was unconstitutional, no longer operative. And she said, "After that, there was no time to play with my dolls." It was a touching speech. Subsequently, I made her make it before the North Carolina legislature.

I. Oh, really?

R. Yes, she told me she was afraid. Oh, I said, "Darling, you would go back on everything I've taught you if you didn't!" She made it and impressed the legislators greatly. The other girl was a lovely girl, a southern girl, too. And this was the time when the discussion was on the admission of Negroes. And she said she herself, had no prejudice, but when it was announced in her small town that two of their girls were going up to Bryn Mawr to study in a worker's school, they

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prayed in the churches for them.

I. Really?

R. Oh, yes. They thought it was terrible. "But we have come, and we've done well, and we've been accepted. But if they learned that the school admits Negroes, no other girl from that community would be sent." And she had a point. And I remember when she got up, she said, "Miss Herstein, I hope you won't be disappointed in your pupil." I said, "Katharine, the only time I'd be disappointed in you would be if you didn't say what you really felt." She made a very convincing speech. And I could see her point. She said, "We've just started this thing." It's like the Inter-Church World Movement and the steel strike that I told you about. The students voted to admit Negroes. And when they came, everybody held their breath as to what would happen. Well, the strange thing that happened was this: the students were always having buzz sessions in their rooms. Amy Howes, who taught in the first year, was a professor of Economics at Mount Holyoke, and she said, "We may not have learned much that year, but, God, we learned about the world and those working girls established a democratic working procedure."

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Oh, I forgot to tell you about that first year. I wasn't there that year but the girls said to the maids, "How many hours do you work?" Well, they worked ten hours a day. "We think that's terrible. We've got an eight hour day. You shouldn't work more than that." So they brought in a recommendation that the hours of the maids must be lowered. It was pointed out to them that the budget was made out on their working ten hours, that they couldn't afford to change. They said, "All right, let's go through the work they do. And we'll do the extra two hours work so the maids need work only eight hours."

- I. That's amazing! And that's what they did?
- R. That's what they did. And they'd argue to the small hours of the night. And whether they learned anything the next day, I don't know, but it was a thriller. Well, to go back to when the Negro girls came, and everybody was holding their breath, the students were having these buzz sessions. Well, it was the Negro girls that proved to be the liason between the radical girls from New York and Chicago, and the southern girls.
- I. They could talk to both groups?

R. Yes. There was always a conflict. If it was a movement to stop tipping, the northern girls were for it. The southern girls -- well, what could you do? They were more conservative on everything, you see. So these Negro girls would go to one buzz session after another. And they'd go to the white girls from the south and they said, "Look, you must realize the background of these Jewish girls, the things they suffered in Europe. And therefore they have a passion for social justice that we don't have. We've suffered, too, but not as much as they. And then they went to work in America and they worked in sweat shops, and they had terrible conditions, and they had to fight for the things they have." Then these Negroes would go to the the radical bunch, and say to them, "Now, you've got to picture a southern town where the center of the town is the church, where even the YMCA is controlled by the employer, where there are company schools." (I'll never forget when I first heard of company schools, I thought I'd die. They were actual.) And they interpreted each group to the other. That was a very interesting developmeat.

I. Yes, unexpected, too?

R. Yes, unexpected. They became the liason.

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R. The significant thing about these resident schools was that for the first time workers were able to give their whole attention to study. They didn't come after working hours, tired, and taught by tired teachers. In fact, I remember when I would read the themes of these girls from New York and Chicago who year after year had gone to public night schools, I was horrified at the spelling and all that. How did it happen, when they went year after year to night school? Their papers were never read or corrected! You couldn't expect it of the tired teachers. The resident schools gave them the leisure to study the way other people do. But Brookwood was an entirely different setup. That was a very much labor-oriented school. At first it started out with the idea of a two year school, and then reduced to a year and then to 8 months. It was near New York City. It was at Kotonah, New York.

I. Did it start after the Bryn Mawr school?

R. About the same time but it was definitely labor oriented, and the board members were labor people.

I. Did the women's groups have anything to do with this or was this mainly run by men?

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R. No, this wasn't run by the women, it was an entirely different set up. We were all interested. A.J. Muste was the head, who later became the great pacifist and just died a few years ago. They did work, they lived there, you see; they did part of the work. And it was very labor oriented. And of course, it was condemned as being Communist. John Fitzpatrick, of the Chicago Federation of Labor, was on the Brookwood board. And one day Watt Wohl, who was vice-president of the American Federation of Labor (He was photo-engravers union and was angling for the presidency if and when Gompers would die) charged that the Brookwood school was communist. Bill Foster used to describe him as carrying his rubbers for Gompers. He studied law and he was very conservative. Somebody said he was the only Republican in the American labor movement, and he issued a blast saying that the Brookwood School was communist. It got in all the papers. Fitzpatrick was furious, just furious, and he wrote William Green a letter. Green was president by that time. He said, "Bill, if you were on the board of any institution and that institution was condemned, what would you think of anyone in the labor movement who didn't investigate, who didn't reserve his judgment first?" He scorned Matt Wohl. He wouldn't even talk to Matt Wohl. He got off the board then, and they had a lot of difficulties because, you see, it was in the wake of the Russian Revolution.

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- I. I was going to ask you, is that when all of this communist label became attached to everything?
- R. Yes. The communists had a group in some of the unions. Communist infiltration wrecked the International Ladies Garment Workers because among their members were people who had relatives in Russia. Also, the Russian Revolution was hailed by all liberals and by President Woodrow Wilson as the great liberating force in Russia. Nobody knew it would turn out as it has. There would be a union meeting and some guy would try to bring in a resolution approving of Soviet foreign policy. It's the same thing that wrecked the New York locals of teachers. They'd tell what a wonderful thing the Soviet Union was. Another member would get up and say, "It's very wonderful; if I didn't send my sister packages, she and her family would starve!" And the fight was on. The point was, instead of attending to the problems of the union they were fighting this out, so the International went way down in members. The same kind of a fight occurred in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, but they had Sidney Hillman as president, who was a statesman, and they all dealt with the Soviet Union, the Amalgamated Bank and so on. But unfortunately for the International Ladies Garment Workers, their distinguished president died. Another president was elected and he died and they had not that continuity until David Dubinsky was elected president. He built the union from scratch

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then again. It had been a very fine union, but he became very bitterly anti-communist and drove the Communists out of the union. He took as an advisor that awful J. Lovestone, who had been a communist and belonged not to the Trotsky faction, but to another. But you know when they turn -- he was a very bad advisor. Lovestone has been a very bad influence. Many a fine trade unionist did not get a visa to go abroad, or an important appointment, because of Lovestone's opposition, which is still of some influence in the International Union.

Well, Brookwood was in operation for several years and so was Bryn Mawr. Then Hilda Smith, whose family had a home on the Hudson River, I forgot the name of the town, started a school there. The Bryn Mawr one was given up. I don't know how much opposition they had from alumni; it went through various stages. Hilda Smith is still working at a job in Washington. It must be remembered that both resident schools were in operation when the Russian Revolution was the great international event and that it was reflected in the schools, where great and bitter conflicts arose among the students.

- I. Hilda Smith is still there?
- R. Yes, a government job ; everybody always sets Hilda a job. She 's written some very good poetry. Then the unions began to develop their own educational programs and many of the unions had very good educational programs, very good. I remember when the educational department of the Auto Workers Union had a convention in Chicago

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and Walter Reuther was there, of course. It was in our new opera house. That's the meeting at which Bishop Sheil made the charge against McCarthy. Now, McCarthy was shooting his gab off for all he was worth, and the Protestant clergy, many of them, had the guts to condemn him. They were needling the Catholics. You know McCarthy had a following in Boston. One time Joe Keenan told me, (He's an official, you know, of the Electrical Workers Union.), he had organized a meeting; in Boston, and right across Father Coughlin, that crazy extremist who was condemning everybody, was having a meeting. There were more people there than at his meeting.

I. Of trade unionists?

R. Oh, yes. And they sold Father Coughlin's Social Justice on the steps of the Catholic church in Brooklyn. Now the teachers, when I'd met them from New York at an AFT convention, couldn't believe that on the steps of no Catholic church in Chicago was Social Justice sold. You see, we had Mundelein. And it was at that educational meeting that Bishop Sheil spoke. He was a wonderful person. He was marvelous. He organized the Catholic Youth Organization. And at that meeting

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he got up and denounced McCarthy as a phony. He was the first top Catholic clergyman that came out against McCarthy and he paid the price for it. They jumped all over him. Well, the Auto-Workers unions educational program became very big and very good. There was a fellow by the name of Brendon Sexton, who was t&e head of the educational department of the union. The Teamsters in St. Louis had a good educational program. So you see, this movement of workers education spread from these humble beginnings to where the unions have taken them over and have done them very well. And if you have a liberal president of a union, he favors it. If not, he lets it go.

Oral History Project

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- I. Hiss Herstein, today you promised you'd give me some of your recollections of the A.F. of L. convention. What about the 1936 convention?
- R. That was a very important convention because it was shortly before that, that a group of leaders of the A.F. of L. had been urging for some time the organization of industrial unions, especially in the area of rubber workers and automobile workers. It was obvious that the craft organizations did not meet the needs of these mass production industries. A committee was organized which was headed by John L. Lewis, who incidentally was head of an industrial union for years, which was the United Mineworkers. Also on the committee were David Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers, Sidney Hillman, of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and Harvey Brown of the Machinists. They organized the Committee on Industrial Organization, the avowed purpose of which was to help organize unions on industrial lines and bring them into the American Federation of Labor. The avowed purpose was not a separate organization. The American Federation of Labor officialdom got very angry about that, and so it was decided that at the 1936 convention the question would be taken up as to what to do about this Committee. John L. Lewis didn't come to that convention, but in the debate proposing the expulsion of that committee the chief speaker was Matthew Wohl, first vice-president

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of the A.F. of L.

I. He was always rather conservative compared to the others, wasn't he?

R. Oh, yes. In fact, when Eisenhower ran for president many years later the only labor leader he could think of was Matthew Wohl. He was very conservative. He was ambitious to become president. Some of the more liberal labor leaders used to talk about his carrying the overcoat and rubbers for Samuel Gompers.

I. Did he really do that?

R. Well, that's what they used to say. He was a member of the photo-engravers union whose members were highly skilled. But it was a very small union and it's very hard to become president of the A.F. of L. when your backing is such a small union. He led the debate against the Committee on Industrial Organization and for its expulsion from the A. F. of L. I'll never forget the chill that went over some of us when he told about what the A.F. of L. had done for these various unions that were now OR the Committee of Industrial Organization and then added, "The Jewish unions, for whom we did so much," meaning the International Ladies Garment Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Then he went on with the speech. The speech against expulsion was made by Max Zaritsky, head of the

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Cap-Maker's Union, and he made an excellent speech pointing out the merits of industrial Organization for the mass production industries. Towards the end of the speech he said, "And did the executive council have to So out of its way to drag in the Jewish question?" He criticized them with great dignity. Immediately there was flurrying on the platform where all the officers sat, jumping up to disavow any idea of anti-Semitism, that they really meant the needle trades, they meant to say the clothing workers union not the "Jewish" unions. There was a flurry of disavowals. Then the vote came on expulsion.

In the August preceding this A.F. of L. convention in Tampa, the national convention of the American Federation of Teachers had been held. It was at that convention that I was a candidate for president, and was defeated, largely through the efforts of the Communists. That was an interesting; story. At first they thought they could handle me. Several workshops had been arranged and they had their "lieutenants" in the workshops, and whatever the discussion was, when I took part in it, they sensed that I wouldn't be anybody that they could manipulate. The candidate that was running for re-election was Jerome Davis of the Divinity School of Yale University, who Was a very fine man and was not a Communist. But they thought they could use him, so they favored him. The vote was relatively close, and he

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was re-elected. Everybody thought how game I was because I got up and said, "We've had an election in the best tradition of the American Federation of Teachers, very democratic, and everybody had a chance to vote, and now we have the results. The thing we should do is to unite our efforts in the interests of the teachers." Everybody thought I was awfully game. It was the hour after I had been defeated. I said, "Let's not be like the story of a recent convention in Chicago. I think it was the time that Teddy Roosevelt ran for nomination on the Republican ticket, one of the reporters said that at the beginning of the convention the "delegates bowed their heads in prayer and sharpened their spikes." And I suggested that we should not sharpen our spikes, but work together in the interests of the organization. That was in August just before this convention of the A.F. of L. mentioned before.

I went to the Tampa convention of the A.F. of L. mentioned above. I did not go as a delegate, but because my close friend Holly Levitas was elected a delegate from her union, the office workers, and was going. I decided to attend as an observer. The whole atmosphere was charged with accusations against Commies and so on. Mollie and I came to the A.F. of L. convention at Tampa. Jerome Davis, who was the recently re-elected president of the A.F. of T. and had never attended an A.F. of L. convention, came over to me and he said, "Lillian, I'll need your help. I have never

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attended an A.F. of L. Convention and you know all these people." I said, "Well, Jerome, I certainly will help you as much as I can."

The hot issue was a roll call vote on what to do with the Committee on Industrial Organization. At our convention of the American Federation of Teachers in August, we knew this was going to come up. We had voted that we would vote against the expulsion of the C.I.O. It would be a roll call vote. I said, "Well, Jerome, all you have to do when the roll call comes, to carry out your mandate from the American Federation of Teachers, is to say, 'No.'" Oh no, he was going to lecture those reactionary labor leaders. I told him strongly, "You only have to vote no on expulsion. That's all you have to do." I went over to Philip Randolph of the Sleeping Car Porters. Industrial organization was the savior of the Negroes. It was in that kind of organization that they could come in to the labor movement. I went over to Randolph, and I said, "Look, Philip," -- I had helped him organize the Sleeping Car Porters -- I said, "I wonder if I'm getting yellow." And he said, "Well, I wonder if you are! It would be a great surprise." And I told him what I had advised Jerome Davis, who was persisting in not only voting against the expulsion resolution but in talking. He said, "Well, he doesn't need to do that. We're going to vote no, that's all we have to do." It was a very hot issue, and

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it was very hard for a little union like the American Federation of Teachers or the Brotherhood of Sleeping-Car Porters to get up there and orate. The other unions that were stronger could do that. Then the roll call vote came -- this was after Zaritsky's speech. Of course, Brotherhood comes early in the alphabet, and the secretary of the A.F. of L. read "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters". Randolph rose, and with his deep voice, voted "No" which took courage. But our man, Jerome Davis, went up there and gave those A.F. of L. leaders a speech, He had never been to an A.F. of L. convention; his speech was resented. He got himself in wrong and our union. Incidentally, every A.F. of L. convention he attended after that, he'd get up and lecture the labor leaders on what they should do. And my friends who were all for the C.I.O., and were still in the A.F. of L., said, "What's the matter with that president of yours? Why does he feel he has to lecture those A.F. of L. leaders?" Well, now, that was the convention of the A.F. of L. in November 1936, I think it was. I attended because I wanted to go with my friend, Molly Levitas, who was a delegate from the Office Employee's Union, which she and John Fitzpatrick, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, had organized. That had been infiltrated by Communists and she voted according to what her union had instructed her to do. It was a very interesting convention and she voted against the expulsion resolution.

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The resolution of expulsion passed! It made the news. When the C.I.O. committee had been organized, they said their avowed purpose was to organize the unorganized, and bring them into the A.F. of L. But you know John L. Lewis was like a bull in a china closet. I remember that he went up to Madison, Wisconsin. The two officers of the state A.F. of L. of Wisconsin were avowed Socialists, very fine and very liberal people, and would be very favorable to industrial organization. But John L. Lewis barged in there and was wrecking the unions by the way he was organizing, and so when the American Federation of Teachers convention met in Madison in 1937, they were all furious at John L. Lewis and his C.I.O. tactics. Well, that was in the 1936 convention in Tampa, Florida. Now after that the A.F. of T. convention met in Madison, Wisconsin in August 1937.

I. Tell me about that.

R. That was the year that I was appointed a member of the American delegation to the I.L.O. in Geneva, Switzerland.

I. Go ahead and tell me about it.

R. It was a very interesting convention, and as you talked to labor people from around the world, the French and all, they were very sympathetic to the C.I.O., because the conservatism of the A.F. of L. had gotten

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on their nerves all these years.

I. How many Americans went?

R. In the American delegation there were twenty-two. At that time, the League of Nations headquarters were in Geneva. In fact, the I.L.O. was organized by the League of Nations. The I.L.O. was one of the two agencies that survived. Our meetings were in a big hall in Geneva. The items on the agenda were seven; the two very important ones were the 40 hour week in the textile industry and raising the age when children could go to work from 14 to 15. The one in the textile industry was very important, because the Premier in France then was Leon Blum and under him they had put in the 48 hour week which shocked the employers of France and Belgium. They were very conservative. That was a big issue. By that time, the American Textile unions had joined the C.I.O. which had become the Congress of Industrial Organizations and if you were going to get a representative from the textile industries it would have to be one from the C.I.O. The man who was appointed was Francis German of the Textile Workers, and I was appointed on child labor legislation. The I.L.O. was built on a tripartite principle with the government of each country having two representatives, so the weight of power was in the government. The leading employers organization, which at that time I think was the

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Chamber of Commerce, had one delegate, and the Labor Movement had one. That's four voting delegates. One representing the government was Grace Abbott, who was head of the Children's Bureau at one time, and the other was the assistant Secretary of Labor, whose name just escapes me. Those were the two government representatives of the United States. The worker delegate was Bob Watt of the Painter's Union of Massachusetts. For each item on the agenda, each delegate is permitted two "technical advisors". Obviously, it's the technical advisors that really do the work, because they're the experts in their particular-field. The employer delegate at that time was a man by the name of Harriman, not Averill Harriman, but I think he owned the elevated roads, or something in Boston, and obviously, he wouldn't know about textiles. Bob Watt was a painter. So they were each allowed two technical advisors for every item on the agendas. I was the technical advisor to Bob Watt on child labor legislation and Francis Gorman was his technical advisor on the 40 hour week in the textile industry, really the hottest issue in the conference. The whole conference meets in plenary session and we are seated in the French alphabetical order, so the United States is not under U but under "Etats Uni". There were the four voting delegates and in back of them their technical advisors, but that's only for a few plenary sessions. The technical advisors meet in their own group, and we met every single day. And the employers, they had their

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technical advisors, too, and they met every day. We met every day, thrashing out what we wanted and what we were supposed to do. Grace Abbott was marvelous. The liason person between the American delegation and the I.L.O. was a fellow at the University of Illinois, but he was advising Grace Abbott not to push this thing about the age.

I. Why?

R. Well, he thought we couldn't get it, and Grace Abbott said, "If we can't raise the age in ten years its too bad. We're going to stick to our resolution." Of course there was India, where children work at the age of eight. At that time, Great Britain was in t&e control of a reactionary government. When the voting came on the child labor amendment, the delegate from India got up and said, "Our children are working at the age of eight." He said that children in a hot climate like that mature early. We American delegates reminded him that that was the argument given to us in America when we tried to get child labor laws in the southern states. There was quite a hot argument about it. But, the Secretariat of the League of Nations was a group of experts who were in Geneva all the time, about 400 people, and they would give us all the material we needed. They had prepared mimeographed copies of the child labor laws and conditions in every country and put them at our disposal. They did a very fine job. Every night in our hotel rooms were copies of the agenda of the

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meeting for the next day, and also the proceedings of the day before. The program was very well organized. We had this hot debate about child labor in our committee, but we won in favor of raising the age when children could go to work from 14 to 15. When it came to the debate before the plenary session, Francis Gorman made the speech in favor of the 40 hour week in the textile industry which was on the agenda. But the best speech made for the 48 hour week in the textile industry was made by a representative of the textile industry, who pointed out to the delegates that we have learned in America that the way to create a market for your goods was to reduce the hours of work and not reduce the wages. My God! I can see the employer delegates, their eyes popping out! It was a very good speech, even better than Gorman's speech. And Blum was very popular. The employer's conference invited Blum to join them at the I.L.O., but before the conference was over, it lasted three weeks, Blum was voted out of power. So he didn't come. Then the technical advisors advised the voting delegates who were only four in number. And when the voting came before the plenary session for the child labor resolutions, Bob Watt came over to me and said, "I want you to cast the vote for the United States." He gave me that honor, and I got up and said, "Aye." At the conference, at every desk there was a dial telephone, and one could dial to whatever translation one wanted. As the speaker from Japan spoke, or from India, there were translators

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translating the speech. One would translate in English, one in French, one in German; and the delegates could dial to the translation they wanted to hear. The person who gave those dial telephones to the League of Nations was Edward Filene of Boston, a very liberal employer. He was the great advocate of the credit unions, also. He was a very socially minded man. As a gift to facilitate the discussions of the League of Nations, Mr. Filene gave those dial telephones. They tell of an American tourist peeping into a convention of the I.L.O. and seeing all these people with earphones. "Oh, " she said, "that's a convention of the deaf, isn't it?" Well, the 40 hour week and also the child labor resolutions carried. There were resolutions on governments turning to public works in times of great unemployment. There were seven items on the agenda.

- I. That one passed, too?
- R. Oh, yes, they all passed. That was in '37, and I came back from Geneva in August. The conference lasted three weeks, the first three weeks in June. Very hard work! By the way, one of the technical advisors on textiles was a man from New York, who had crossed the ocean about a hundred times in connection with his business. He could speak French and German and he enjoyed taking us worker delegates on Sundays on trips. He was a textile manufacturer, a technical advisor to the employer delegates.

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- I. Did you have time to do any sightseeing at all?
- R. We had Sunday off, and Mr. Menke the textile man I mentioned above was there, William Menke, and he brought his wife and he hired a car every Sunday. He would take us around and we saw Switzerland and it was particularly handy to have Mr. Menke, who could speak French and German fluently.

- I. Oh, that's lucky.
- R. He was very proud of the fact that he had established such friendly relations with those of us in the labor movement. He was an employer. In our group was Mary Hulbert, a grand-niece of Jane Addams; she was secretary of the American delegation. Bob Watt, who was the labor delegate, and Marion Hedges of the printing trades, who was a technical adviser" to Watt, also went places with us.

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He'd been to I.L.O. conferences before. He was very well informed; he represented a union. And so Mr. Menke was so proud of playing around with Wedges and me and Mary Hulbert, and he and Mrs. Menke would take us out in the car he rented, and wherever we went it was easy because he spoke French and German very well. Everybody who comes to Geneva wants to see Mount Blanc in Geneva, but sometimes

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it's covered by clouds, and they don't see it. We were driving one Sunday and pretty soon our driver said, "Stop." And he said, "Mon deiu, mon deiu, Mont Blanc!", and we all got out of the car and gazed in wonder and there was Mont Blanc in all her beauty. It was very lovely. Well, the conference was over after three weeks, and I decided that as long as my transportation was paid back and forth, it was economy to spend some time in Europe, on my own.

- I. That's what I wondered.
- R. I had met the teacher delegates of the Teachers' Union in Paris on my way to Geneva. Because it was the year of international conventions, and there was an international convention of teachers in Paris, they were quite determined that I come back after the I.L.O. conference and I agreed. The Czech delegation was there. It was a very sad group because somehow or other they had a sense of impending doom, which pretty soon descended on their nation. And by the way, the British reporter for a liberal paper said that Britain was deserted by all her dominions except India. Britain had voted conservative. It was the reactionary government of Chamberlain. They voted against the child labor amendment. It was a solemn time for the world, more solemn than we realized. I decided, since I'd never been to the Scandinavian countries, I would go. I went to Ireland, too. The American delegation had been in the same hotel as the Scandinavians

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and when I told them I wanted to go to Denmark, they immediately came in and gave me their cards and told me the people that I could meet. In fact, before I went to Geneva, (you get short notice you know) I received a letter from an editor of a labor paper in Oslo. Finn Moe, his name was. He had come to America to study the A.F.L.-C.I.O. fight with the feeling that the lethargic A.F.L. was not moving. When he got to America he was told that if he wanted to get a good idea of that aspect of the labor movement, he should get in touch with me, which he did. He called me up and I met him in Chicago, and by that time I knew I was going to go to Geneva. The notice was very short. We had a very fine interview. I told him everything, and he took out his card and said, "When you get to Oslo, be sure and get in touch with me." And he was very helpful when later I did get to Norway. I went to the Scandinavian countries and then came to Paris and attended the International Congress of Teachers, and addressed that convention. While we were there, the Minister of Foreign affairs entertained forty of the foreign delegates at the Qui D'Orsay and I was one of the forty. If you ever saw anything beautiful, it was that luncheon. There was the table, a long table, but wide, and alternately were low bouquets of flowers and then little statues. Nothing stood between you and the person across. It was exquisite in it's beauty. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, or his assistant,

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addressed us. Our response was given by a man by the name of Mander, from the Teachers Union in Great Britain. Before he gave his prepared speech, he said he had to pause first to pay his tribute to the sense of beauty of the French people as this room indicated. I sat between the Minister of Education of Czechoslovakia and the Minister of Education of Iceland; both of them talked French. We were all going to address the International Congress of Teachers; so I said, "I'll speak in English." And these two men were wondering what language they should use; they knew both French and German. It was a very beautiful affair. And as I said, I addressed the congress and then I came back to Paris. And after I was in Paris, I made up my mind I wanted to go to Ireland. I had promised I was going to come back in time for the A.F. T. convention in Madison, because we had just formed the one big union under John Fewkes, and this was to be an important convention, centering on the C.I.O. issue.

- I. Before you get to Madison, I want to ask you a couple of questions about the International Convention. Was this something unusual, or did the teachers regularly have international conventions?
- R. I don't know, they may have had, not every year, but quite often. The Secretary of the A.F.T. was there that year, but I was the one who addressed the convention.

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I. And what kind of issues did they raise? Did they operate in the same way as the I.L.O. convention?

R. Oh, no, it was purely educational. The discussion centered on educational problems.

I. A cultural exchange kind of thing?

R. That's right. Just like a medical convention would concentrate on medicine, we concentrated on educational problems.

I. Now, back to Madison.

R. I said, just before that, you know, we had been paid in tax anticipation warrants, not scrip. It was that bad time, and the teachers were ready for anything. We had an elementary teachers union, and a lot of the teachers didn't belong to anything. They always said if they had one union, they would join. One union was formed and many of them joined. Jack Fewkes marched around the street and he was very handsome, and these elementary school girls fell for him, and he was elected the president. But they knew nothing much about trade unions. I told them that although I could have stayed abroad till Labor Day, I was not going to do it. I was

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coming back in time for the A.F.T. convention because the Federation of Women High School Teachers that went into the unity movement were a much more liberal group and they were nervous about the unity and I was too.

- I. More liberal than the elementary teachers?
- R. Oh, yes, those who had been in Margaret Haley's group were very good but the others had never joined anything and there were many of them, every inexperienced. I got to Madison but I went to Ireland before I left Europe and I remember I went into the American Express and I said I wanted to go to Ireland. They said, "Lady, you can't. The horse show is on." Well, I said, I didn't care anything about the horse show. But I had met the Irish delegation at Geneva, and for the first time in the history of the I.L.O., it had elected a man from a small country as president, and that was Sean Lemass and he gave a wonderful party for the whole I.L.O. group, which the president usually does. I met the whole Irish delegation including a woman who was the inspector of all the factories of Ireland. She said, "Oh, you must come to Ireland." So when this fellow at American Express said, "We can't get you a ticket to Ireland, or a hotel, or anything," I said, "All right, I have a friend in Dublin, I think I'll telephone her." I was in Paris' and the fellow at American Express, of course, was a Frenchman, and said, "Oh these Americans." I called her, and

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she said, "I'll work on it." And within twenty four hours, I got a telegram from her saying that she had gotten a reservation for me in the Drummond Hotel in Dublin. From Paris I went to London, and I had a reservation in a hotel there. In the meantime, I had had correspondence with Jennie Lee whose husband was Aneuren Bevin. And she told me, "Just as soon as you get to London, call us up." It was on a Sunday, and I called her. Here were my bags all around me. "Oh, Lillian," she said, "Get out of London, it'll be a bank holiday, which is dreary. Now, you take such-and-such a train and get to this little town, a resort place, very modest, and stay with us over the weekend." Here is this dignified clerk in the hotel in London thinking I was slightly crazy. I said, "All right, give me something to eat, and I'll get a ticket and go there. Take care of my baggage while I am gone. I'll be back in three days." So he gave me something to eat and I went by train to visit Jennie and her husband. Aneuren was there, and Jennie, and they had a very humble place. I had entertained Jennie Lee in my home, too, and Jennie was laughing at my having to get accustomed to primitive plumbing. She had a lot of fun with me. She refers to it in the letter she wrote at my retirement -- on my pretty hat, that I looked exotic. I had a marvelous weekend with them and then I came back to London and went to Ireland.

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I met the Irish delegation that I had met at Geneva. Later I sailed home from what was called Cork. By that time Ireland had gone very Celtic. And in the little hotel that I stayed in Cork, whom do I run into but Preston Bradley. And let's see, there was something happened in Dublin. Oh, yes, when I was in Dublin the woman who was the inspector general of factories said, "If you want to see Dublin, travel on a native bus." I was in a group she had arranged that went in a circle tour from Dublin and back. It was a regular tour.

I. That must have been nice.

R. I remember when we got to Athlone the guide said, "This is the home of John McCormack", the great tenor, you remember? His parents were evicted from there by an absentee landlord. And I said, "'Another fact you must put in the book; this also is the birthplace of John Fitzpatrick, the distinguished president of the Chicago Federation of Labor." And we had this whole trip, but I couldn't go back with them to Dublin as I had to sail from Cork. The tour lasted about five or six days. And we all got very well acquainted, and we had parties. When we got to the place where I had to get off, they all got off. And they had confetti, and they all kissed me. And I got back on the native bus to get back to Cork, and

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there was a priest on the bus and he said, That was lovely, are you a bride?" And I said, "No". So the next morning, we had to get up at five o'clock to be sure to make the boat for the U.S.A.

- I. That's primitive, too.
- R. Yes, but that Irish landlady certainly got us a wonderful breakfast. There was a porter. There was no vehicle to take your baggage to the boat, and he carried it all the way to the boat. We were standing in line on the boat, and we had to show our passport, particularly the vaccination statement. That's required of all people entering the United States. As we were standing in line on the boat, the man in back of me said, 'That was a warm farewell you got in Cahier.' and I thought to myself, "Heavens! He saw all those people kissing me." I got back in time for the convention in Madison. When I got there, one of the hot resolutions was urging the American Federation of Teachers joining the C.I.O.

I. Oh.

R. Oh, my, yes.

I. Were you expecting this, or was this a surprise?

R. No, we were expecting it, it was in the air. But we were a big union

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by that time. I was on the resolutions committee, and Jerome Davis who was the president, who defeated me for president, presided. We had a very long and hot debate on it. I led the A.F.T. part of the debate which was the minority report of the Committee; the majority had voted for the A.F. of T. to join the C.I.O. This was all written up in a magazine. I presented a minority report against making any gestures going into the C.I.O., and I had very good reasons. I remember they all said that Lillian was a better parliamentarian than the chairman. When the question was up, I said, "Mr. Chairman, according to parliamentary procedure, the minority report precedes the majority report," and I gave the minority report and we lost.

- I. Tell me a little bit about the debate.
- R. You have that magazine article which discusses why we should not join the C.I.O. One of the most important considerations was that education in America was still largely a local matter, and the teacher's union got its support from the local federation of labor, not the national, as we did in Illinois. We had the unqualified support of the Illinois State Federation of Labor and the Chicago Federation of Labor. In fact, there was no local C.I.O. in Chicago. And even Sidney Hillman, one of the men who helped to form the C.I.O., was hoping against hope that some unions would stay in the A.F. of L.

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- I. To liberalize the A.F. of L.?
- R. Yes, and so, I pointed out that wherever we had a strong chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, it was in a community where there was a strong local A.F. of L. union, which supported us, and there was no C.I.O. union.
- I. So they would be t&e only C.I.O. group there?
- R. Well, you'd get no support. There'd be no one to support you. If you don't have a state C.I.O., how can they lobby in the legislature for you? And then, we published that in the magazine; one of these magazines has that. (I gave you a copy.)
- I. Yes. I think I have that magazine.
- R. Yes, that has it; and I showed it to William Green. Wow, there had been a rumor -- it was in the air, everybody talking about the American Federation of Teachers joining the C.I.O. And somebody had asked William Green what he would do with the American Federation of Teachers, if they split on this issue. He said he'd take those that stayed in the A.F. of L. and give the County, and Municipal Workers Union jurisdiction over them, which, of course, was a lot of nerve to decide our fate without consulting us. I don't know if he

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ever said it or not, but at any rate, after the convention, I was in Washington, and he saw the article I had written. He said to me, "Well, Lillian, it's a very good article, but I'm surprised with all you know of the busting habits of John L. Lewis, that you didn't mention him." Well, I said, I'll tell you, Mr. Green, John L. Lewis was never a favorite of mine, because he comes from Illinois and I knew what the Illinois miners thought of him." But I said, "I feel that I would never condemn any person who was leading a significant group of the American workers. That would be fodder for the employers." And the article never mentions Lewis. It was a very hot convention Madison. By that time, the Chicago Teacher's Union had employed Kermit Eby as their executive secretary, and John Fewker was the president. We had a caucus of the Chicago group after the convention. During the convention, an event occurred. Whenever the A.F. of T. had a convention, they never stayed in a hotel which wouldn't admit Negroes. The meeting of the council of the A.F. of T. often took place in Chicago. And they'd go to some crummy hotel because they would not go to one that didn't admit Negroes. Their record was very clear. Well, in Madison, we were at the Lorraine Hotel. Our

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Negro delegates were there and then, as usual, when a convention takes place people don't take all their meals in the hotel, they wander around. Well, a group had gone in for supper or lunch in a drug store right near the Lorraine Hotel where we were all staying. I never heard of this happening before, but it did. They had lunch, and there were Negroes and whites sitting together at the same table. And the waiter that waited on them, a white waiter, took the plates that they had been eating from, and threw them on the floor and broke them, in protest against these white teachers eating with Negroes. Well, that was just hunky-dory for our New York commies. Oh, that was meat! Later we had a meeting of the whole convention, the A.F. of T., and there were resolutions submitted condemning the owner of the lunchroom, who wasn't even there; Phillip LaFollette was the governor, and to think all of this took place in front of a statue of Abraham Lincoln; I just can't tell you all the bla-bla-bla they said. That's the time I was called a Nazi, that was very good. And I got up, and I opposed the resolution. I said, "I am very much surprised, but perhaps I shouldn't be, for some of you have had very little experience in how a union operates. No union would condemn an employer unheard." And I proposed that we form a committee to call on the owner of the drugstore. Oh, my!

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I was called a Nazi! I was defending the principle of trade union negotiation. Well, we won out, and a committee was appointed to interview the employer. He told us he didn't know a thing about what had happened. He immediately fired the waiter that had committed the deed and sent an apology to the A.F. of T. So what more do you want? That didn't make our Commies very happy.

I. How did the Negro delegates respond?

R. Well, this is interesting. Then as I said before, we had this caucus of our whole group after the convention in the hotel in Madison. And there was a Negro delegate, a very nice girl, and I remember that when I used to urge her to join the union, she was very conservative. She used to say, "Oh, well, I wouldn't think of going on strike." Well, there was really a no-strike clause in the constitution of the A.F. of T. And then picketing -- she thought that was terrible. She was very conservative. But when we caucused, she got up and said how heartening it was to see those delegates of New York stand by them. To them, it was a Negro issue. And if you were against the resolution, then you were anti-Negro. And the guy from the Chicago Teacher's Union on the floor that made the speech with the New York crowd said he was surprised at Miss Herstein. She talks like a Nazi!

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I. Who was that? Do you remember?

R. Yes, he's dead now, so we better leave him.

I. Let him rest in peace?

R. Yes, he was much more conservative than I, but they got swept aside.

Well, now, that was the A.F. of T. convention in 1937 in Madison.

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I. Now do you want to tell me about the next big convention? Would this be the 1940 A.F. of L. convention?

R. At the next convention of the American Federation of Labor, I was a delegate from the Chicago Federation of Labor. According to the constitution of the American Federation of Labor, the central bodies were called "one lungers" because they could have only one delegate. And, of course, it was an assignment much sought. I had been nominated several times before to be the Chicago Federation of Labor delegate to the American Federation of Labor, but always there would be some older man who, if he didn't go that year, would never get to go; so I would withdraw for him. This time delegates came to me and said, "We don't want you to withdraw, now you go." I was the delegate to the A.F. of L.

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Before the convention, every delegate got a letter from a group of Negro workers who would be eligible to the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks but the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks had a clause in their constitution forbidding membership to Negroes. When you think that that's only 1940, and you tell Negroes to be patient! The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks wouldn't have them; so these Negro workers organized federal unions and were directly chartered by the American Federation of Labor. They had 130 locals chartered directly by the A.F. of L. at the time of this convention. Several resolutions had been sent calling upon these locals to return their federal charters: "And we present this matter to your attention in the hope that as an organization that has no color clause in its constitution, and which has among its membership many loyal members, that we might get your support in our effort to prevent this great A.F. of L. from committing what we consider to be one of the most un-democratic and un-American acts, by allowing this matter of auxiliary locals to be imposed upon thousands of colored." The proposal was for these 130 locals to go into the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks as auxiliary members without the right to vote. Did you ever hear of anything so outrageous? They wrote to various delegates to support

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them in this fight against the resolution. I got this letter, and immediately I went over to Philip Randolph, President of the Sleeping Car Porters; Webster, who was first vice-president of the Sleeping Car Porters. As I said several times, I helped to organize them, and I said, "What about this? I got this letter and of course, I'm willing to support them." They said, "This is what we're trying to do. We are meeting with Mr. Green, the president of A.F. of L., and with Harrison, the head of the Railway Clerks, and we're trying to work something out. We'll let you know just what's worked out, and what we want you to do." And day after day, we didn't hear anything.

- I. No resolutions were offered to the Convention?
- R. No and we wondered what happened. In those days the A.F. of L. convention lasted two weeks, and this covered Thanksgiving. By that time, a lot of people had left, and the head of the central body of Milwaukee, I know him very well, (he was a member of the machinist's union), and on the last day of the convention, when most people were gone, he got up and said, "Mr. Green, Mr. President, I want to inquire about this resolution about the locals in the railway clerks. Just what disposition was made of that?" Green jumped all over him. He said, "You should know!" "Well," he said, "I don't know, if I did know I wouldn't ask you." The agreement had been that the matter would be referred to the Executive Council of the

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A.F. of L. for future disposition.

I. So they really had no agreement.

R. No, just to refer it to them. I can remember talking to Webster about it when he came back to Chicago, and he said he and Philip Randolph, all the way back to Chicago, in every town, Negro delegates would meet them, and they would discuss it. Incidentally Randolph and Webster didn't stay in the hotels where we stayed in New Orleans.

I. Oh, it was segregated?

R. Sure! They stayed with friends, the same old procedure at all conventions. So that was the big issue.

I. But it really never came up on the floor.

R. Never came up on the floor. But this man brought it up, He was a machinist.

I. Was he white or Negro?

R. He was white, very liberal, and he was the head of the central body of Milwaukee. And he got jumped all over by Green. Now, that was the convention where we had the resolution about the B'nai B'rith. That was settled. And then I was instructed by the Chicago Federation of Labor to bring in a resolution to change the representation of

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of central bodies in the A.F. of L. I knew we'd be defeated, but I got up and made my little speech.

I. In what way did you want to change it?

R. Oh -- it wasn't very practical. The Chicago Federation of Labor always wanted it, and they didn't feel bad that I didn't get it.

I. Your heart wasn't in it.

R. No, it wasn't, and I think some of them weren't either.

I. Tell me about the B'nai B'rith.

R. A resolution was brought in to condemn the B'nai B'rith because they had their program printed in a non-union shop. The president of the National B'nai B'rith at that time was a very fine man from Omaha, Nebraska, which wasn't a strong union town. If it had come on the floor at the convention, I would have had to vote to condemn the B'nai B'rith for this non-union activity. Before it got to the floor, the matter was referred to Matt Wohl, who was first vice-president of the A.F. of L. and always was persona grata to employers. He worked out an agreement with the head of B'nai B'rith. Now, we've finished

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with the 1940 convention.

- I. You said you had something else to tell me, I hope I didn't shake it out of your mind.
- R. Oh, I meant to tell you in the 1936 convention, when the C.I.O. issue came up, Molly had gone to her union before, and they had instructed her to vote for throwing out the C.I.O., and she voted according to instructions. By the time she got back to Chicago, her local was in control of a bunch of commies, and they introduced a resolution condemning her for that. And John Fitzpatrick -- she and John Fitzpatrick really organized that office workers union. Many of the union offices had stenographers who were not members of the union. She and Fitz had a lot of fun about this resolution condemning her. So, at the next meeting, Fitz said to her, "What's the matter with you Molly? You going over to your union again?" She said, "Sure". He said, "You're a glutton." So, she went again, So that was that. But I don't know of anything else.
- I. You said that you helped to organize the Sleeping Car Porters, and I don't know if we talked about that on tape.

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R. Oh, that was long ago, in my early days. The Sleeping Car Porters had a hard time organizing. Every time they had a meeting, there were spies in the meeting, and the next day they were fired. And they held out, Philip Randolph held out for a union, not to be an auxiliary to any other union. There were several unions that wanted them, railway unions, but would put them in non-voting auxiliary capacity. Randolph held out and finally they won. There was to be an election of the National Labor Relations Board, and on the ballot were the two choices: to belong to the Sleeping Car Porters or to belong to no union. Well the Sleeping Car Porters by that time were pretty well organized, and the vote was coming on one hot day in July. Webster, the vice-president, called me up. He said, "I know we've got the votes, but the company, particularly the Northwestern Railroad, has some Negro stooges going around urging people to vote against the Sleeping Car Porters. He said, "I don't think they'll succeed. I'm sure they won't but to make assurance double sure, we're going to hold a big meeting on Canal and Harrison. Will you come and speak?" I said, "Sure." I go out there surrounded by a whole group of Negroes, and the only two speakers were Frank McCulloch and I, both white. Subsequently Frank McCulloch became administrative assistant to Senator Paul H. Douglas of Illinois, and later Chairman of the

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National Labor Relations Board. The white men passing made all kinds of remarks about me, miscegenation, so I said to the Negroes, "Don't pay any attention to that. I don't care anything about that. Just hold out in our meeting." And then for some reason, we had to go to see the president of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. We went into his office, and when he saw Frank and me, he could have killed us. His whole idea was these Negroes are nice and law-abiding, they don't want unions. It's just these white agitators. He got so insulting that one of the Negro delegates standing next to me was getting mad. I said, "Don't get mad, let's go look at the post office." That was at Dearborn and Adams, I said, "That's where they're counting the votes. Let 's look at that, and not pay any attention to him." The Sleeping Car Porters won. It was the first Negro union directly affiliated with the A.F. of L. Many meetings were held celebrating the event. At the one held in Chicago, the Porters asked their three best white friends to sit on the platform and be honored; Mary McDowell, head of University of Chicago Settlement, Paul H. Douglas and I.

Oral History Project

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Tape 8, Side 2

- I. Today you said you would tell me about some of the work that you did during World War II, for the government.
- R. Yes, that's right. When the war broke out, among the agencies, there was the War Production Board. I've forgotten who was the chairman. There were nine vice-presidents and, at first, none from Labor, the excuse being that the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. were fighting each other so bitterly that they didn't know whom they could appoint. Well, as a matter of fact, they could appoint two, one from each Labor group, which they did. They appointed Joseph Keenan, who was on leave as Secretary of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and Clint Golden of the C.I.O. They were the labor vice-presidents of the War Production Board. All the other seven were from industry. One of the problems in the war industries was absenteeism of the women workers. Many of the men were in the army, and the women were needed in industry. There was all sorts of propaganda and romanticizing of "Rosie the Welder" -- urging women to go into defense industries. But the women had children and the problem was care for the children and various needs. Mr. Keenan appointed me as Woman Consultant for the War Production Board with a very fancy title that I can't even remember now. My job was to gear community facilities to the needs of women working in war industries so that they could stick to the

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job. There was a lot of absenteeism because they had to take care of their children. Keenan appointed me in about August of 1942, and I came to Washington to be briefed. I hadn't been there a week when he sent me to the west coast, to California, where I had never been and really didn't know much about the industries. It had been suggested to him to have me go to Glen Martin's aircraft plant, which was in Maryland, so I'd get oriented, but the absenteeism on the west coast bothered him very much. I went first to Los Angeles. There were several large plants in the area. They're always situated on the outskirts of the town and going to and from the plants on those long Los Angeles roads was quite a problem. There were Lockheed and Vega, which had two different names belonging to the same people and which were at Burbank, on the outskirts. And then there was Douglas, at Long Beach, and North American, and they all had women workers. There was also the shipyards, a big shipyard right out of Los Angeles, which by the way is a man-made harbor. There was a campaign put on, urging women to go into the defense industries. And then the problem was gearing community facilities to the women who were already working in the industries. There was the problem of housing, of child care, of getting to and from the plants. The employers did a good job in organizing automobile pools. They were working eight hours a day in three different shifts and the

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plants were very far from the city where they lived. I also worked with the Federal Public Housing Authority to see if we could facilitate things, and request Washington to do something. I'd come along and try to push the getting of housing et al. Another problem was in-plant feeding. During the war the government passed the Lanham Act, which provided for grants to communities whose population had greatly increased because of war industries that were placed there, for example, Vancouver, Washington, (not British Columbia), which is across the river from Portland, Oregon. It had a normal population of 18,000 inhabitants. Because of an increase in workers in shipyards in the area -- Kaiser had four shipyards -- 25,000 were added to the population. You couldn't expect the cities to provide schools and other facilities needed for that enlarged population, and enlarged absolutely because of the placing of war industries there. The Lanham Act was passed by Congress to make grants to those communities. A grant just had to be asked for by some regular agency of the town. When I first started the work, the churches had come to the rescue, and they used the basement of the churches for child care facilities. They were awful. I remember writing a report with a noted authority on child care facilities who came out from the east -- not a person necessarily connected

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with the war industry, but it had always been her work. And we reported that these nurseries were dark damp, and dreary. Then, if you got a church and it had been recently decorated, the ladies of the church didn't want their quarters to be spoiled by a nursery school.

I. Did the mothers pay for this care?

R. Oh yes. We would apply -- we would get some regular activity in the town, a regular one, to apply to Washington for the funds under the Lanham Act. That's all they had to do. Sometimes I'd get in touch with Joe Keenan, and he'd push harder for the request. Most communities did apply for federal funds, but there were intransigent officials in Oregon. Henry Raiser had four shipyards in that area. He had women working in the shipyards, and he wanted and needed child care facilities, but Portland, Oregon wouldn't apply for Lanham funds.

I. Why not?

R. Oh, a conservative Republican area. And when I would say to them, "Are you against the war?" "Oh, no!" I'd say, "I can understand that, because I come from the Middle West, where we don't have the Atlantic! Ocean on one side and the Pacific on the other. And we feel so safe that we are isolationists." "Oh, no," they'd say, "My boy is in the Army.", and so on. Finally, for that area, Raiser despairing

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of the community applying for Lanham funds, applied to the Maritime Commission as he was building ships for the Maritime Commission. We didn't get to the point, like in England, where the government out-and-out built the ships, but we gave a contract to a private company, and it was given through a different agency. It was the Maritime Commission that built the ships for Kaiser in that area. Kaiser applied for a fund, an additional fund to build nursery schools, and he got \$500,000 dollars. And they built the most marvelous nursery school! It had everything: In fact, he brought experts from the East, who were experts in the field of child care, not military experts. And that's where I met these people. My experience in teaching had been on the high school and college level; I never knew about these things. I met these very distinguished people, and they advised us. This place in Portland was a marvelous nursery. They even had bathtubs high so that the attendants who bathed the children didn't have to bend over. But you must remember that these children were there for eight hours and no nursery school of any professional standard keeps children that long. But it had to be done as the mothers worked eight hours a day. I think those mothers paid seventy-five cents. In the other places I got the fee reduced to fifty cents, much to the annoyance of General

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Fleming in Washington who was in general charge. They then provided meals. Now, that was another problem. Wherever there were war industries, there were military installations, and although the soldiers were very well fed, they came in town and took up the seats in the restaurants. I can remember one time in San Diego where the soldiers from the camp, who had good food at the camp, came into San Diego and occupied seventy per cent of the restaurants. The women who worked could pay for a meal in a restaurant, but there was no place. Another problem was, by the time the pool with women workers arrived from the plant in the town, all the food in the markets was gone. It was quite a problem. So in this lovely nursery that was established by the Maritime Commission under Raiser, the nursery school teachers said, "'We will prepare a dinner for you, and a dessert, a whole complete dinner.'" The mother brought the child before eight o'clock in the morning if that was her shift and ordered her meals, which she picked up, when she picked up her child. There were three shifts: the morning, the evening and what was called the "graveyard shift," from 11 o'clock at night until the next morning.

- I. Did they keep the nursery school operating around the clock?
- R. Oh, yes. The mother would come early in the morning, and deposit her child. She would order a dinner, and when she picked up her child in the evening, she picked up the dinner. That was a very

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great convenience and real help to the war effort. Now, Vancouver, Washington, which was in this area where Kaiser had his shipyards, had a marvelous nursery school -- not from the point of view of the beautiful surroundings that Kaiser had in the other. In fact these teachers didn't want it, but they were devoted to service. There wasn't a thing that a mother would need that they wouldn't attend to. Oh, they were wonderful women. A mother would come one day and tell them she'd have to take a child to the dentist the next day and they'd say, "Never mind, you go to work, we'll take him." They even did mending and darning of stockings, to release these mother workers.

- I. Oh, for heaven's sake!
- R. They would say, "Bring your darning; we'll do that for you." They were very resourceful. I made the mistake, when I was going up and down the coast looking at these nurseries, to give great praise to the one in Vancouver, and of course, that was published, much to the distress of the other nurseries. When the nursery at Kaiser's was established, this beautiful one, the people around Portland said, "The Japanese will come over and bomb the nursery!"

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I got so irritated with them. I said, "So what? Then all your problems will be solved. The father will be killed in the war, and the children will be killed in the nursery, then you won't have any problems." That was a very Republican state. And, incidentally, a lot of these people who had been out of work there and got jobs in these war agencies were hard-nosed Republicans and anti-Roosevelt. I was there when Roosevelt ran the last time, and I was voting by absentee ballot. One of the workers, who wasn't Republican like they were, took me into the office of one of these people. He had been out of a job. He wouldn't have a job if it wasn't for the government, and you would think they were going to declare a day of mourning because Roosevelt had been re-elected. They were quite backward. Of course, there were many other kinds of people too -- kind and generous. Another problem was the race problem. Vancouver, Washington, before the war, had had three Negroes in the whole town. Then a great many Negroes came in during the war, and of course the number was always exaggerated. I'd meet some people in restaurants, and I would talk to them. One woman I met in a restaurant said, "Oh, did you hear about it? There are 9,000 Negroes in one of the shipyards of Raiser." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you, I have just written my report to the United States Government on the yards, so I know exactly how many Negroes there are in that yard. There are two

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thousand, two thousand out of eighteen thousand workers."

Then there was the taunt, that these workers were only Okies and Arkies -- Okies and Arkies. One California resident said, "You know, Miss Herstein, " (He was born in California.), "There are very few native Californians, and the next time somebody says that, you ask him, "Now, what town in Iowa did you come from?" I pointed this out to people, and they were reasonable when you took the time to explain the situation. I remember one woman -- this must have been up in Seattle. She was shopping in Frederick and Nelson, which is the Marshall Field Store in Seattle. It's been there many years, elegant store, just like Marshall Field's of Chicago. And here was a woman, right in from a shipyard, with dirty slacks, standing next to her in line. This shocked the well-dressed woman. I put the isolationist argument to her. I said, "Are you against this war?" And I explained that I could understand that point of view, coming from the middle west. "Oh, no," she had sons in the war. I said, "Now look. I'm sure that people like you and me, American women, if the time came where the danger was as great as it is in London, we, too, would be working in these plants while a guard watched and notified workers of approaching Nazis. And we'd be working there while a guy stood on the top, warning us that a Nazi plane with bombs

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was coming. But it hasn't come to that yet in America, so you and I do knitting and things like that. But the ships have to be made and these women are making the ships to take your boy safely across. Now, who are these women? Sure, they're Okies and Arkies. Who emigrates? The biggest plant in Seattle, Boeing Aircraft, at one time had 88 recruiters in the south. And who came? The people in the lowest economic level. They were poor. But many of them have been in America before the American Revolution. But they were poor; that's the kind that migrates." We have a new word, "in-migrant," we call them. And I said, "People in your class and mine, we're not working in the factories yet, in the aircraft plants, or the shipyards. I'm quite sure if it was necessary, you and I would work, but it isn't yet. But it is necessary to have the workers make the planes and the ships. In fact, in some things, like in the electrical part of the work, the women were more skillful than the men. so, of course, they're poor. And, if they changed their clothes before they came to town, they'd miss their ride in the pool." The woman was very reasonable and listened attentively. She understood it. In fact, at one time, when I was in Seattle, we got some money. I think I got some from Dave Beck who subsequently went to prison, the big teamster boss. He was in Seattle. We got some money and we rented

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a place, and it had a washroom where the women could come and wash, and dress up if they wanted to stay in town to buy something, or whatever they wanted to do. The problems were very complex. They were a microcosm of a bigger problem of all America. You had the conservatives, who didn't want to apply for government help; you had the people with prejudices; and then you had, in every place, a group of liberals who would help. And then there was a great difference in who the officials were, who the mayor of the place was. Now, we had much more trouble in some cities in Oregon than we had in San Francisco, for example, or Seattle.

I. Because of the officials?

R. Oh, yes.

I. What would they do?

R. They were much more helpful. I remember, during the war, this incident happened to my friend; Tom Tippett, the coal miner. In the area where I worked, Tom Tippett was in the rent control part of O.P.A. And if there was anything that people objected to, it was rent control. Every congressman would write; their constituents would write, furious, and so there was a lot of opposition to that.

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We didn't realize that, but each local community had its own problems. Tom would come to a town and he would organize a committee. He'd get the head of the Chamber of Commerce, the head of the labor movement, the YMCA, and they'd organize to help out in this problem of housing, really, rent control. He was on his way to California when somebody blasted him as a Communist. Headlines --"Field representative for O.P.A a Communist !" The charge was in all the big newspapers all over the country. He was on his way to California. He was on his way to Vallejo, which is right near San Francisco where there was a big shipyard. By the time he got near there, he decided there was no use going because of the Communist charge. But nevertheless, he thought he'd go through it and see what happened. He comes to Vallejo, and a man who'd been a yard worker was the Mayor of Vallejo, and he met him. He invited him and asked him how he worked. And Tom told him that he'd get socially minded members of the community to cooperate, and they were all there. Tom just couldn't get over it. He introduced Tom to the audience and everything went wonderfully. He couldn't understand what had happened. When he was leaving the town, waiting for the train or the plane, a young man came to him and said, "You know, I'm just new in journalism. Maybe when I get older, I'll be more cynical, but I can't get over what happened at your meeting.

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Did you know what happened -- how it happened?" Tom said, "No. And to tell you the truth, I'm still very much surprised. In fact, just before I got to Vallejo, I considered seriously not going. But I went, and I'm still wondering." 'Well, this is what happened," said the young man. "The Mayor of Vallejo sent for the newspapermen, and he said, 'Wow, I want to tell you bastards something. I want you to know that this government has assumed responsibility for housing the workers who are working in these shipyards. And they chose this young man, among all the experienced in the labor movement, a coal miner, to help. And all this baloney about being a Communist is pure baloney. And I want you to know, I don't want you to dare to disrupt this meeting, any of you reporters. I'm going to have a meeting of the leading people of this community, and we're going to put into effect that program.'" And it went over. What a wonderful mayor! You see what a difference it made. But you get some town where the mayor would go in with the reactionaries.

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My territory was the whole west coast, which was absurd. For doing the same work that I was doing, the east coast had about five women. Well, you know how big Connecticut is, and Rhode Island.

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Here was California, alone, a thousand miles, and I was doing three states on the west coast.

- I. You must have traveled a lot.
- R. It was very hard! I had California, which is almost a thousand miles, then Oregon, which is big, and Washington. Great big states: And it was only towards the end of the war that I was given an assistant. I assigned her to California, and I took the Pacific Northwest -- Washington and Oregon with headquarters in Seattle. Well, I told you this incident about this man. There was this question of war housing, urging women to take jobs in a war industry. I remember Archbishop McIntyre of San Francisco who has since retired; he was the Archbishop of San Francisco.
- I. You look annoyed.
- R. He was saying he would not urge the women of San Francisco to go into war industries and leave their children, when there were these huge profits, and there was hoarding of labor. I'll have to tell you about hoarding of labor. But I learned for the first time the structure of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. It's not

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the Archbishop that's the big gun, but the Bishop, and the Bishop lived in San Diego and was very cooperative. McIntyre wasn't. Well, then there was a lot of talk about hoarding of labor.

- I. What does that mean?
- R. Hoarding -- having people standing around having jobs and not doing anything most of the time. There was a lot of talk and I learned about that, also. One time, when I was in the San Francisco area, I went out to an aircraft plant. It was Lockheed, and I went to the union meeting. Hoarding labor was said to be feather-bedding by Labor, I always went to the union meetings. This was the shift that stopped at 11 at night, which means I got back to Los Angeles long after midnight. Safer traveling in those days. I was at the union meeting, and these girls got up and testified, these workers, young girls. They said they were in high school and the recruiters came to recruit them for work in the defense industries and told them it was their patriotic duty to work. They were only eighteen years old, something like that. They applied for jobs in ships or aircraft there. One girl got up and said, "Sure, I came to work here. My brother is overseas.

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And I came to work here but what am I doing? I'm standing around doing nothing! There's no work for me. A lot of us were getting paid, and not doing much work." And the reason was not that the workers were shirking but that the employers wanted to build up a pool of labor that they could use when the war was over and they would keep the aircraft plants, which were normally in the middle west in places like Detroit. In the beginning, when the aircraft plants developed on the west coast, the feeling of the big guys was that they'll be there just for the war. But the plants stayed and there are all these aircraft plants there now and those employers saw that, so they were the ones who were hoarding the labor for future use. When I sent that report to Joe Keenan, that was quite a shock, as it was to me. So that was a problem. Then I told you I'd talk about in-plant feeding.

- I. Yes.
- R. The women and men, too, went to the plant, left at about seven o'clock in the morning and went to the plant. There was no cafeteria, no feeding facilities. There was an urn for coffee and they brought their lunch, and I learned that a shipyard is cold even in Los Angeles. And then, when they got home, they had difficulty marketing. The

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butchers were gone, the soldiers were taking the places in restaurants. It was quite a problem. And we thought if they could have a good cafeteria then they'd have one good, big meal and that's what we called in-plant feeding". Douglas Aircraft and another air plant at Long Beach, California -- there was a big plant there and they put in in-plant feeding. I went with one of the local labor leaders down there to see it. I guess we started early, so when we got to the plant we could smell the food. Our mouths watered. I went in -- there was very good food, very well cooked and plentiful. But I remember one of the workers there, they had a field office there of the C.I.O., and the man with me was a C.I.O. official, and this gal was shooting her gab off about just everything, finding fault. My associate said, "I don't like that gal." I said, "I don't either, I'm suspicious of her." I learned a way to find out. I just would mention Walter Reuther, and she would go up the ceiling. She was a communist and Reuther had thrown them out of the Detroit unions. That was one of the things he had to do. I casually mentioned Walter, and then Roy Reuther had come out to help me. "Well, how many of those fellows are there?" "Well," I said, "I think four." She was looking for an issue to call a strike, or something, raise a good deal of trouble. But it was a wonderful cafeteria.

- I. Was she complaining about the cafeteria?
- R. She was complaining about everything. Yeah, sure, she was the

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field officer outside, you know. The company I was talking about in Seattle is Boeing -- Boeing Aircraft. They put in a wonderful in-plant feeding. That just happened at the end of the war.

I. None of these big companies had this until World War II? That was a war development?

R. That's right.

I. I didn't realize that.

R. They didn't have it, and I could tell many a story about that. No shipyard had in-plant feeding. The only shipyard that had in-plant feeding was the shipyard at Bremerton, Washington right out of Seattle. That was government owned, of course, and the union was not recognized there but most of the workers were all union members. They belonged to the union. But that had a marvelous cafeteria. And when I talked to Edgar Kaiser I think it was, he was in charge of the yards around the west coast there. "Oh, it wouldn't be possible to have in-plant feeding in a shipyard." So I said, 'Well, Mr. Kaiser it's not far. Go up to Seattle, to Bremerton, you'll see it. What a marvelous cafeteria there in the shipyard.' We had a War Housing Authority, and the military wanted our government to forbid the wives

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of soldiers to get on a plane, which they could - to come and see their husbands where as soldiers they were stationed. Rut you know, in our country the government doesn't tell people what to do. Every time I was traveling on a plane, we had to have priorities. I had priority three, I think. First went to the military, or soldiers that were being sent because somebody died in the family or something. So you had these differences in local communities, too. Now, in Seattle, they had a wonderful mayor. They never had the race problems in Seattle that they had in Portland. Of course, Portland's started with that awful case that happened. There was a trainload of soldiers that were coming to Portland, and some of their wives went along in the regular trains, sleepers, and so on. And as they approached Portland, the cook OR that train went beserk and stabbed to death the wife of one of the soldiers.

- I. There were big repercussions, I expect.
- R. Oh, my. That's the start. Well, you had various reactions. You had a very liberal mayor in Seattle. And one time a group of liberals (I don't know what they called themselves, Civil Liberties or something) had a meeting in Seattle. I was invited to come, and Marshall Field was invited. It was the Marshall Field who really established the Sun-Times, the great grandfather of this boy, the Marshall Field.

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We were having this meeting, ad a banker, a genuine liberal -- I think his name was McNaughton, was in the group. He went over to the Olympic Hotel, the best hotel in Seattle, to engage a room for our meeting. McNaughton said to the clerk very casually, "We will have some Negroes at our meeting." And the clerk, who'd already found a room, quickly pushed it back anal said, "Now wait a minute, while I talk to the manager." Then he came back and said the room had already been reserved by another group. Mr. McNaughton said, "One of our guests is going to be Mr. Marshall Field, who, you remember, gave fifty thousand dollars to a school for retarded children in Seattle." We got the room. And I went and Mr. Field was there, and that was very interesting; but in the main, Seattle was much more liberal than Oregon. You must always remember Oregon was settled by New Englanders, and when it came to deciding what the name of the important city should be, they tossed up a coin as to whether it would be Portland, after Portland, Maine, or Boston, ad Portland won. That's why it was called Portland, Oregon. Washington was settled by a great many Scandanavians. And you see a lot of them there right now. That made a difference.

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Now, the strange kind of local opposition you had -- one man wrote from the west coast to Joe Keenan that I was doing union propoganda, and his proof was that I always went to union meetings. So Joe said, "I have to answer the guy." So, he wrote to me and I said, "Joe, of course I go to union meetings. I've got to meet the workers. Anyhow, you ask this man how many representatives of the Chamber of Commerce are coming to union meetings or are they going to business meetings." Anyway, any inconvenience they had from the war, they would write about to their Congressman. And the Congressman would write to the President, and the President would hand it over to the War Production Board. Well, I remember, there was just a little while that I was working in the East, in Baltimore, before I went to the west coast. Goucher College is in Baltimore. They had a very good school of education. I still have the letter of that woman; she was in charge of nursery school education. You see, nursery school education was a new development. As a matter of fact, the first nursery schools were for poor working women who had to work, like they had in Hull House. Then it was for the very rich, very fancy. Well, this woman was a professional in that field, and she was very eager to have a nursery school established for the children of these working women. Glen Martin had a big aircraft plant there, 40,000 workers, and a lot of women workers. She was

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trying and trying to get a nursery school for these children when I came along. I saw the superintendent of the county. There's something peculiar about Baltimore -- it's not in any county, it has a county by itself. And I meet this fellow. First, I talked to the official who was supposed to apply for Lanham funds, and he wouldn't apply! That's why they couldn't have a nursery, he wouldn't apply. I discussed the problem with him. He said, "We don't have the money." I said, "But you can apply to the Lanham Fund for these funds." And we argued and argued, and he always came back, "We don't have any money." And I said, "But you can get government money." And finally he said, "Yeah, and we'll build one of those things, and that guy in the White House will get the credit for it." And I lit into him. I said, "'Nobody asked the boys, who have to go over in ships, and have to have ships that are made right, what their politics are!" Oh, I handed it to him. And I said, "And the big lack was in the electrical work, and the women were the best in that." And they weren't working because they had no place to leave their children. He wouldn't apply for funds from the Lanham Fund. Then I go out to a place -- talk of having the black children and the white children together, that's out! We didn't even discuss that. We wanted it adequate for the Negro children whose mothers were working

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in Glen Martin and in shipyards in the area. Get something for them! So I go to this community near Baltimore, and in the area of Glen Martin, and here's a beautiful schoolhouse, just been built, with beautiful murals that had been painted by a Negro artist in New York. I went to the superintendent and I said, "How come, when there's a shortage of schools, this place is empty?" Of course, it would be for Negroes, because it was in the Negro district. What galled him was to think that this beautiful school was for Negroes. Well, it was beautifully made, not because it was made for Negroes, but because it was the last school to be built. And I said to him, "You're not very far from New York or Washington. What do you think would happen if one of the New York papers sent an enterprising reporter here to take a picture of this school, and report that in the shortage of schools, this school was left empty?" And that did the trick. He told somebody that he understood from that Miss Herstein that what she really meant was that she'd get the reporter there. Well, I'm glad he caught that, because that's just exactly what I would have done. And they did get a nursery school, and they got that school opened. Oh, yes, one of the reasons was, the school was near a river, and the children would fall in the river. I said, "But the old school was near the river, too." And I've got a letter from that educator of Goucher College telling

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me, "You're the kind that gets things done." There were different conditions in different communities. Yes, it was different in different places. Now, you get out to the west coast' and you have War Housing. That's an agency, and they're supposed to get housing for workers. A lot of women, when they knew their husbands were in camp on the west coast went out there, and they got jobs. I said it was a good thing, the best beauty parlor girl I found came from New Jersey because her husband was stationed in Seattle in the army. They got teachers that came out there and wanted to be near their husbands. Very often the husbands were there several months. A soldier comes to the War Housing Authority, and his wife had come, you know. She was a teacher, or she'd just come. He wanted an apartment; they said, "No, you can't have an apartment." He said, "What do you call this? It's called War Housing, and I'm in uniform." "Well, it isn't for soldiers." And it wasn't! It wasn't for soldiers.

- I. Wasn't his wife a worker?
- R. Then he got the idea. He said, "Suppose my wife gets a job in a defense industry. Could she get an apartment?" "Oh," they said, "That's different." That's exactly what she did. She got a job in a defense industry, went in and applied, and got a place to live. Many soldiers got mad and said, 'This is called War Housing, but it's not for warriors.'" That was one of the ironies of the

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situation. Well, I want to get back to Baltimore. In that area, I was in the shipyard and it was very cold. I got there before noon, deliberately, so I'd see what they had to eat. The only thing they had was one of the big coffee urns, and they didn't even have brains enough to place it inside. There was a little building with toilets in it, but a big room. At least it was warm. They could have put the coffee urn in there. I went into the building and I rummaged around, and I found the women workers had brought sandwiches from home. And they were sitting on the toilets eating their sandwiches because that was the only warm place. I write this in my report, and the head of the shipyard was furious. He wrote to President Roosevelt, complaining about my report! I think the president called in Joe Keenan. Of course, this tickled Roosevelt. He used to nearly die laughing at these reports. He could hardly keep his face straight. In fact, Mrs. Roosevelt's sister-in-law, Dorothy Douglas, who was married to Mrs. Roosevelt's brother, did the same work in Detroit, the work that I was doing. She was hip to a lot of stuff, you know. And, oh, this man was furious. Roosevelt, you know, wrote the letter, and he got the reply. Sure they were there. It was the only warm place there was. So I kept going there. As long as I was in the Baltimore area I went there. And I said to the labor official, (you know, we had to push them, too), I said, "Come on now, get your car, we're going out there. Come on, I want to get

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there before twelve o'clock." Sometimes I'd get there around 11, and oh, they'd look at me. They'd like to kill me, because they knew I had written the report. That was at the Martin shipyard. The war was over before we got any in-plant feeding in shipyards, but we did get it in several of the aircraft plants, which was a different story.

- I. What became of those nursery schools after the war?
- R. Yes, I've wondered. Now there was one thing that happened that was strange. It was a surprise to me when I got to Portland that there was only one big city in Oregon and that was Portland. They had just built a city called Van-Port to meet the needs of workers. Portland had, I don't know, a couple of hundred thousand. Van-Port was the second largest city, a place created for the workers. It had about 40,000 people. They were all workers in the shipyards. And you remember, after the war, the Columbia river overflowed it's banks and Van-Port actually disappeared. Nobody was drowned or anything because the people had begun to go home. I remember poor old Senator Robert Taft, you know, of Ohio, the great Republican, just two days before had made a speech. They were having some big discussion about

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flood control, and he said, "Well, the Columbia River isn't likely to overflow it's banks." Two days later it happened -- the Columbia River overflowed its banks and literally wiped out Van-Port. You know, it starts way up in the north, and goes down. Well, now, let's see, what else. Oh, one of the discoveries we made was published in a medical-industrial magazine. I gave that report, and it came from others. The women welders, stood on a platform, they shook. The women used to menstruate almost continuously. They'd stop for a few days. And there was an investigation of that, but it had something to do with that work.

- I. The constant jerking?
- R. Yes, it must have been the constant jerking. There were a lot of things -- the way women hustled things, and lifted things.

- I. A number of problems developed, then?
- R. Oh, sure, you'll always have that. And you know I remember being in the union station to go for a train, and the people that handled the baggage were women. They had to load heavy things. Of course, "Rosie the Riveter" was canonized during the war. Right after that, go back to your kitchens!

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Tape 9 - Side 1

- I. You indicated that there were quite a few physical problems that occurred from women doing heavy work. In the case of the riveting, it seemed to affect all the women?
- R. It was the welders.
- I. Well, did it affect most women who were welders or just some of them?
- R. Well, I found that it was quite general, and it must have been found in other plants, because David Saposs, my chief in Washington, told me he got this report from several plants. He was one of the finest labor professors in the country. He died just a few years ago. He was my superior, and I wrote him this story. It was published in some industrial-medical magazine.
- I. Did they ever decide if it was harmful, or how harmful?
- R. They didn't know, but it was certainly damned uncomfortable.
- I. It may have led to anemia or something.
- R. Sure.

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I. What about the problems of lifting?

R. Well, I don't know. We don't know.

I. I was just wondering, in light of your experience of World War II, how you felt about removing protective legislation for women?

R. Oh, none of us wanted that, you know. One thing the women in shipyards resented, they always had to wear their hair all covered. I remember once when we were asking for a beauty parlor near the plant. "No," they said. "But you've got a barber shop for the men." Poor things, they earned money but the wages were very much exaggerated. Remember that fellow, (he's dead since; he went out in a boat; he was quite a hero) always telling about the high wages of workers in war industries. But we would talk to the officials in the lower echelons, and they would tell you the truth.

I. You mean they weren't that high?

R. They weren't so high, when you took out for this and you took out for that. And you go among these poor shacks where they lived and you would see this woman who was working in a war industry, and you'd see on the window a flag with two stars which meant she had two boys in the war. It would irritate them when they were told, "Why don't you be patriotic?" My

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God, they gave everything, they had their sons in it. These were problems.

I. What about pregnancy? Did you run into problems with women who became pregnant? What kind of provisions were made?

R. Well, they just went off.

I. They didn't come back to the job?

R. No, I don't remember any of that. That was automatic.

I. You just assumed that was the end of it.

R. I know at one time, there was a general Fleming. Our friend Franklin D. Roosevelt certainly had a penchant for generals, and he was the head of the WPA in Washington. We had to write to him, you know, or the War Production Board, for the rules and so on. But he thought the mothers ought to pay more for the child care facilities.

I. He thought the women should pay more?

R. Sure, the working women. So I said no indeed! I put up a fight for fifty cents a day, and I won out, so he didn't love me very much. Then, just before the war came to an end, right

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after the Japanese surrender, I was in Seattle. I was on the train going to Portland when we heard that Fleming had the bright idea that we should close all the child care facilities. Well, their fathers were still overseas. Just because the war ended didn't mean that the fathers were back, and what were we going to say to these mothers, "Can't have any more child care facilities," when their fathers were still over there? I talked to Joe Keenan long distance, and suggested to him that I make a trip around my territory and find out how many mothers were working, or how many mothers still had husbands in the war and would need the child care facilities. I went all over and I found a great many. Helen Gahagan Douglas was Congresswoman at that time from California. I came back to Washington and I got hold of her and she just hit that thing in the head. She got a resolution in Congress that they should not be closed, and I furnished her from my district with the number of women whose husbands were still overseas. so that didn't endear me to Mr. Fleming very much. I think he was very glad that I left when the war was over, which was October first.

- I. You don't know how long the nursery schools lasted?
- R. Oh, I don't remember. They kept them on for quite a while.

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I mean, it took a long time for all the soldiers to get back, and some of them were injured when they got back and their wives still had to work. It was a different war than this one.

- I. Do you think the unions came out of World War II stronger, or as strong? They had a lot of government protection during World War II, didn't they?
- R. Yes. You know, they agreed on the problem of the prevailing wages. The unions agreed that they wouldn't ask for any raises more than about fifteen percent beyond the prevailing wage of the area, whatever the wage was. And this was a problem we had. Oh, and then the FEPC hearing in Portland, I think either Portland or Los Angeles. I'll check on that. It was an interesting story. Now, I began to tell you about something else. what?

- I. Oh, we were talking about the unions, and you said that they --
- R. Oh, yes, the prevailing wage. Wow, the labor movement, when I was there, was highly organized on the whole west coast. Maybe 75% of the workers were organized. They were conservative,

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but they were organized. Ad the two unions that operated in the aircraft plants were the machinists and the auto workers. The auto workers were C.I.O., and the machinists were A.F. of L. When they had an election, it would be, "Do you want to belong to no union, or to the A.F. of L. or the C.I.O.?" There was conflict there, but we settled it in the usual way, you know, with the election. The prevailing wage in Los Angeles was very low compared to what it was in San Francisco or Portland or Seattle. And this was the reason. You remember the famous bombing that happened in Los Angeles, where the Namaras had bombed the place, the Los Angeles Times? It's very interesting how that paper has changed; There was a big dispute between the union (this was long before the war) and the Los Angeles Times, owned by the famous Chandler Family. And the place was bombed and many people killed. The union fellows that planned this bombing, planned it at a time when there'd be no workers in it, just bomb the place, but the bomb went off at the wrong time. The leaders of the union were the McNamara brothers and they went to prison, you know.

- I. I suppose the whole union movement was in worse shape in Los Angeles after that.

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- R. Oh, it was wrecked! The movement was wrecked in Los Angeles for many years. And as a result for doing exactly the same work in an aircraft plant in Los Angeles, the wage was much lower than in doing exactly the same work in Boeing.
- I. Were the living expenses the same?
- R. Sure. It was a matter of the prevailing wage. And because the prevailing wage had been low for years in Los Angeles it was frozen at that, during the war, and some great disputes went on. I remember, it came to the War Labor Board and there was a professor from one of the southern universities on the board, and I remember the union men cursing him, but he couldn't help it.
- I. There was no mechanism for equalizing things?
- R. You had the rule -- whatever the prevailing wage was. And this prevailing wage differed all over the country. You know, there are some communities where the wages had always been low.
- I. Were women getting equal pay with men?
- R. Yes, but you always had a fight, had to show it was equal, you know. When you'd ask the foreman, "Well, isn't this work equal?"

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Well, approximately, almost. I said to one man, "Listen, I used to teach English, and I taught that equal was equal, not approximate! They'd always try. Ad the men unionists were the same. At first both the union and industry in Seattle said they wouldn't have women. Didn't want them at all. Well, of course, as the war went on, they had to have them, and the law on the War Production Board and the War Labor Board was equal pay. Then you'd have to go in and show that this woman was doing the same work as this man. I remember one man said, "Well now, you know, here's this barrel, and the man who'd work in here would have to move that, and that would be too heavy for a woman." So they couldn't have it equal. I said, "How many times have you had to move that barrel?" They'd always be able to figure out some extra thing that a woman wouldn't be able to do. We had to fight that all the time.

- I. And this was both the union and the company?
- R. Well, the union subsided on that. When they first started they were that way, you know. There was a girl up in Seattle. She was a Commie, and the Commie thing was very weak, you know --

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Hanson, her name was. Oh and there was this smart one in Los Angeles. Oh, she was smart. Mary, I remember, Mary. Oh, but she was smart. I think I first learned the expression "deficit financing" from Mary. Mary's husband was a member of the C.I.O. union that worked in the plants there. When I first went to Los Angeles, the chairman of the central body was a Commie, and he was also the head of the state Federation of Labor. I wrote this in; they were always a problem. Then the steelworkers sent out Thimmes from Chicago, a C.I.O. official. Oh, he was fine -- tall, handsome. And he came there and he settled that whole thing, threw out the Commie leaders. I was sorry that a few years after that he died, he was such a fine person. But this girl up in Seattle -- well, Mary, Mary was in Los Angeles. And they had a big citizens committee on the war problems, you know -- housing, and child care facilities with representatives from the YMCA and the YW, and little Mary, she was representing the C.I.O. union. I went to this meeting; I see no one of the A.F. of L. I went to the A.F. of L. head and I said, "What's the matter with you guys? Everybody's represented except you! You talk about the Commies. Sure, they've got a representative, and a very smart one!" He said, "All right, Lillian, while you're here, you

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represent us." They're so backward and dumb! Oh, Mary led me a chase; she was very bright, you know. They had a scheme to try to get legislation that would make the child care facilities a permanent part of our government. Well, it's a good thing, twenty years afterwards. But when we asked for child care facilities for war workers, it was distinctly understood that it was a war measure, and you wouldn't be playing square with the legislature, but she was always pushing me that way. And I said, "Well, we'll come to that bridge when we come to it." But this one up in Seattle, she got the orders; she knew what the line was but she wasn't very bright. So she was always pushing for some kind of thing to make these things permanent, but I beat her easily. Apparently, the lumber workers up in Seattle, (they were connected with the lumber workers union in Canada) and they had a bitter fight with the Communists. One of the men who worked in the Seattle office had been a lumber worker in Canada. I was second in command, and third was this lumber worker, who had been in the fight in the union before the war started, and a bitter fight!

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I. What was it over?

R. The fight was about Communist control of the union. They defeated the Communists. He used to tell me about that. All these things were complicated with internal fights.

I. Well, it sounds like you had an interesting time during the war, at any rate.

R. Yes, very interesting, an interim in my career.

I. Anything else you want to add today?

R. I don't think so, at the moment.