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M A R T H A     F E U E R

Interview with Martha Feuer  
By Ann Allen  
February 1974  
Time - 2 Hours

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Interview with Martha Feuer

By Ann Allen

June, 1972

I. What effect did it have when the Wagner Act was passed?

R. That did away with company union in all the different industries.

Before that there were no women involved in industry and the telephone hired more women, the telegraph hired more women. When they came into the working force, they were not treated like women, they were treated like chattel. And unless you happened to be a very pretty girl and the bosses liked you, it was a sex thing. Well, it didn't have to be that bad. All the bosses liked to have what they called office wives. They wanted to have a sounding board, someone who was compatible with their personality, that they could talk to, since the wife was not around. Sometimes it doesn't mean anything. Sometimes it's just that a man needs a woman around to inflate his ego or because she is attractive, you know. It really is basically sex. And these girls, a lot of them--well this is all personal. I really don't know many girls in the other industries but I imagine in other offices too that the pretty ones, or the attractive ones, or the ones that the bosses liked, always got a little better raise. It was whispered to you that you got a nickel an hour more.

I. Nobody knew about this?

R. Nobody, and don't tell anybody. But, often it would be a group, one girl would be associated with several other girls and that would be a clique. That clique would always get the best jobs. They would get the raises before anybody else, would get the best assignments. If something glamorous was going on they got the assignment. And the

rest of them were just workers that had to scramble on and wait their turn, you know. They always got everything a little bit better, and of course, they were very loyal to these bosses.

Well, when you have a union, you feel you don't have to do these things any more. And one thing the union did do was insist on equal pay for equal work. The union that I joined the ACA-CIO-- represented Postal telegraph at that time and there they had instituted a job rated system, where each job was rated. The harder the job, the better the rating. But our company, Western Union, did not do that, they rated the class of work, an operator received the same rate regardless if one operating job was more difficult. They just had these flat rates. If you were a telegrapher no matter where you worked, you still got the same pay whether you were a man or a woman, unless it was a specially press rated job or something like that. But it was very involved and it took a long time for the women to become aware that they could do things without this old sex appeal, that they had the law in back of them, and they could insist on having things done legally, and didn't care if they were cross-eyed or what. Even if they were a poor worker, if they had the seniority, now that was the basis for everything was seniority. And we have, even to this day workers with varying skill but they got the same pay which may not seem very fair, but in the long run it works out. So, the women are much more aware today, but it's taken a good thirty years.

I When did you start organizing?

R. '43.

I. And you didn't start with the AFL?

R. No, I just started with an independent union, but that lasted only a couple of months.. I mean they were building up to an election. We

had to elect one of the three unions to represent us, and there was a big campaigning period. It lasted about a year and half to two years, and I think our election was in '45. But in all this time the company did not dare to fire us for organizing.

I. Did they try to influence which union?

R. Oh yes. They wanted the AF of L -- they got it.

I. How did they go about putting pressure on you?

R. It was through the women. I mean it was a matter of prestige. One thing they did that was very unusual and that most people didn't notice until it was brought to their attention, a lot of our supervisors would be a union member until they got to be a senior supervisor and then they were out of the union. But our supervisors were very influential, especially on the working force because they had a direct hand in it. And they were the petty little Gestapo group that made our lives miserable. The company didn't even know what was going on. This was a union where everybody was related in the top management. Fathers, sons, cousins and nephews -- they all got jobs and they all got top jobs -- nepotism. And even the headquarters in New York couldn't do anything about the Chicago office because it was a real deadly situation and they had it all sewed up here.

I. The supervisors were AF of L people?

R. They got to be AF of L people. They'd better not be CIO. So, all of a sudden, all these supervisors -- the male supervisors -- joined the Masons. All the female supervisors joined the Eastern Star. It was a mass entrance into the Masonic Order, because then they were

brothers. You see the Masons is a secret organization and they stick together. They are all brothers and sisters in this great lodge, and they cannot strike against each other. So, they thought they really had it sewed up. But unfortunately, after a couple of years, they didn't count on maybe these people were a little union minded, too. So we went on a strike. We called a strike, they wouldn't come to terms on our first contract.

I. The CIO called the strike?

R. No, we lost the election. The AF of L. You see, when you organize, even if you don't win, the mere fact that we were competition forced the AF of L to be a lot more union minded than they ever had any intention of being. And they were pushed into a position where they had to handle grievances they never would have handled otherwise. Because we, as workers, played one against the other. We had to, in order to get anything at all. We'd say, "Well either you produce," we hadn't won yet but we were bargaining, or, "We'll see that the CIO wins." They didn't know how strong it was yet.

I. How strong was it?

R. It was the weakest of the three. The Independent had more because I say they were very conservative in that place and pink was a very unpleasant color. And the CIO made what I thought was a fatal mistake. When Humphrey was organizing the American Youth for Democracy group (he was one of the organizers) they had a big rally here in Chicago. Well, the CIO was politically involved, and we were in an organizing period, and they spent part of their time fooling around with that.

I told them, I said, "Hey, it's bad, because you are just going to turn our people." I said, "'They are very conservative, and they are all Republicans." I said, "This is a Democrat organization and you shouldn't mix into it, you shouldn't take one side or the other." But you see they had organized Postal to a much rougher crowd of people working there, with a real! down gutsy I.W.W. talk. They tried it on our people and they scared them to death.

I. What kind of people worked there, I mean what kind of backgrounds -- at Western Union?

R. Western Union?

I. Yes, why were they more conservative than the people at Postal?

R. They were always expected to be part of the upper crust eventually. When they went out to dinner, they didn't go to Sloppy Joe's, they always went to a very high class restaurant. And they came from nice homes, not poor people. Not too many poor people worked there.

I. Black people?

R. Not at that time. In the first place there were so many white people that weren't working. It was during the Depression, so who would get the jobs? Not an unskilled black person, he wasn't educated. There weren't that many blacks in Chicago at that time. They actually could get jobs, the women and the blacks could get jobs when the men couldn't but they were menial jobs. But this was a skilled job, you had to go to school and they didn't pay us to go to school.

I. You had to go to school before you took the job?

R. They trained us.

I. You didn't get paid for it?

R. You had to support yourself or have your family support you. Now when they had money and needed people very badly during the Second World War, they not only paid them to go to school, but took them to theatre parties and everything else to get them to come to work. There was a big demand for labor because all of the boys were in the war. And that's when the women really came into their own. They got into a labor force then. That's when they got into the ship yards, and the auto industry because of the shortage of man power during the Second World War. And that group of people is the one that was most labor minded. They had to work like men in many places.

I. They weren't getting paid like the men either were they?

R. No they weren't, and management was not trained to treat people correctly. They were uneducated slobs themselves. Most of them didn't get through high school. My supervisor started work at 14, She never got past the eighth grade. So those people didn't know how to handle people. Now you have a much more educated group in management, and also they never really had to go through hard times. You know, magazine type people, well dressed and very cliquish, They all talk the same way and they all stick together, you know. But the women still have not really flowered into a full realization of their value. They are still hanging on to the old system of favoritism, and it works. It works alright, as long as you have males in the industry it works. But that isn't going to get us anywhere. The only

thing that will get you anywhere is through legal means, because you cannot be in there fighting every five minutes for an injustice. It's not getting any place. Right now we have a terrible situation. We don't have a strong enough union leadership to do anything about it because we have a woman at the top, and she's more pro-company. She's interested in her pension and getting out of there early. She only has another year or two to go. She's not going to fight that hard and she doesn't have the forcefulness. Actually to deal with management you have to have a really strong hand. You have to have a certain unique character. Like Hoffa--I never met him, but he must have had quite a personality.

I. You talked about a guy before, organizing, Italian or an Irishman, did you say?

R. Yeah, he was from New York. He was from the CIO. He was not part of it. He never worked in the telegraph business. He was an outside organizer, a professional organizer. They won in New York by the way. And the whole country went AF of L-CIO except New York City which went ACA-CIO. One of the reasons why we didn't win was the day before the elections, the Chicago Tribune came out with big banner headlines saying "A.C.A. C.I.O. --Communist Organization." on the top of the paper in big banner. Well that squelched it right there because our workers were all Tribune readers. They all read the Tribune.

I. What about the people who were committed to the CIO?

R. They still voted for the CIO. I mean the real, hard core organizers, the people who were convinced.

I. How did they feel about the Communist charges?

R. Well, I'll tell you what. They didn't practice any communism, but the idea was they were more militant, that's all. I mean they were not going to take a back seat. The Company was afraid of them because of possible sabotage. Nobody ever sabotaged anything, but the ACA-CIO was more militant. They made more demands, and they were more for the rights of the working people. And because of them, the AF of L had to get up and do something. You see, our first contract we got a 16c an hour increase immediately. We didn't get a raise for 13 years, not one penny raise. So, all during the Depression we didn't get a penny raise. I don't think the company management did either.

I. What about working conditions?

R. Oh, they used to have them riding on roller skates to deliver messages.

I. Really? On roller skates?

R. So as to save time. If they had a buy or a sell order on the stock market they had to get from one place to the other in one minute and we had a long building. They put these boys on roller skates. Naturally we had a lot of action.

I. I can imagine!

R. So the first thing the union did was take them off the roller skates. Another thing we had was a split tour. In other words you would work four hours, be off two hours, and go back and work four hours which gave you a ten hour day, but two hours you weren't paid for. And the telephone company normally still has that.

- I. The bus company has that, too.
- R. In a way I can see the bus company, because it must be fatiguing driving for eight hours in a row.
- I. The drivers don't like that.
- R. Well, if they don't like it, then they can get rid of it cause we got rid of ours and there is no reason why they couldn't get rid of it. And so can the telephone company. They can get rid of it if they want to. But you see their union is not strong enough. They have too many little unions. The telephone company has an independent union and this union, and for every little thing they have its own union, which the company likes very well because they can never really get organized. See, if the telephone installers want to walk out, the operators don't have to walk out because they are different unions. Unless they want to honor the picket line. Whereas, in our place we are a union shop. When we go out, they all go out. When we called our first strike the company couldn't believe it. Everybody walked out, everybody in the whole place filed out. We called it at 2 o'clock. We just left everything, and we just walked out, and there was only one person that stayed behind -- one woman. She was a personal service representative and she didn't believe in unions so she stuck to her guns. She had guts. I admire a person who can face a walk-out of 800 people and insist on staying. She's bull headed but she has guts, you have to admit it.
- I. Did they call in scabs?
- R. Oh sure, they also had to sleep, so the company brought in cots and those working slept in the office and their meals were brought in. Some of our bosses became ill as a result of the strike. It lasted for 7 1/2 weeks and they had to stay

in the place day and night. They slept there. See they were not that mechanized, so it really hurt. It was a terrible situation for them. Some of them became ill because they couldn't stand that nervous tension and working like that. I really felt sorry for them. They didn't have a chance. I know a couple of bosses that died as a result of becoming ill from that.

I. Did you have a strike fund set up?

R. That time we had no strike fund, we were just organized. We didn't have no strike fund and everybody went without money, but they were down there fighting every day. They were down there walking the picket line.

I. The women too?

R. Oh sure, men and women. During the night they had the men, but during the day time they had the women. They had everybody down there. We were all walking around. It was a very vicious strike.

I. Did they threaten to beat up some people?

R. Oh yeah, they chased a couple down the street. But they came from all over, you know, from small towns.

I . Did the company go out and look for them or what?

R. Oh they had people in small towns, little one horse towns. They couldn't see any reason for striking. They could make big money. They got their transportation paid, they got their hotel rooms, they got double time all kinds of privileges. Well, they came from all over. Well then the next time we had a big to do, we didn't pull a strike that

way. We let it be known that they were going to strike only in Minneapolis. So the company flew in all their scabs to Minneapolis. In the meantime we walked out in Chicago--only one city at a time. When we went to a union meeting, we didn't go on strike, We went to a union meeting that lasted for the rest of the day and came back the next day. Then they went out in another city. It took very little time before they saw the light of day. It was very effective, and nobody lost too much money, you know. But in all those times we didn't have a strike fund because we were too young a union.

I. Did the AFL back you up?

R. Oh sure they did.

I. But not with money?

R. Well, not to pay the strikers, no they didn't. I don't really know what they did. I wasn't active in any office, so I don't know what they did financially. They had their meetings in Washington, and they sent their AF of L representatives there to negotiate. Well, all that money is paid for by the headquarters and the local pays for their own representatives. But to have the AF of L represent you there, that costs money and lawyers, and a lot of research. See, we don't have our own local lawyers here. If we want any help we have to go to the headquarters in the region and get interpretations. If you have a grievance that can't be settled locally, you send it to the AF of L headquarters and then they have a hearing on it. And if you have a case then they take it up as a grievance and then they have an arbitration. All this costs money. That's what your dues go for, and a lot of things are settled that way. Lots of little things, a word or two

in a contract can make all the difference in the world. The women are learning, but I think now labor, has taken a step backwards. They don't realize what's happening to them. They really don't know what's happening to them. Today they are being wiped right off the map. They don't realize that firms have a powerful union. It's called the National Association of Manufacturers. All these people that build the union they plug all the heads of organizations, companies. And they all have their own ways of doing things and a way of communicating with each other. So they've got a president in now who is very pro-big business. They think now is the time to make it or they will never make it again, because once the Democrats come in they can go trounce them, you know. But they will never make it that big. Now with mechanization they think, well at last we'll get rid of the people, and we'll just use the machines because they are much cheaper. You don't have to pay them a pension. You don't have walk-outs, you don't have to give them a coffee break, you don't have to do anything. All you have to do is take in the money and divide it amongst ourselves and our stockholders.

- I. When the machines came in, did the workers react? Sometimes you hear about people sabotaging the machines when they realize they are taking their jobs away.
- R. No, they act as though it's inevitable. They accept it as being inevitable because they see it all around them. But so far, it hasn't touched them too much because a lot of our people took their pensions, they saw it coming. We had a group that started when I did that are still there, and a lot of others have gone out and found other jobs. Jobs were available and higher wages too, but everything has its

drawbacks. It may be a higher wage but it may not be as secure. So everybody goes on to a job for certain reasons. I think now, they haven't seen the outcome of this yet but mechanization is losing. I read about the fellow who invented the first computer, this Dieboldt or whatever his name is. The people don't realize that every week the computer does away with a minimum of 10,000 jobs a week. It's beginning to show now, your unemployment rate is going up and up and people are saying, oh, there are no jobs. There are no jobs. Just look at all of the office buildings, where are the elevator operators? Those were one of the first ones to feel it. They even pick cherries now with big nets.

I. What did you say? Your group went from 800 to 25 people?

R. Well, I don't know, we have different tours you know. But right now we're down to bare bones. We haven't got enough people to cover, but that's not all mechanization. Partly it's management because after this last strike, as soon as we got back, they laid off 20% of the people whether they needed them or not.

I. Did the union do anything about it.

R. Well that's what I mean. The supervisors are taking over the operator's positions now. Before that a supervisor didn't dare put his hand on the message, because the line of work was assigned to an operator. The supervisors dared not touch that operator's job when our union was strong. But now it's not that strong and you can yell and scream all you want. But they have it in the contract that the company can assign you to the work as it sees fit, where it's needed. Well that kind of squelched everything right there. And the workers never got to see

the new contract either. We still haven't gotten our contract except what they published in our paper.

- I. It wasn't true in the beginning, though, was it?
- R. No, in fact that first strike we didn't even go back until they had a big union meeting and we all OK'd it from Washington and we went back and we thought we'd all be going back together and we got in there and found out only those with the most Seniority were called according to the needs of company. And there were messages that stood there for three days unopened because they didn't call the people back. So I said to the president, "You had no business to tell us to go back. In the first place without our OK, and as soon as you found out that they didn't call everybody back we should have gone on strike again." New York never did go back. They were much more militant. The CIO was put out of there and they were independent by that time, but they never agreed to this last contract. And the only reason they went back was because President Nixon put on this wage-price freeze and forced them back. But they were still out whereas we were back.

- I. The union was CIO for awhile? The New York union?
- R. For years, yeah. But as soon as this fellow, Keho, died, it fell apart. He held everything together out there. And, no matter who you are or how good you are, there's always someone fighting against you because they want your job. So there was a nucleus out there that was always at odds with them. Just like there is here, somebody always wants the high paying job and the power that goes with it. So no matter where you are on top you know someone is shoveling from

underneath to try to push your feet off the pedestal. And as soon as he died they were able to do that. They were able to tip over the basket and take it over. But they were still militant, and a lot of the original people from the originating organizing in New York, of course, are dead or pensioned or out of the picture, so this is a new group that's up there. I don't even know how they worked it, but they never did settle the strike out there. They went back, but under protest. See we just got through with a strike. We had it last year.

Side 2

R. If you had a person in the family working, you were considered well off even if you made nothing. If you could pay your rent and you didn't get kicked out, you didn't feel the Depression. As long as your belly was full and you had a roof over your head, you could do without-clothes and things like that. But in those days we went to work with holes in our shoes, with cardboard on the bottom because you couldn't afford to resole them. My mother took the dresses out of my closet and sold them for a quarter a piece in order to get a pound of hamburger for supper.

I. How did you get a job? How did you start with the telegraph?

R. Oh, I answered an ad in the paper. I came out of high school and I had no skills. Oh, I had a few little temporary jobs.

I. Here in Chicago?

R. Yeah. I tried to get in the Telephone Company and my eyes weren't good enough. And in those days you didn't ask your folks to send you to college, although my father could have done it. At that time it was before the Depression, a year or two, you know. There was prosperity. But they didn't think of sending their daughters to college. What for, you know. The boys, but not the girls, you know. so I didn't even ask, although I wanted to go to work, I was seventeen when I started at Western Union.

I. You had to train for four months?

R. I called up my mother on the telephone, and I said I can get this job here but I have to train for four months. Would it be alright

with you if I couldn't pay any room and board for four months?

Would you support me? Sure, they said.

I. What were they paying then? Was it good compared to other kinds of work?

R. We got 51c an hour, That was considered pretty good because you came home with a paycheck of about \$21. a week. When you figure than an engineer was making fifty, that was pretty good wages.

I. Did you say it stayed the same for 13 years?

R. With a difference of about 10 sixteen years.

I. What were the conditions like besides the roller skates?

R. Well, for one place, it was very dirty. We were right opposite the La Salle St. station and they used to have these steam engines with the smoke and the smoke always came in. We had to wipe off the place from soot.

I. Were there like toilet facilities?

R. Oh yes, they had good toilet facilities, They had a nurse on the job and they had a restaurant, but the restaurant was not in operation twenty-four hours a day. I would say that the worst part of a job was the straw boss and the speed of service. They kept records on every little deviation you had, I mean they watched you the entire eight hours and your messages had to be out in 5 minutes. If there was a delay you had to explain it. If you talked to anybody, you were called on the carpet. That's the worst thing you can do to a worker. You sit down and somebody says hello to you, you say hello.

I. Did you have to work long hours?

R. Well, that was a point that you brought up that I forgot about.

There was no eight hour law for women, which is very stupid of women nowadays. They don't realize how hard you had to work to get the eight hour law in. Well then you could never have any dates, because you never knew when you'd get off. They released you when the file was sufficiently low for you to go,

I. Oh, so you just had to stay.

R. You had to stay, you could never count on coming home for supper.

If they weren't busy, you'd get off after eight hours. If they were busy, you'd have to work ten, maybe twelve. But there was no set rule that you could get off after eight hours. You couldn't walk out. You can now, but our girls are working down there eleven, twelve hours a day, some of them right now. But that's by matter of choice. In the factory, you don't want that sort of thing. You want a definite time to be released. Otherwise they take advantage of you, and you're keeping somebody else from a job. Because if they can take you and make you work time and a half for a couple of hours to take up the slack, they don't have to put anybody on for eight hours a day to take up that slack. We did have one thing, it was a good place for married women because they had a lot of leeway as far as hours are concerned. At that time you could work 3 days a week, or you could work six hours a day, or seven hours a day, because they had a lot of married women.

I. That was after the union though, wasn't it?

R. No, that was before the union.

- I. It was also after the union, wasn't it?
- R. Yeah, it was also after the union, but not with the change in management. Now they have change of management. Like I say, these young managers are very inflexible. Everything is supposed to be run like an army. They are all ex-army officers, I guess.
- I. Were there many married women?
- R. Oh yes, mostly married women, or they got married after they got there.
- I. They stayed on the job?
- R. Yeah, there are a lot of married women there, which was also bad for unionism, unless their husband works there, But you see with two pay checks they didn't feel the necessity for being very militant. That's why it was hard to organize our place, because a lot of it was pin money and many of them worked hard to get the kids through school, especially after the Depression. They worked because they wanted the luxury of a nice home, or something like that. But during the Depression, most of the women were the bread winners of the family because they could get work when their husbands couldn't.
- I. The men wouldn't take that kind of a job?
- R. They weren't in the industry and the jobs they were in were out of work. So they had to depend on the wife who was working mainly for Western Union. They laid off a lot of people. I was laid off three times myself because of the Depression, But then we're hired back on three days when businesss got better. Then you were hired for 4 days.
- I. Did they hire you back on a seniority basis?

R. No, at that time they had to be on seniority. They had three types of seniority there. They had what they called company seniority. That applied to your pensions, and things like that. Then they had office seniority which meant you accrued seniority in the city that you worked in. If you moved to another city you took only eighteen months with you, even if you had worked twenty-five years in the industry because you moved because of your own accord. And then they had class of work seniority. In other words, you worked a certain job that you were hired for. If you moved into a different category, a different type of work, that was a different type of seniority. You couldn't bump anyone who had been working on this other job for eighteen years, although you had eighteen years in this other type of work. You couldn't bump them out of it because that was their class of work. So when they came to a vacation, the one who had been there eighteen years on this class of work would have preference on vacations, also preference on the job.

I. This was before the union?

R. Well, some of these were company policy right along. Some of these had always been company policy. They did send people around in emergency to different places, like when they had the Pittsburgh flood and things like that. They always paid them travel time. That the union didn't have too much to do with, That was a company policy. They paid them travel ~~time~~ and all that, certain wages after that. I would say the hardest thing to take down there was the straw boss and the constant pressures of being under surveillance continually.

I. Did the union change that much?

R. Yes, they did for awhile because the supervisors also had to be in the union, you know. But they didn't change it much, The company really changed it, eventually, with new management. They wanted to break up this nepotism in the Chicago office and they sent them new men. They sent in several men. Some men couldn't do it. They couldn't handle that job. Then they finally sent in one man, and he called all the supervisros down to a meeting and told them that they would have to cut out that stuff. And he happened to be very pro-labor.

I. This is the management guy?

R. This is the management guy and everybody loved him. He was there during the strike. He felt terrible because they called him names. And I said, "Well, you know, you really can't blame the people. You're just a symbol to them. They really don't mean it for you personally." And he had a lot of tragedies while he was here. He lost his wife. It was a very bad scene for him in Chicago at the **time**. But we always called it the Golden Age because here was one boss that really fought for us. And from that time on the supervisors didn't have the power that they had before that. Once you become aware that you have certain freedoms they can never undo that again. And another thing that broke it was the Second World War. They had to hire a lot of girls from the South. They were young and full of spirits and they didn't take any of this., And they couldn't do anything with them. At one time if you didn't come down with your hair in curlers or in pin curls or anything like that, you would have been sent home. They didn't permit those things.

I. And dress too, did they have dress codes?

- R. They had a strict dress code. I mean you couldn't go out of the way. These girls came down in slacks. Well, they couldn't afford to fire them. They needed the help too badly because they were under what they call government plus contract. And they made a fortune because the government had to pay plus for everything. That's what put them on easy street, then they were able to buy new equipment.
- I. The union didn't complain about dress codes or that kind of thing? Did they try to?
- R. Well, I think that they did have to go to bat for the girls, but the company didn't argue too much about it. It was mostly the straw bosses that objected to it because they were not used to that. But all these old things broke down one by one. And now they can wear just about anything. In fact they came out with an edict here that you could wear pantsuits but they had to have a long jacket. So, what are they coming down with? They're coming down with shorts up to here and one piece suits. I mean, what are you going to do? After all, you can't send everybody home. They keep their hands off of it now, they don't pay too much attention to it. So that dress code broke down entirely. And the speed of service has gone entirely because that's not what their prime motive is now. The prime motive is to mechanize and get rid of the people.
- I. So mostly what the Union did was to increase the wages a bit.
- R. Wage increase was the important part. And we got better hospitalization from it and we got better pensions. However, it's not funded so that's what they're fighting for now. It's not permanently funded, and it's not a sure thing. Only for those who are on pensions, theirs is funded.

But those who are going to take pensions are not too sure they'll get them. I suppose they will, But the new ones that are being hired won't get anything. And another thing that they got was better working conditions and better hours. Another thing is crossing over into classifications. A supervisor couldn't substitute for an operator at the **time**. It was very distinct for many years, what your class of work was, so that you didn't encroach on anybody's job. People weren't paid for , a holiday or something was wrong. Or they did something wrong and the union went to bat for them, would protect them even though the error might have been on the part of the person, Or maybe they got money stolen. One thing they did do, seniority is the big thing down there. And the company called anybody down to work and they overlooked your name, somehow or other, and you were next in seniority, you got paid if the union was there. "You didn't call this person." That person would get the pay because it was an error. It might not have been delivered. But, the fact that they jumped over that name, and didn't call her, she was cheated out of that money. And she had a right to that money and she best get paid, which she would have done before.

- I. Can you remember from the first strike what the demands were for that first strike?
- R. The first strike, the main thing was to get a wage increase. That was the important thing. And to do away with the split-trip. That they did away with. And to do away with the roller skating. That they did away with. Of course, anybody didn't work over time unless they were willing. You could walk out after eight hours and this we had never done before. Then there was certain rules about things, about class of work and all that stuff, that would be too involved, but it was very

pertinent to our welfare. But the main thing was the wage increase.

I. Who did the bargaining?

R. The AF of L.

I. Was that national?

R. That was national, that was national strike. Although they all belonged to the AFL there were different unions; like they had a southern local. and this and that and the other. They all had a convention. Then they set up their demands. So many would say we want this or that thing. They'd have a hearing on all the different demands.

I. Did you get to say what you wanted the demands to be, or were they set up nationally?

R. Each local, you write in your grievances. or if they should bargain for this or that, you can write in. And the executive board in each local carries this message to the national convention.

I. This happened the first time, too?

R. Yeah. And at the national convention they draw up this list of demands that they're going to deal with the company with. Then they meet with the company. Of course, it doesn't meet your demands right away, they bargain about it. Then when it comes to an impasse on the major demands they don't want to meet with, which is usually wages, they don't want to give a raise. Then they either go out on strike or they finally go to arbitration or something. But usually a strike is the only way to get it. A couple of times we didn't strike because the company didn't want to go through that the next time. We one time got a three

year contract. Now we don't want that, we want a two year because times are changing so much. Cost of living is going up too high.

I. Were the first contracts three year contracts, those early ones?

R. Well, the first was a one year contract. Then the next year they had it for two years. Then it was two years for a long time. Then they conceded to the company to have a three year, but I think they only had that once. Found out it didn't work out too well. The cost of living skyrocketed and here we were stuck with this wage. Another thing, when you get a wage increase for three years, the largest increase is always on the third year. Which means for two years you're working for less wages instead of having the large increase on the first year. So, it doesn't work out too well that way. They didn't want that any more.

I. Didn't you find that once you got your wages increased a lot of people lost interest in the union?

R. Well those people, if they said that, they were never union minded. The ones that were union minded before, they're still union minded. And the ones that were not union minded before, are still. not union minded. They still think they can get it on merit alone. They've always done well without a union before, and because they're good workers they think they're going to get paid because of their ability. Which is not so. And the same way when you work in a small office, I don't care how much ability you have, the boss doesn't like you, you're going to be fired the next day. So they don't have a leg to stand on without a union. I don't care if it's a two bit union, even a company union is better than no union. Without a union, especially

in a big place, you just don't have a chance.

I. What happened after the election when the AFL union was chosen?

Did the CIO people just go along with that?

R. They all had to legally join that because we got to be a union shop and it was a question of employment. You either belong to the union or you didn't. But even' if you didn't want to join the union, you still had to pay dues. You would get the benefits, but if you had a grievance they didn't have to handle it for you.

I. Did the people who'd been organizing for the CIO get integrated into the AFL pretty easily or were you at a disadvantage?

R. A distinct disadvantage.

I. They were kind of hostile?

R. Yeah, well they were hostile, they still are to this day, don't forget.

I. Oh really?

R. I used to belong to the Abraham Lincoln school, which also was a little pinko. They taught Spanish at that time. People wanted to learn Spanish so I says, "Well if you want to get a good class that don't charge much, five dollars or something, come with me." So quite a few of the hardcore AFL people went there. One of them was the boss's wife. And they were learning Spanish like mad. Spanish military songs, you know Spain was having its big thing with Franco and here they were teaching us that in class. Then the ~~Tribune~~ came out again. After we had been there for couple of weeks, all of a sudden it came out, "Abraham Lincoln school is communist dominated." I came down next

day and they were all pretty good sports. They said, "Hi comrade." But they all dropped out. I said, "Did anybody tell you you had to be a Communist to learn Spanish? Spanish is Spanish. I don't care where you learn it. And I don't care if they're pink or whatever they are. They'll teach you Spanish and that's all I'm interested in. Their philosophy, you can take it or leave it, whatever you want to do, Nobody's forcing you to do anything." So, they got a big laugh out of it. I thought they were pretty good sports, especially since they were so pro the other way. If you fight you can stay, you can hold your own.

I. Are there many CIO people there, people that you worked with?

R. No, there aren't too many left.

I. Wasn't in CIO?

R. Oh yeah, he was president of the local, postal. In fact, he was the one who got me to join the CIO. He came over, called at the house.

I. They were looking for organizers? At Western Union?

R. They couldn't get in to organize Western Union because they didn't know anybody there except this one girl, Mabel Graves. It was through her and her contact because she worked for Western Union. They had to get some other people, and people just didn't understand the organization. It took a lot of talking, talking, talking.

I. How did they work on you?

R. Oh, for weeks. I didn't want to get involved in all that. I had to think about it. Then I go and I talked to them and I says, "Well, I'll

think about it." And I'd think about it some more, you know. After all, you're only a High School kid, you don't know too much, and you're afraid. But they'd talk and explain things and they'd give you literature to read. I started reading the papers and getting to see what the company was doing. And far different it was from home, You got discipline at home, you go down there and get disciplined again, but I didn't realize that I was getting paid there and I had certain rights. Whereas at home, this was a different discipline. It was hard to make a break from home to work, because we didn't have that. The girls were kept home, they were not trained. The whole way of life was different than it is now. You can't compare the two. It's the Victorian Age and the Modern Age, you can't compare the two. And the emotional attitude, well, you wouldn't think of talking the way they talk on TV nowadays. You'd blush red. Everybody blushed then, they don't blush anymore. Who blushes nowadays? Have you seen a girl blush? I haven't seen that for thirty years, but we used to blush. And if they said a dirty word we got red in the face. I don't say it's good, but that's the way it was, because we were uninformed. Life's changed a great deal in thirty years, believe me.

- I. What did you do, then, after they got you to agree to work for the CIO?  
How did you go about setting up?
- R. Oh well, I talked to different girls. Then I got really active, I followed a guy. This guy I mentioned became my husband, we worked as a team.
- I. He worked for Western Union too?
- R. Yeah, I used to organize on my lunch hour. I'd be late, then they'd

bawl me out. They called me up at the office and said, "You know you're always late on your lunch?" I said, "You can't expect me to organize for a union and not take more than a half an hour." They didn't dare say anything, because then I could say they were firing me for union activities. "Well, would you like to have more time?" I says, "Alright, I'll take thirty-five minutes then.", I'd lose money. We lost a lot of money, the two of us, because we gave up our time. And then I'd take some girls out to dinner and we'd talk union. Tell them you had to join the union because you'd never get anywhere. You wouldn't be protected. One thing about CIO that I liked, they were very good about informing the people. There was a leaflet all the time. We'd go up and prepare leaflets, you'd hand them out early in the morning.

I. You ran off your own leaflets?

R. Yeah, we ran off our own leaflets. Everything had a leaflet, they were very informed. And each leaflet you learn more. It's a matter of gradually learning more and more about it.

I. How did you convince them that with the union it would be better? I mean, now it's hard to say, "We don't have anything to offer you yet. Once you get organized you'll have a lot." How did you convince them that there was something there.

R. Because everyone was dissatisfied, especially the old timers. See, the war didn't come along till 1943, '44, '45 and they had all these young girls in there, yes, About sixteen years there, there was a lot of resentment built up. I just mentioned a few of the bosses names, the ones that had done the worst, and told them you have to get it in

contract form, otherwise you have no rights.

I. Was it mostly the older people who joined first?

R. Well, you had a few old people that would join. They always stayed with us then. The young ones would flit in and out. We did most of our organizing amongst the young because the old ones usually sign up with the AFL. This was more conservative, see. When you get into the middle years you're not apt to go into anything too radical. It's a long time ago, I've kind of forgot most of that stuff. The young people, we got most of them organized through different gimmicks that we'd use. We had a fashion parade and a canteen, anything to keep the young girls interested. Once you could get them interested, you could talk union. You'd give them a lot of literature and tell them to read this and read that and see what they did in this union and see what they got for these people over there. Many of them were from out of town so they wanted to first get a steady job. But you had to use all kinds of ways to get people. The only way you can get them to organize is person to person contact. One individual talks to another one. And keeps talking and doesn't give up. Keeps talking and keeps educating them.

I. How many organizers were there besides you and your husband?

R. Everybody was an organizer. We didn't get paid.

I. You mean everybody that joined. Did you join the CIO then or was this just an election campaign?

R. It was an election campaign. Oh, we officially joined, we paid dues. Every new member you got was supposed to bring in other members and

that way it grew. They would have paid us to organize, but we refused it. They would have paid my husband, especially, to organize, but we refused it. We said, "We're doing it because we believe in it, not because we want to get paid for it."

- I. There was just the guy from New York, he was the only outside organizer?
- R. No, there were alot of people who came from New York that were organizers. But they were paid organizers.

R. I remember one woman. She had organized the Postal, her name was Claire Brown. She was a very good organizer for the Postal people and they loved her. They would do anything for her because she organized them and she got them better working conditions and their lot was harder than ours.

I. She worked for the C.I.O.?

R. Yeah, she was not a Postal worker, she was a professional organizer. But I have to say she was really good at bargaining with the Company. A.T.A. protected their postal workers so tremendously, they did a tremendous job protecting them. When our company took their company over, they conveniently lost all the seniority files for everybody. And when their people came over they carried a tremendous amount of years of service, almost older than they were. I mean it was a gimmick, but it worked. To this day those people have that service. And there was a great deal of animosity between the Western Union and the Postal people even after they were integrated into the organization. You wouldn't say that the issue of Black against White was any stronger than that. And the people themselves fostered it. I don't remember any company official ever saying anything about Postal people or this and that. The people themselves did it, the little people that worked there. I told them they had a good union.

I. ClaireBrown organized the Postal?

R. Well, it was the ATA, CIO. They all organized it. They had a lot of women there too. I wasn't there, but I could see by the way they

talked to her that she had done a good job for them.

I. Did she organize Western Union then?

R. She tried to organize Western Union people, but on the same method.

And I told her, "Claire you can't pull that over here, you're too rough for these people. You're talking too rough for them. They are going to turn away." So I said, "You can't do that. They are very conservative, they are an entirely different type of people. They are real office people, you know, and you know how stenographers are and stuff like that." See, if you couldn't get a job from Western Union, you could go over to Postal and get one. They would take anybody. I met quite a few of them, and some of them were pretty rough, and some of them were pretty nice. But they did have a much rougher crowd of people over there. They liked that kind of truck driver talk, you know. But our people didn't like it, and you couldn't organize them that way. "Down with the bosses" and all that stuff. They didn't like that, see, because they always associated themselves as being part of the bosses. They were all cozying up to the bosses and they wanted to be part of that group. They didn't want to be called a worker. That was the worst thing you could call them, a worker. They were the elite. That had quite a standing at that time, to be a telegraph operator. It was above a telephone operator, it was more skilled. You had to learn more to be a telegraph operator than to be telephone operator.

I. What did she do after she flopped at Western Union?

R. Well, she didn't flop. She stayed with us, but she had the rest of us up and around. We finally saw to it that she didn't talk to our people

too much, you know. We had to tell her, you can't use those tactics. Like for instance, there was a big doing for the canteen. Everybody pitched in and helped and donated and everything because it was our night and everything. Well, she was a little on the jealous side and she didn't show up. So I said, "How come you didn't show up?" She had a pimple on her nose. I said, "That might be what you call it." So one of the girls was supposed to write a report on the Canteen, and it was a lousy report. But instead, Claire Brown, who had never been there, she was a good writer, she wrote about a two column spread about what the thing was about. I said, "How can you do that? You weren't even there."

I said, "Now you are going to use that girl's report. You can doctor it up,' because you are not laughing at people."

- I. Was she a telegraph operator, the girl that wrote it?
- R. Yes, she was not a writer, but I said you're not laughing at her. She gave her the assignment. I said, "You're not going to just by-pass her work. She went to the bother of writing it, and you're going to use it." And she did too. She went to the bother of incorporating every sentence. I said, "Either that or I'm quitting this organization because I won't stand for it."
  
- I. When was this? Before the election?
- R. Yeah, it was before the election. It was when we were organizing.
  
- I. Were there any other women that the C.I.O. sent in organizing?
- R. Yeah, there was another girl that came in from New York, but everything that she did was wrong. That girl, she organized a group of dinner parties,

and she forgot to send out the publicity on it and nobody showed up. She just contacted the person who was supposed to speak, but she didn't contact the people to come. So everything was prepared, all the food was there, the entertainment was there. And nobody showed up. They sent her back to New York.

I. Did they send any good people?

R. Well, then it was mostly men. Then after we got a few people and each one talked to a few individuals we got more people in. And we had all kinds of things going for us, anything to get a member to sign up. You had to show that a certain number of people had signed cards, that they want to be a member in order to even get on the ballot, you know, in order to be in the running. So we didn't show up too well in the end because like I said, with the Tribune coming out with this slanderous headline. I never did know of anything we did that was wrong, and I never saw anything. We were certainly ethical all the way around. But you can smear somebody. This was a great thing in those days, to smear somebody, and then the election would be over with and you'd be standing there with your mouth opened trying to defend yourself and what are you going to do? Once you're called a certain name, there is nothing you can do about it. You're smeared from then on. So that was a sad case. The Tribune was great for that stuff.

I. Did they do that deliberately?

R. Yes, they did that deliberately, that was all deliberate. Everytime there was a union anywhere that was having an election, they made sure they came out the day before and said it was a red organization. Anything

that had to do with unions was red.

- I. Did the union itself try to do anything like a purge of its membership?  
I know sometimes unions try to kick out anyone they think is a Communist, themselves.
- R. No, the ones they were interested in purging were the ones that were there under false pretenses and were anti-union and joined the union in order to undermine it.
- I. Were there a lot of people like that?
- R. They had one fellow on trial there.
- I. The union did?
- R. Yes, our union had one fellow on trial and they kicked him out, he and his wife. And they were really a scurrilous pair because they turned in everybody to the company.
- I. I thought that the company had to let the organizing go on, so what could they do?
- R. Well like my husband was going down the aisle, and said to someone kiddingly, "Don't work so hard." You know how you would say, "Well take it easy, don't work so hard," you know, kidding. The wife of this fellow went up to the boss and said Dave is trying to keep the workers from producing, that he told everybody not to work hard.
- I. Then what did the company do?
- R. Well they told him about it. They said, "Is that what you said?" They called him on the carpet. That's how we found out that she was that way.

I mean remarks that you would be making in the lunch room, on you own time, they would get back to the bosses. There was always a stool pigeon. One time he was talking to someone in the lunch room and the only other woman in the place heard it. He was called on the carpet the next day and he said, "I know who it was, she was the only one there." He said, "What I say on my own time is my business, and she couldn't have heard what I said. Anyway, she was too far away. What she told you is made up." Of course she heard right. But there were stool pigeons all over the place. Whatever you said went back to the bosses. When we had our company union before the NLRB, they always sent a representative from the company down to the union meeting and he reported back everything that went on there.

- I. So how did you pull off that one strike?
- R. This was before the election, this was when we had a company union. You just couldn't do anything. I went to one union meeting and that's as far as I went, because you couldn't open your mouth there. Whatever you said would go back and you would be called on the carpet or you would be fired, one or the other. So you don't have a chance without a union. I don't care, with Big Business you haven't got a chance at all The sooner people find that out the better; they think things have all been fought for already. They've got it now, the eight hour day. Some of their women want to turn it over and work long hours so they can be part of management and big deals. But they don't realize when they upset the apple cart so they can have certain advantages they are upsetting the apple cart for the little woman in the factory who works eight hours a day and she can't work ten or twelve hours a day because it's too fatiguing. She's got to get off. In fact, her hours should be shortened, not

lengthened. But everybody thinks, oh, they get a little bit more, a little bit more, but they are giving something up at the same time. They are losing all the ground. The coal miners fought so hard to get an eight hour day. They fought so hard to get a union and then we smug people come along and say, "I'm a part of management and I'm going to get on top. We don't need that anymore." And they are going the whole circle all over again. And that's what they will have to do. Every generation will have to go through the whole circle themselves, otherwise they don't seem to learn. And they don't read. Nobody reads anymore about what's gone on before. If they would read a little bit about strikes and how people suffered in order to get these things they might become a little aware that maybe what they are getting is not what they have coming to them but somebody fought for it. The women will have to become more aware if they want to get anywhere. Otherwise they will just go back to where they were before.

I. Did the company ever provide any child care or day care?

R. Oh no!

I. Well I know some places do.

R. Oh no, the farthest they ever went was to find some rooms for these southern girls, find them a place to live. That was about as far as they went. But child care, oh no. They were lenient about how long you could be pregnant. They didn't tell you that you had to leave.

I. Oh they didn't?

R. No, you were probably ready to drop, but they didn't tell you that you had to go.

I. Could you come back then afterwards?

R. You had protection for about a year.

I. Was that a union gain?

R. No, that was a company policy. The overall policy of the company was many times much more liberal and advanced. It was the local stuff that was hard to take, they made up their own rules. Like I say, they stayed on the job for years and years and they felt like a little company all by themselves and they made up their own local rules. The Chicago office was always hard to work for. People that came from out of town didn't want to work here, it was too hard. And the same way with New York, the big cities... Now the company is by-passing all the big cities. They are putting all their main centers in little podunck places, so they get the local help, and they won't be militant. They always have a great fund of farmers daughters to come and train to be operators and they will be glad to stay there. They don't have experience with the big city and they go home everynight, and they will be glad to work there for less wages, for less priviledges. See, in the city, the high cost of living, you need more protection, you need higher wages. We used to have big centers in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. No more that way. They have by-passed all those centers. Now they've got it down in Middletown, New Jersey, or some place, West Virginia or some place out there., You telephone to send a telegram; no longer here in Chicago do you talk to an operator. You talk to an operator down in Mt. Vernon, Ill. We don't have a telephone department anymore.

I. What do you do here?

R. Send and receive telegrams. Mostly we work with big business and all of

their private wires. People call and send telegrams, but there are not very many. Mostly it's business where they have their own set ups. That's what they are doing. They are setting up what you call a tie-line. You connect with all these offices. They have branches all over the United States. Well, then they set up a system where they can communicate with all their branches through a network of telegraph printers. They just dial in anywhere in the United States. Each company has a number. You just dial that number and you get connected with that company and you can talk to them. Then if that company is big enough they have a network of communications just with their offices for their own orders and all that stuff. They have enough business to do that. Then we send all night. They are not even there but we send all-their communications and in the morning they just pick up all these messages that had come in during the night. It gives them a big advantage because they can start work right away. They don't have to wait for these calls to come in or these orders to come in. They are already there. That's what mechanization is. You can't beat it, you know. It's coming but what are the people going to do? You need work to keep your sanity. You can't be bored just looking after yourself. People must work, they have to have the discipline of work.

- I. Did the union ever set up or did the company ever set up like classes or after hour kinds of things?
- R. The only thing the company ever did was during the war and that was through the pressure of the union, not because they wanted to do it. But that was a neat trick we pulled, we pulled that trick on them. We wanted a Red Cross First Aid class. We wanted the company to sponsor it because they would have to pay for the room rent and they didn't want

to. But the people at work wanted it. They thought it was the patriotic thing to do, everybody should be trained for Red Cross, especially the women. They wanted to take that two week course or whatever it was. They were not that anti, we were all working together. So we got together and we said how are we going to get the company to pay for this room, to provide a room. So we went to talk to Joe Keenan he said we can't. We're not authorized to bargain but if you go in there and tell them that if they don't provide you a room, the CIO will provide their union hall for you to meet. We instantaneously got the room. We got it immediately and we had Red Cross classes and we got a Red Cross pin, We all learned first aid which came in handy later on, by the way. But that was the only thing they ever provided outside of business. Except to get people to work for them they did provide them with theatre tickets, wining and dining. They went to different high schools to solicit girls to come work as telegraphers. They had a man going around.

- I. Did they ever have any extension courses?
- R. Yes, they had at Hull House, various places. We had speakers and we had people come in and training, different places, you know. Also when other unions were on strike we went out and cooperated with them and sent people over there to help them out. We would either serve coffee or something like that to help the strikers. There was quite a bit of inter-communication between the C.I.O. unions. We had alot of auto workers and Western Electric and all that stuff. Wherever there was a C.I.O. they communicated with each other. And the AF of L did the same thing I guess, but they were not as union minded. The C.I.O. was more like the I.W.W. They were all one union. Everybody belonged to the C.I.O. whether you were a plumber.

As long as you worked in that firm, they all belonged to the same union. And the AF of L followed that format, here. In other words they all belonged to the same union, when one walks out, they all have to walk out. They can't walk out piecemeal. That is very much the same format the same principle. They got alot of their ideas from us, from the C.I.O. not from me but from the C.I.O. That was a very fascinating period to live through, much more so than now. You went from being half dopey to waking up -- everyone was half dopey. The young people are much more aware now, and they are not as stupid as we were. We were from childhood into the company. You become awakened by that, but before that you could work for twenty years and still be a clod unless you belong to something that teaches you something. They are having a little trouble down at our place with the union, and they are all becoming a little more union minded, because we are arguing more, participating more. Without participation you don't have many thoughts. You have to participate in a union meeting to become aware of what is going on. You just pay your dues and then you can't say you're a union member. You're a member in name only, you don't know what it's all about.

'I. When the union first started, did almost everyone come to the meetings and get involved?

R. Where there was money involved there was a big turnout. Now lately they have been having pretty good sized meetings at our place, since the strike especially, because there are still alot of things undone. I'd say they have had sixty to a hundred people at the union which is very good. We sometimes couldn't even get a quorum of 25.

I. But right at first you got more.

R. Well yeah. I didn't go to too many union meetings because I was C.I.O. So that's about as far as I can go, thirty years is a long time. We also met Studs Terkel, he came to give talks there. We met alot of people through the C.I.O., alot of them that are big names now, but he was just a young man then. Jose, what's the fellow that does the Spanish dancing? Greco! He entertained at our place at our local union. They pulled a fiasco one time; we had a dinner party one time and we were going to have an ethnic, dinner party. We had about fifteen, twenty, mostly women there.

I. Were there alot of different ethnic people in the union?

R. No, this was just a gimmick to get people. They liked to go to dinner parties. Polish dinner party, Chinese dinner party, Russian dinner party. The Russian one we had, nobody showed up because the girl forgot to send out the leaflets. Then she sent out the one for the Chinese and we got about fifteen people. We went to Chinatown, and she did invite the Counsul or the Assistant Counsul from the Chinese Counsulatte there to give us a talk. He thought he was going to talk to a bunch of businessmen. We got there and his face fell because he realized that it was just all a bunch of women. Well, as a result of that he let down his hair. He thought these women wouldn't understand anyway. But he laid down the outline of what China was going to do. He said we are going to use your American power, your American know-how to build our highways, to improve our country. There was a big to do about a highway they were building over there, and American business was cooperating in the building of it. He said once we have it built, we are going to kick them all out. We sat there, we were aghast. And that is exactly

what they did. As soon as they had that highway built they closed the door, and we haven't heard from them since. I thought there you have it girls, that's what the future has in store. Don't put your money in foreign investments because they are going to kick you all out. The same thing with Russia, they used our engineers as soon as they had the revolution. My Dad could have gone over there but he was afraid. He could have gone over there as an engineer to help them build up their country, you know. After they got them built, then they don't need you any more. Same thing with the Arabian oil, too. Once they get the oil set up, they will take it over, you know. Not the people, the ones on top. That's the way it's going to be all the time. Well, after awhile we are going to get so many people these forms of government are not going to be able to handle us. We will have to change our forms of government into something. Democracy is going to be too cumbersome and somebody is going to get the idea of telling the people that. And you are going to have somebody at the top who is going to tell everybody what to do.

I. Did the union ever talk politics much?

R. Our C.I.O. talked a great deal of politics, a great deal.

I. What kind of politics did they talk?

R. Mostly Democratic, mostly for the people, you know. Otherwise I wouldn't be talking this way. But they were very pro-labor, pro-little guy. See that he gets his fair share, you know. They figured the ones on top were smart enough to take care of themselves. You don't have to worry about them, but the one on the bottom hasn't got a chance to say anything.

I. Did they use alot of that in their organizing? When they tried to organize

people did they just talk about their specific situation?

- R. They talked specifically, but they also talked politics. That isn't always good because the people you talk to are not always of the same political viewpoint. They may change, but first of all you have to convince them you have a good union. And when you have a union most people feel that their politics is their own business. If you have a union, that's what they are paying their dues for, to represent you with the company, not to tell you how to vote. I don't believe in the power of the unions to sway their people to vote this or this. It smacks too much of political patronage. I think everybody has a right to vote the way they want. But a union is a different thing. If you're working and you want to have a representative intercede for you with the company, it doesn't make any difference whether you are a Republican or a Democrat. It's the job that counts. That's what they are there for, and that's what they should stick to. Politics is something else again. If you want to go into a political organization, then you go into a political organization. Join a political party and plug for them. But I don't think the union should have too much to do with it except as far as laws are concerned. But to say they are going to back this or that or the other person, you back the person that is going to do you alot of good in labor legislation. If he has a good labor voting record you back him. You can recommend him but don't tell your people they should vote for him because he has been working for them, then that's too bad. They'll get somebody like Nixon in there, or what's his name, Wallace. Well, that's the kind of the guy you have to watch out for, cause he's using the things that they want to hear, just like Hitler did. He gave them what they wanted to hear but that isn't what he's got on the back of his head.

I. Who was Mabel Graves?

R. Just a girl that worked with me. She was persistent, she believed in it. Her father was a coal miner, that's why she was labor-minded.

I. She was the the C.I.O.?

R. No, she was working for our place, then she got involved. I don't know how she got involved with the C.I.O., how she got connected. But her father was a coal miner and she had a very deprived childhood because of that. They were striking all the time. She saw what they had to go through and it made her labor minded.

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