BOOK 23

MYRNA KASSEL

Interview with Myrna Bordelon Kassel
By Isobel Grossner
December 11, 1970
Time - 2 hours

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Oral History Project

I, Myrna Kassel (deceased) hereby direct that the interview recorded December 11 1970 at my office - - _____
Date Location

by the Roosevelt University Oral History Project in Labor History be handled in the following manner:

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Permission needed to cite or quote

Elizabeth Balanoff
Director, Oral History Project

x Jeffrey Bordor
Signature of interviewee
(Son of Interviewee)

Oral History Project

I, Don Kassel hereby direct that the interview recorded December 11, 1970 (Date) with my wife Myrna Kassel (Location) by Isabel Grossner by the Roosevelt University Oral History Project in Labor History be handled in the following manner:

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Elizabeth Balanoff
Director, Oral History Project

x Don Kassel
Signature of interviewee

Interview with Myrna Kassel Tape 1

By Isabel Grossner

December 11, 1970

I. Well, this is December 11, 1970, and I am sitting with Dr. Myrna Kassel from the CIO. And your position is?

R. I am now the director of the Human Services Manpower Career Center.

I. Now, Dr. Kassel, I assume that's not a medical degree.

R. No. I am a doctor of economics, labor economics specifically, with a minor in public administration and philosophy.

I. And you were born where and when?

R. Passaic, New Jersey in September of 1918.

I. Could you tell me something about, your family--what your parents did, who they were, whether you had brothers and sisters?

R. I was born, as I say in Passaic, New Jersey. I don't know if you know of Passaic, New Jersey, but it is a town that has suffered some rather severe labor conflicts. This was in the textile industry. It was an industrial. town.

Historically, at least from my childhood, I was

aware of the fact that it was a city that had experienced severe labor management conflict. I was born in a Jewish family that lived in the Polish ghetto of Passaic, New Jersey. I had three brothers. My father was a house painter. A number of my relatives were small owners, retail merchants. My mother died, she was killed by a train on the main street of Passaic when I was ten years old. And then I went. to live in Philadelphia with my grandmother. Our family was split up, and subsequently after she died I moved back to New Jersey, a community with very many of the people of Polish and Slavic ancestry. Most of them were either unemployed or working in the textile mills or domestic labor, that kind of thing, a poor community. And my first impressions were impressions of a community going through very severe pressure. I had three brothers, one of whom died just before I was born and the other two died subsequently. So I grew up in a sense with a rather strong feeling for the people around me, and then my family just disappeared. The only one that was left was my father and myself.

I. Did you stay with him?

R. I lived with my grandmother. We lived on a street called Market Street which had a small rather lively street of stores. The people either lived on top of the stores or in back of the stores. My grandmother,. had this place. We lived upstairs from the millenery store and a chicken market. I went to Woodrow Wilson School. My childhood was really very much involved with a kind of sense of the despair in people, the hopelessness in people as they wandered in and out of the stores and up and down the street. It was a situation in which the Jewish merchant was also very hard pressed. They were hard times. I went to Passaic High School, graduated from there. I don't know if there's anything more you want to know about the neighborhood I grew up in.

I. Well, I think you've described it very vividly. I remember reading about it, seeing pictures about it. They say it was in trouble. Well, from high school what did you do?

R. Well, in high school I was a good student and became involved in things like the debating team, the Latin and the French Club, something or other. I think it

was really through the debating team that I first began being articulate about social problems. I remember way back in those years that the topic of the year was "Shall we have Socialized Medicine, shall we have tax exempt securities?" The debating team was a very good principle, you know, the kind that had kids get involved in social issues. Then I, somewhere along the line, decided that I wanted to go to college and the teachers at that time encouraged me. I was very good at languages. I remember the suggestion was that I take some scholarship tests for the New Jersey College Board. And we were all very poor in those days, so there would be no chance of going to college without getting some scholarship help. And I remember at that time that my options, and I thought about them were that either I would go out after high school and get a job at the Five and Dime, which in those days, you know it was a job. I guess I had worked all during high school, either tutoring kids who weren't very good in school for about 50 cents a week, traveling on buses to get to these kids. I also sold hats, because a number of my

relatives had small hat shops. Then I met a German who took me on as a kind of--almost as a daughter and gave me five dollars a week while I was going to high school and.1 helped her. So there were a number of people around me that, helped me so far as getting clothes. It was a era in which, you know, you had one dress to go to school in, and sometimes you wore it damp because you had just washed it and it wasn't dry.

And I remember very well that there was a candy store down the street owned by a Russian, a photographer, and he did his photography behind the shop. He was quite an intellectual and a musician. And he was very important in my life because it was there where we talked about the world, outside of Passaic, New Jersey. So I think back always very fondly of him and of the lady who gave me the job at the millinery shop. They were people who were very encouraging to me and who proved as certain as teachers. So one day, I remember going to Monteclair, New Jersey, and taking the examination in the lobby for the New Jersey College for Women . I won a scholarship. In those days we had the

National Youth Administration, so they were able to give me $16.00 a month, something like that, for some tasks at college. My father gave me $2.00 to go to college with, as his farewell present. So off I went, and it was really a tremendous, exciting thing for me, to leave the kind of life that I had grown up in.

I. I take it this is after you went on, to college.

R. Yes. So from 1935 to 1939 I was at the New Jersey College for Women. I had a scholarship and a job waiting on tables and my support, and I made it, And there, at college, even though I entered into language. courses and classics, I studied Latin and Greek and so on, another wonderful accident happened. That was that the teacher, Dr. Evelyn Clark, who taught those courses at J.C. was a lifelong companion, and shared a house with Miriam West who was a Communist. Both of these wonderful ladies had a kind of a feeling about the students, that if they really knew themselves that the potential was there, or that they enjoyed being with a certain student, they almost adopted them. They became in a sense mothers, and I mean a very close, warm personal involvement.

Really it didn't take me very long to move from that kind of focus in languages to economics. I can't even remember the transition it was so immediate. And pretty soon I became very much involved in Miriam West and what she was trying to teach me. See, coming out of the ghetto in the time of severe depression and having been exposed to a great deal of suffering and poverty in the community that I came out of, gives a certain real sense of, I hate to use the word compassion, because it seems I was out of it. I was in it. I was in it in terms of almost the absurd competition that takes place between the small merchant and the ghetto consumer. So I was hit on both'sides of the thing, the same thing you would encounter to a certain extent in the inner city, and in any large area today, the kind of tensions that develop between the small merchant and the poor groups who have no money and need to buy on time.

Anyway, my freshman year I became very much involved in social problems, and don't forget I was in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Johnson and Johnson being the principal employer in that community. There was a very large relief load in that city and first terms

beginning in those years of organizing an employee. There was a group called the Workers Alliance that had some interest in what was going on in New Brunswick. I became active in organizing something- which in those years was called the American Student Union.

In my sophomore year I became president of that organization and a local chapter in J.C. And this brought me into contact with similar kids from Princeton, all of whom were very close, just a few miles from one another. And so I began to bring to the campus various kinds of speakers, and I remember that in those years, and I was only about, let's see I graduated in high school at the age of 16.

I. Excuse me. Is that the National Student Union?

R. It was called the American Student Union.

I. The National Student Union came later then?

R. This was the original depression student movement. And I remember very distinctly bringing out people like Norman Thomas to speak and Sherman Eddie who at that time was organizing the Sharecroppers from the South. I went through some very emotional stirrings that I was sure I would encounter in the world, outside of Passaic, Now,

we had an Economics Club that I was also active in. And in my sophomore year during the summer, they scraped together a little bit of money and they sent me to New York City where the Socialist League for Industrial Democracy (SLID) was running a summer program for kids, to acquaint them with what was going on in the city of New York and to give them some kind of exposure to national, social and economic 'problems. The leader of that group that summer was Joel Seidman who eventually came to the University of Chicago as a professor and taught labor relations, who is a scholar in the field and has written a great deal. Now he, in those days, actually managed a young group of kids. Bill Dufty was in that group, the man who eventually became, who is one of the leading columnists in New York City, He wrote Billy Holiday's biography, an extraordinary man. And a number of other people who since then have, like Eleanor Peterson who became President Johnson's Consumer Advisor, assisted Joel Seidman in running the summer group. So it was kind of an extraordinary experience for me. We worked in the Bowery, we studied what was going on in the depths of the depression in New York. We lived in the Village.

It was a kind of interesting summer.

Then I went back to college and I had already committed myself to the study of economics, I continued with my work there until the next summer. I was given a scholarship by the American Friends Service Committee to go into a work camp. This would be like the VISTA of our present day. The work camp was run by the American Friends Service Committee and we went to the coal fields of Pennsylvania, Western Pennsylvania. We went there, really, to help the miners who were being disposessed, the mines were running out. The mines were being automated. It was the depression, and it was the intent of the Quakers there to begin to take the miners who were being stranded and to find ways of developing with them small subsistance farms. The kids that actually went there dug ditches and built river houses, laid pipe lines, laid sewers. The girls and boys were from all over the United States, and the best thing I can compare it to in modern days, it was a kind of a VISTA or Peace Corps. That was the summer before I went back to my senior year, it was one of the most important summers of my life. It put me in direct experiencial

contact with working people, almost in the sense of living with them and working side by side. It was a whole different relationship than what I had as a child. I went back and finished my senior year, and during that year there was a great deal of agitation in New Brunswick about relief and relief rolls and relief payments.

Early in my senior year I applied for something called the Morries Graduate Fellowship which. my college hadreceived an endowment for, to send a graduate student on. Well it just happened to be a year when things started to bubble in New Brunswick, and I became concerned with what was going on in the city of New Brunswick and this college of mine and our reported interest in social problems and things. So I began to reach out and see if we could somehow be helpful to the groups in the community. And I began to try to he helpful to the local organization Coal Workers Alliance. And I remember it was early in the spring when relief roles were cut, people were just thrown out all over.

We helped to put out something, actually on a pink slip, which was a protest against this. Early one morning,. I took some girls with me from campus, all of us waited on tables, whatever work there was, really. And we joined some men in the heart of town with our leaflets, and we were distributing our leaflets to some of the relief clients that were coming into the relief offices. As this was going on the police came and they arrested us. We were arrested under an ordinance Norman Thomas later proved unconstitutional in Jersey City, as you can't arrest people just for distributing leaflets on a littering the streets ordinance. Eventually it went up to the Supreme Court, but here we were in the morning distributing these leaflets and a couple of us got arrested, put in jail. So that morning we were supposed to be waiting on tables, we didn't show up. The police called the college, so eventually that day we were released. But this episode resulted in my losing my fellowship.

It was quite a blow, but then through the help of Dr. West and others I applied for a legislative fellowship to the University of Wisconsin, which was,

where she had gone, which at that time and still is one of the best places in the United States to study Labor Economics. It was a special kind of a Department of Economics which began on the History-Economic theory, developed in what we call the School of Institutional Economics, which can be distinguished from, shall we say, theoretical schools of economics dealing largely with describing the economic system in terms of mathematics, in terms of more abstract generalizations about how the economy works, and really dealt with the history of movements and how social conflicts were generated and managed and what you do about public policy in dealing with economic problems. And the founder of that school was John Commons. Still today the four volume history of American Labor is a classic he developed. And though he was not there when I got to the University of Wisconsin, the most eminent labor historian in the United States, Sal McCormick, was the one that was running this particular curriculum. I was so pleased to be able to go there. So I left New Jersey, and went to the University of Wisconsin. I also, I think, got some additional help and some student loans to get me over there.

My older brother died, a terrible disease, and so I had to really leave school. I wanted to go and be with him. He passed away and I didn't know what to do--whether to go back to Wisconsin and try to finish the year that I had lost, something like six weeks, when several things all happened at once. The New Jersey College for Women sent me a telegram saying that they would give me the scholarship which was something like $1200.00, which in that day and age was such a tremendously fine amount of money. The next day one of my teachers at Wisconsin wanted me to be his assistant and wanted me to come back to Madison. So all these very wonderful things came after a very tragic time of my life. So I picked myself up and I went back and I finished that semester. And with his help he arranged it so that I could make up what I lost. And later that year I finished my masters thesis which I did on J.D.H. Cole. I was very much interested in British Social Theory and the British Trade movement and so that was that.

Then I began to feel a very strong desire to get back in the world again. I always had plans and very deep convictions which I held strongly: that study is

best utilized in a sort of a counter corps as a work experience. I wanted to get back into the world and try out some of the things I had learned. I went to New York City on the thought that I would find some work there. I could start planning some of the things that I had learned. And I became the education director of the New York Women's Trade Union League. It had a really glorious history. And eventually Frances Perkins became Director of Labor. So by the time I got there, which was 1941 I think, that had already passed by. The New York Women's Trade Union League was made of female trade unionists that looked toward this organization for education, social, recreational, something other than it really being a trade union organization. I became their educational director and I ran what was essentially an educational program for then. It was a good experience, but really the league was peripheral to the trade union movement. It was sort of tolerated in a sense for what it had done, but it certainly wasn't main stream. At the close of that year I left to return to do my graduate work, to continue as assistant. Then I began to become involved at the University of Wisconsin

School for Workers, which was at that time the outstanding school in the United States. Part of the university had opened up programs for the trade union movement to come into.

I. Through the British tradition?

R. Yes. Yes. They offered extension services so that staff and school could go out into the small towns all through Wisconsin and work with the trade unions--stewards training leadership training programs, the whole thing. And I was part of that traveling circuit, and I was involved in teaching. It was war-time, and I began to work on my bachelor thesis, of course, and one of the things that Fess Palmer and I agreed with was that we were moving from a blue collar to a white collar society, that one of the most important fields of trade union organization would be white collar workers in the years to come. And we also had a very strong interest in what was happening in the Montgomery Ward case, before the war. We began to see that it might have potentialities of becoming the classic test of the powers of the board. So I chose that as my thesis, and therefore I became involved. I sure picked one because our premonitions

were correct! I had not yet completed my thesis but I had completed all my graduate requirements and taken my exam when I met the Montgomery Ward union at Madison, because we had them for training that summer. And they had just concluded their first contract under duress. They seemed to have won a nickel an hour increase.

I. And recognition.

R. And recognition. That was important. But the thing that I say they thought was most important was that nickel. They thought that they could have a dues schedule that would enable them to hire an education director. So we were sitting under a tree in Madison one day, they said why don't you come to Chicago and be with us.

I. What was the name of the union?

R. Local #20 of the United Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Employees, CIO.

I. Was that the union started by Henry Bruhn?

R. I don't think so. It was started by--

I. Textile Workers?

R. It was started really with the shoe workers in New York City under Samuel Wolchock. I never was part of it in the early years there.

I. You said you never came back East after that. You stayed in Chicago.

R. My experience in New York had been with an organization that had been sort of, in my judgement---Well, in New York when they came up with an idea they usually encountered an awful lot of people who said well, we tried that before and it didn't work. Chicago I found had a different view. First of all I think what happens in Chicago is they try things out and when they don't work they forget about it. There is a special beautiful amnesia here so that nobody really buggs you by saying it was tried and failed.

I. You try over and over until it does work.

R. Yes, and I always felt, here in Chicago a special kind of, you could talk about it, a figure in Chicago. I have always found an equilibrium here, not that I haven't found other things. But there is a kind of blessed lesser sophistication that makes it possible for people to say, "Gee that's a good idea" and before you've got it all elaborated people are willing to try to look at trying it out. You know, it's not surprising because sometimes it's not well enough thought through so it does fall on the wayside. But at least there is an appetite

for experimentation. Anyway, I really liked Chicago from the very beginning, and I felt very good here. And I felt very very good about the leadership, the quality of leadership. We really took on a tough one. Now my job there was to develop an educational program, in the union. We had experienced a problem just organizing and reorganizing, and reorganizing the same plan, because the turnout was beyond belief. During the war, Montgomery Ward hired mostly, not in the warehouse where it was clearly solid men, who were our strongest element. But the newly hired people in Chicago were in the mail order house--were young girls. And we used to call them the Babushka Bobby Sox Brigade, because they were very young and they were very inexperienced and they knew nothing about unions. So within a period of about a year you might have to reorganize that plant several times. My idea was through the union to try and reach them from the kinds of things the union offered, which to a large extent were social and educational. They were geared to where they were at. Some sense of cohesiveness in trying to introduce some connection with the union. And as you can see these rather disparate groups, that is the older middle-aged warehouse, and this very young

group mostly of women, you could see how hard it would be to build a cohesive local. And yet, we did very very well. Now, when Sewall Avery stiffened his resistance, and refused to deal with the union to negotiate, to accept a contract and move towards a contract situation, my duties became enlarged.

I. He had already lost the case with the War Labor Board? There had been recognition. And the contract was now coming up for renewal, was it? It expired?

R. Yes, it was also - my memory since 1942. The exact sequence of events is not with me, but in the time that we were theoretically recognized, and that we were supposed to be in a position where we would go in and sit down and settle grievances and handle problems and so on, the experiences that we had there were really traumatic. I mean, some day I would like to do a book about what it was like to walk in with a grievance committee and try to settle grievances.

I. Why don't you talk a little about that right now?

R. Well, it was one of those structures, everything that happened, the way the rooms were set up, where people sat, the nature of the dialogue, all were anti-any reasonable

concept of peers negotiating. In other words when we went in even with our International president, we entered a classroom, a room that they used for training new recruits. John Barr and Stewart Ball representing the management sat at what would be a teachers desk or podium. All the people sat in table chairs, arm chairs, like students. You know, we've had big things in Paris with the Vietnam talks about the shape of the tables. These things I understand in a very personal way. Because the table and the way you sit and how you sit set a climate. The procedure would be that we walk in with our demands, requests, what-have-you, and go like this: "We now would like to talk about the wage rates paid in department 102. This is the problem and this is what we think needs to be done about it." The answer was a mono-syllabic "No." Pause. "Well our second demand is is this," and this would go on through let's say eighteen or nineteen demands, so that each step of the way it became more or less like a meaningless charade. There was absolutely no give and take to speak of and with great difficulty, that I recall any true inter-action. So what you really have is rising irritation

and frustration and so on. And obviously under those circumstances the union becomes more and more truculant. Part of it is because you're not getting anywhere, and the second part is because you're losing members, and you can't deliver. Now I was the editor of something called The Spotlight, which was a weekly-mimeographed paper which we stood out on the windy cold corners with the wind whistling around the Chicago river on a cold Friday morning on both sides of the street, which was the union news. One of the ways we would get back what we were experiencing with the company, we had something called the Hall of Shame there. And that was one way that we could keep the pot boiling. We would report in this paper, John XYZ, supervisor in Unit G is behaving like a son-of-a-bitch. This is what he did this week: this was the inhuman brutal thing that this man did and we would have this column and he would be the whole show. It was really pretty flambouyant union journalism but it was the best read column because, you know, it was specific and the people in the department would buzz and there would be a half a dozen. Like the gossip column.

R. Right. Well, the crisis with respect to the new contract wasalready in the National War Labor Board and soon Labor was clearly developed in the posture of resistance. And again you will excuse the fact that I don't remember exact months and so on, but at that time the Chicago Sun Times was doing some interesting reporting work on Sewall Avery, what is this man like, and why is he doing this. And Business Week was also engaged in some research about this man. And in one instance Montgomery Ward sued Business Week and one little Spotlight paper for one million dollars each. I was one of the principal defendants.

I. Was there that much money in the whole CIO treasury?

R. Well, there he was Francis Biddle came in, seized the plant, he refused to budge, he was carried out. For a while we were in a plant that was run by the United States Army. I neglected to mention that we had a strike that was precipitated by all this and I was in charge of developing the broadest possible community support. Now, I went out and organized a community committee to support the Montgomery Ward strike. This was in the war time and that was quite a thing for the people to do.

I went out and got James Adams, a head of a Seminary. And Edward Sparling, who at that time was head of the YMCA Central College, was co-chairman of this committee. And there was a distinguished group of citizens in Chicago. I did some interesting things. I got Orson Welles to sign a letter at one point to support the union. I put on a good public relations campaign and it did help. Chicago would in effect say, "We think that strike is legitimate."

I. Did you get any business men?

R. I don't remember. I would have to go back through boxes of stuff. Anyway, there is an interesting sequel to this; because Edward Sparling, and I just talked to him about this at Frank McCallister's Memorial Service , when he showed to make a speech, and he and I were laughing and chatting on that very dark day on one thing and that was our memory of the repercussions of all of that. When he decided to become a co-signer with Adams, the Board of Trustees of the YMCA College disapproved. They asked him to relinquish that decision. Whether or not this was the straw that broke his back, he refused to capitulate and so he walked out of the College and took

a group of people out with him and walked out a few blocks away and started Roosevelt University. He was saying to me the other day that he thought the Montgomery Ward strike committee triggered the vote of Roosevelt. That was one thing that happened that affected Chicago as a result of that strike.

Anyway, in the course of all this work at Montgomery Ward another thing was beginning to happen. A national CIO Community Services Committee was organized. It was stationed in New York and it had begun to look at Labor's role in the community. What Labor's expectations might be from the obvious fact that Labor along with other groups and persons in society were contributing very heavily to our voluntary agencies. And so out of all the efforts the CIO had made to participate in local community fund campaigns all over the United States, the question then arose--what are we getting for the money? Are these agencies serving the people? And so in the Community Service Committee we began to find more ways to begin to participate in and become a beneficiary of the resources that the working man was putting into the Health and Welfare systems of these communities.

I became very much interest&in this and I was one of the delegates of our local union to the Chicago CIO Cook County Industrial Union Council. And it didn't take us long to organize a local Community Services Committee which is what the national group was trying to develop. I became chairman of that committee - executive secretary of that committee. In a sense I felt that after this whole thing had passed with Montgomery Ward and we had a local union there that was beginning to function, what happened later was a whole other story. I was asked if I would leave local 20 and join the staff of the Chicago Industrial Union Council and operationalize this program for Chicago. What began to emerge was the concept of training a whole new family of people in the unions who, unlike the steward, would be concerned with in-plant problems, would become the linkage between the worker and the out-of-plant problems. And it had many other dimensions, besides. Through the Union Council we would begin to develop a category of people in the unions who would become very knowledgeable about the human services and the community, where the resources were and where the deficits were.

A union counselor was a person within the plant. Right.

I. Who knew how to solve problems, what was available to people in trouble.

R. And also through our efforts with the Community Fund: I think the Labor Movement was one of the key groups that was responsible for something that still exists called the Community Referral Service. But we saw that service as (in modern terminology) like our "hot-line." That all the councils we train would have one place that they could call wherever they were. And they could present the problem, get competent consultation, and they could get appropriate referrals to the resources in the community.

I. In each community then Referral Services was a group? Trained people?

R. Yes, it was actually a new agency. And it existed at 123 West Madison.

I. A city agency?

R. A private agency supported by community funds. Now I'm talking about 1944, '5,'6. This program, this Community Services Program in Chicago, really became

something of a model. I think there were some excellent programs all over the country in small towns, but it became kind of a model of what could be done in a really giant metropolis. We trained very large numbers. We had a training program that ran, six weeks during the evenings. We trained people from many many unions, we trained hundreds. And at the time the program was at it's zenith, we kept the Community Referral Service very busy with a couple of hundred referrals each month. And untold hundreds. of things were done in the plants. And as the Council became more knowledgeable, directly . to agencies in steel, packing, auto, many of the large basic unions. Now we also must point out that during these years that we succeeded in getting Labor Welfare Projects set up in the Welfare Council of Chicago, because the CIO didn't have the funds to sustain a staff, I was appointed to represent the CIO in this project.

And so I found myself in a project in which we had myself and an assistant, along with 2 people from the AFL. And our way of promoting labor, social welfare relationships, was to work with the community. In other

words we were building the grass roots net work. The AFL approach was different. They had a whole different perception of what they wanted to do with their staff. So essentially it was two basically different programs. And it was a hard thing to do to be a protagonist for my people and at the same time to function responsibly and rationally in the framework of the Welfare Council.

I. How did the AFL approach the work?

R. Many years have passed since then. The original concept was that that staff saw themselves as people that would promote the Community Campaign Fund contributions during regular campaign periods. If a Health and Welfare problem came up anywhere in this AFL, this staff of one or two people would attempt to solve it.

I. How were people brought to them, through the stewards?

R. Yes, the local union president would call up and say, "Is there anything you can do for John Jones, he's at the..." In other words they were really more of a model of a business agent deal-ing with out-of-plant problems, and they would occasionally go to locals and make speeches.

I. I assume this is a rather small type of operation. There wouldn't be that much need to take care of it.

R. I think it was more like the business agent concept in

their union. Since then I have not kept track of it. Whatever remnants there are in this program today, the CIO is still more committed to the development of a broader base of participation.

I. Did you have problems about employed workers as well as unemployed.

R. Oh yes, and of course we did some very interesting things during the marches and strike of the '40's. Part of my job during those strikes was to really negotiate with the city agencies for relief for strikers, which we were sucessful in doing, involving agencies like the Salvation Army, providing food and helping in our strike kitchens, the Salvation Army at one point brought mattresses in to Union Headquarters, so the pickets could have something to sleep on. We actually were very successful in the '40's in getting some of the agencies with high levels of good will who weren't frightened, like the Salvation Army never is, and others to provide support to strikers and their families. And there were some rather sticky issues as to whether strikers should get relief. We negotiated that successfully. In those years we had something really beautiful going. We had

an annual kind of a get-together conference and banquet for all the union councils. We attempted to keep very close track of everybody in training.

I. Where did you get the training for this? From the CIO?

R. Well, you know, in labor economics, at least the way I learned my trade at the University of Wisconsin, a very practical kind of training existed. First of all, when I was up there I had interaction with unions through the school of workers. I had field work: going out into the Kenosha, and Racine and Milwaukee, and I met many people in the labor movement. I had enough background, having worked in the field of labor economics, to know what our major social problems were and some notion to help the needy. But for the most part, you know, I learned by the seat of my pants. I had the local union experience, you see, so I was able, in a sense, to integrate the academic background from really a rather unusual set of teachers with the work experience that went right along with my graduate work, being right in a storefront on Chicago Avenue in the middle of strikes, organizing campaigns and so on. And then by the linkage with Welfare Council, all of those people there helped me a great deal to teach me

the anatomy of the Chicago Welfare system. And you learn by what other people give you.

I. What does the store front refer to?

R. Well, the store front was on Chicago Avenue, Local #20 Headquarters. And just to show you how green I was, and how idealistic I was when I came, I thought that since we had a lot of young girls and we were trying to organize and bring into the union. The storefront was dirty, it was dark, it looked like a gangsters layout. And when you looked inside there were these really beefy burly warehouse guys. It wasn't the kind of place a young girl would like to go to attend union meeting. I have always been interested in architecture and design, creative arts, and when I knew I was going to take the job in Chicago and I was still in Madison, I wrote to Frank Lloyd Wright who at that time was alive and well, And I said to him, "Dear Mr. Wright, You've thought a lot about how to work with structure. What do you think about helping me make a storefront on Chicago Avenue something meaningful to people who are going to be using it?" And the old boy invited rue to see him and that was really quite an

experience. And my dialogue with Frank LLoyd Wright was about the whole issue about what kind of an environment a labor union ought to be, thinking about and working towards what it ought to be. I wish now more than anything in the world that I had taped that because he spoke so eloquently about how the union had borders that were going up in the United States. All really totalitarian architecture to use Norman Mayers phrase.

I. That's true.

R. The marble walls and all, you know, the worst in architecture. And yet on the other hand, he was really so critical of the taste of the working man. He said to me, "What can I tell you. If you look at the Montgomery Ward catalog and you realize that the working people are buying their stuff, you will find that. the most. popular items are junk. And, therefore, to do that union hall in a way that is truly beautiful and fresh, you probably will find out that the problem is that it doesn't match the taste of the people in the union. " We had some interesting dialogue, but he said to me, "You know, I have an architect colleague,

ex-student of mine in Chicago, and I think you ought to go to her and I think you ought to ask her for her help." And that was Molly Leninbraugh who teaches Interior Design at the Art Institute. And I found in her a true helper and she literally came to Chicago Avenue for something like $80. and transferred that storefront into something simple but really bright and beautiful in good taste. I had a few scraps along the way with people who wanted to put crysanthmums along the windows on the floor and stuff like that. But really Frank Lloyd Wright did help me.

I. That's marvelous. A wonderful story.

R. I haven't seen her in years but she will remember that. Anyway that store front no longer exists, it has been wiped off the map. But it was a kind of historical little place. For me it was the center of my life for a number of years. So there I was.

1. Were the Chicago City officials very helpful?

R. Well, Al Rose, who at that time ran the Chicago Welfare Department which gave relief to the strikers, was one of the great people. I have a picture at home of me, and Frank Annunzio, who is now in the United States House

of Representatives, He was chairman of a committee when I was secretary. I have a picture of your Kennelly addressing this banquet. Stuff like that.

Tape 2.

I. You were saying that someone had lent you his staff.

R. Samuel C. Bernstein, an Employee Security Administrator for the State of Illinois and now the assistant to the Mayor of Chicago for Planpower. And then we had many agencies that we picked because the kinds of things that they were doing were very relevant to the needs of people--Legal Aid Bureau, for example, the United Charities was always very helpful to us in our training program, Jewish Family Service, public agencies involved in social security programs and so on. I went out and got help from those people that could help train and help our constituancy. I also think that the Welfare Council. of Chicago itself, by being the sponsor of this Labor Welfare Project and by making the funds available to do this work, was very important.

I. Well, let's get back to my other question. Did you have any enemies? Were there people who made difficulties? Parr of this must have been uphill not just because people were learning about new things and trying to do new things, but because there are some people who don't like unions.

R. Well, let's talk about our internal problems first. The CIO at that time was engaged in a very difficult struggle here in Chicago with Communist led groups. And the internal struggles within the CIO, for example in the packing house strike, broke out, it was obviously extremely important that relief be gotten for the strikers and that in a strike situation particularly its union counselors, if you have them should come to the fore because people need health care. They may need emergency food allowance, they may need intervention with landlords. A strike situation is more than any situation a time when there are more of these kinds of problems to deal with. And so we had set up for the emergency special strike counseling classes, because even if the union had failed to participate in this program and they had no counseling program, we were there--you know, like a crash program. Now, certain local unions didn't want us in there because now I was never a member of the Communist group. I was never a member of the Socialist group even though I spoke about being in New York that summer with the SLID. From the very early years of my life, I was profoundly influenced by Marx, as any economist must be. I was also profoundly influenced by Freud, John

Dewey, you know; many many people had an impact on my life, naturally, and I never did accept a Marxian description of the world, and certainly not the strategy of the Communist party, and the CIO. Some of the problems were internal.

I. Now these unions that you say wouldn't let you in were Communist led unions?

R. Yes. Well it isn't so much that they wouldn't let us in, because when it came right down to it we really had something to offer, but they made it difficult. And you asked me what difficulties there were. Some of these were very brutal, like they would stage a strike counselors meeting on a certain headquarters in a packinghouse area and get there in the morning and put up the proper signs to get people directed to what was a very frenetic scene, you know. And find out when the time came to meet the signs had been moved. Or on some occasions we would come into a meeting and some man that did not approve of our being there and that had not been cleared with would throw us out. And in those days, I travelled with a very big man, I mean he was six feet four. He was with me at all times because at one point some wild eyed guy took a cigarette butt and burned the arm of my secretary in one of the

strike headquarters. So, we had to have a little protection from our own people.

I. Now you were representing the Chicago IUC.

R. Right.

I. And this was a group within the IUC?

R. Yes, there were many factions but some of them were inter-union struggles like who was going to get the jobs, steel or auto. You know there were always strains within the right wing groups. The right wing groups were determined not to let the Communist groups control the Industrial Union Council. And it was a fierce struggle.

I. What would have happened do you think had they won. What was the danger? What union was it that tried to determine the life of the labor movement?

R. If the power structure were in the hands of the Communist Party; a great many of us felt that, first of all the kinds of programs we were concerned about that were relevant to the needs of the membership would be not the highest priority to the Communist Party leaders. But the constituancy and their potential power would be diverted to other goals which are high priority and which were high priority during the

war to the American Communist Party.

I. Could you be more specific?.

R. Oh, I really don't have to be, do I? Like you're either concerned with developing, promoting, sustaining the Communist Party agenda and strategy or you're concerned with promoting and developing an American Labor Movement that's concerned with the economic, social, and political goals of the American Labor Movement . You know, it's so well documented and there are so damn many books on the subject and reports.

I. I'm trying to get more of a personal view of it.

R. It was more than just a struggle forpower, which you know is life in movements. More like just a naked struggle for power. I wish that it indeed had more clarity in terms of the idealogical issues. If I could sit down and write the differences between what I perceived then to be a militant, aggressive, sound program for Chicago CIO, it would look a hell of a lot different from what some Communist led factions would. I would have loved it as I always do love it if you have idealogical hang-ups or differences that you make them very clear and specific when arguing on the issues. But you never really enjoy and indulge in that luxury because these guys are, so busy struggling for survival and power

that the idealogical clarity is sacrificed. And that doesn't mean to say that there weren't a hell of a lot of Communists in the Communist dominated unions that worked with great commitment, great dedication and enormous skill to do good things. And it also doesn't mean that the right wing unions-were full of angels and saints who had democratic organizations, and when they complained that the Communists did not believe in democracy, that they were paragons of virtue themselves. You know life is never that clear. But essentially in the struggles that took place, and that will take place in the rest of my life you know I am not in support, in sympathy, in rapport with Communist, i.e. Marxist, i.e. Marcusian, i.e. S.D.S., i.e. Weathermen, or whatever. This is not my value. No. And yet on the other hand I believe in complete freedom of all those groups to agitate, organize, combat, confront,. because otherwise we're not going to make it in this world.

I. Well then your position within the Industrial Union circles is the natural one that the Communists are not going to come up with a good labor program.

R. Right . And I don't think that they're going to come up with democratic unions.

I. Your internal difficulties were really mostly with

these particular unions?

R. Right, Another internal difficulty was just sheer apathy. And if I were to put any difficulty on top of the list, it would not be that the establishment was no good or that Communists were our real problem, but that it takes a hell of a lot of commitment, understanding, concern for people, commitment to the group for development of people, and commitment to developing new leadership from within the union to make something like this come alive. So the real problem is what kinds of energies, commitments, exist within the labor movement to make something like this really work.

I. Did you have to have the full support of top union officials?

R. I think I did pretty well. I think that the Steelworkers Union was, and even despite these problems in packing house, Ralph Helstein was cooperative and we did some good deeds there. And I, myself, feel that considering that it was a time of great struggle to organize the unorganized and to consolidate things a meaningful CIO Cook County Organization could impact the city in some relevant ways and be something good for the community. In view of all of these things, I would say, on the whole, that we enjoyed enthusiastic support although far short

of what I would call total commitment. I think that it was really a failure to see that this kind of community program could if it had ever really succeeded in the CIO have produced a somewhat different labor movement than we have in the '70's, a less parochial movement.

I. Did you work at all for the Democratic Party in Chicago?

R. No, as a matter of fact our hidden agenda was to create political structures of all kinds. We were at that time just in the early years of the P.A.C., the Political Action Committee. Our feeling was more to be engaged ineffective political action that you had to offer something more than just a list of your candidates to work for, that you ought to be in the precincts, that our union counselor ought to be providing the same kind of support and counseling, advice, referral services, home visiting. We saw the union council modeling our selves after the power of that system. That doesn't mean that if you had a good politician in certain corn-munities, the Democratic Party, that their influence couldn't be brought to bear to get certain things done.

I. Well, now, let‘s get back to the external problems.

R. Well, the external problems are still with us and that is that we talked a great deal about labor participation,

in the Health and Welfare System. Now-a-days, the 1970 terminology is "community control" which in many cases is mere rhetoric. I don't think the whole issue of what we meant by community, control has been really thought through. Even let's say at the weakest end Of the spectrum, where the community runs, controls its own system and over here is labor participation, or community participation so we worked very hard to get labor, people on to boards and strategic committees and so on. The decisions are made and the funds are spent to provide services. Now, here again since I don't have really an angel-devil view of the world, the most part the agencies were not really ready to accept labor participation, and when I say labor I mean labor-consumer. participation, client 'participation. So that the numbers that came forward and said well look we've got an eighteen man board, and eleven of them are from the North Shore, and we have three or four more who are professionals, maybe top staff people of various agencies that came forth and said, you know, look, we're working in the inner-city, providing services mostly to people that can't afford medical care, that have to go someplace to get a set of false teeth. They can't afford a doctor. We should have consumer representation.

Those were few and far in between.

I. Which ones did you work on?

R. Well, Metropolitan Housing and Planning was one that really wanted labor participation. And we think that's pretty effective participation. There were many agencies that fought to bring labor on, simply because by having X Y Z on the board they thought they could raise money. But those agencies largely brought laborbrass on the board. And so you might have, which still exists, one guy who is chairman of this or director of that who sits on as many as twelve or fifteen boards in the community and doesn't show up at any of them. And if he does show up he has nothing to say. That's token representation and it's done with labor people, it's done with Blacks. It's a favorite pattern of agencies. So in my judgement, we're still in the same situation in Chicago today. I really see no large scale integration of community-client-labor involvement in the League, and I've come to the conclusion that the only way it will ever happens with the raw agressive organization producing the groups themselves.

I. You mentioned the Metropolitan Council. Could you tell me what labor representation was on the council?

R. Well they had Mike Nann on their board. And Mike Nann

took the trouble to try to understand what was going on in the house and field. He communicated these problems and issues back from his involvement with the council to the rank and file. This is something extremely important, because what good is it to sit on a board, you're learning things, and nobody knows about it. So I felt that his feedback to his own group was good. The other thing is that he took some time to think through what his unique contribution to that board could be. And so I think he did see himself. Most labor unions in the housing field are involving themselves with building codes. The problem we're confronted with in the Chicago Plan. today is the union is seen as restricted. But what Mike did was to come to those council meetings with a strong eloquent articulate support for the expansion of local housing and good policies in the community for the disadvantaged minority groups to enable them to get housing and to remove the restrictive barriers which kept the cost of housing high. And he stood for some decent social planning, physical planning for the city. Well now, it's clear that he made a contribution within his own union, but I mean did the union show more consideration for social problems? The union council?

R. I think so, I think that the only way that you could

check that out is to go and talk to people like Dorothy Ruper who were there during those years. She will probably say, I imagine, that he was a source of strength in any fights that she had to get into to produce certain changes. The fact that the CIO was there and that it understood the issues and that it was with the good changes that had to be made, when they walked into the Mayor or when they walked into the Building Commisioners office, this was important. But for the most part it was a discouraging picture because we did not have the caliber leadership of trained, articulate, feeling comfortable. You know, you bring a guy in from the steel workers union who has, let's say, -been an excellent union counselor in the Reynolds. Metal Company and you tell him you're going to go downtown to represent the CIO in the Red Cross or Tuberculosis Institute, or Travelors Aid Society or what-have-you, and you can't expect him to function really well for a while.

I. You really train them.

R. Yes, and I don't think we ever did enough in this. And therefore some of the agency people, the best of the lot, who really wanted high-caliber participation tended to become frustrated and disappointed, because here they

fought so hard to get labor personnel on the board and the guy just didn't inject much. And I have compassion for them, too, because they wanted to do the right thing. The person that came on just wasn't equipped. What you have is you want to bring a lion in and you get a mouse. But you see this is the price, that our society pays for the fact that we have never really had more than the thinnest veneer of leadership. You know in any of our good movements, good agencies and so on, when you lose a Dr. Martin Luther. King or a Walter Reuther. Walter Reuther's union is in about the best shape of any union I know, with Woodcock and people like that to stand in. But the people that I have talked to in Washington say that some of our highest Priority social programs are really held in tack by the thinnest veneer of leadership. And when you get below that level you're lost. "Even with programs that are under financed, and where the expectation held out for them are too high, we could accomplish so much more if below this thin veneer we had a middle level cadre of people that were ready to implement what these people on top conceptualize. And so we have a society which produces great businessmen, merchants, entrepreneurs and so on. In the whole field of human services, public services it has never been topped off

in this field. Well that's probably way off the subject.

I. Not really. An explanation, a part of what's happened.

R. You know, it also means that in any really great new idea - let us say that the idea of full, active, sophisticated, labor participation in the life of this community, assuming that were a brave, new, good idea We are talking about like a 25 year program. It has to be mounted, sustained; the labor movement would have to put real resources into this, get talent into it, keep the talent.. Like much of the talent of the CIO went into the Peace Corps. Much of the talent went into the university labor movement, programs. I'm not there, you know, in the labor movement, and there are many many more like me, that exported themselves or were exported. And so what you have here in l970 is, in my judgement a regressed picture.

I. You don't have young people coming to help you?

R. You don't have the kind of fantastic sweeping corps of young intellectuals like myself. Young intellectual-activists like in the '40's. It was an incredible period when the labor movement was able to garner, and by the way I worked for $35 a week in New York or maybe it was $50. But people did not care about

that because they felt they were in something that was so important.

I. Nor was that such a rotten wage then.

R. It was not really that tough, but a lot of us had choices. Particularly as you got into the '40's. I'm not talking about the '30's but in the '40's there were choices. There were choices of working for government. I myself was offered quite a few other jobs, but it was really the labor movement for me.

I. Do you remember something that happened in 1946, was it?

R. In 1946 I was invited to come to New York, it was around, Washington's birthday, and make a speech at the Seminary. It was part of a series organized by Liston Pope of Yale.

I. What Seminary was this?

R. The seminars were at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, but Liston Pope of Yale's Seminary group was really the person that was organizing this. And I forget how many there were in the sequence, but the title was called the "Spiritual Autobiography of Labor Leaders." And they picked I remember Mark Star, Kermit Eby, several other people and I was invited. And it was really a historic moment in my life because I met my first husband there.

I. The original Autobiographies of Labor Leaders.

R. And I wrote a chapter in there, and it was eventually published in a book, in which I talk about my childhood and why I went into the labor movement. My title, it took something out of the text, something I said about "The Union gives John Doe a Face and a Name," was the title of my chapter. I'll look for it if you care to read it, because it would be somewhat like this, but it would be the way I sounded. And by the way at the University of Wisconsin is my Ph. D, thesis on Montgomery Ward versus the Union, in the library there. In front of it is a letter that Dr. Perlman gave me. Because Montgomery Ward attorneys came up to try to get my thesis and try to use it for court purposes. And he called me up in the beginning and said to write him a letter saying that not under any circumstances could any portions of my thesis be used without my permission. so it is still sitting there dated 1948. But I did want to remember that particular chapter that I had written and also to say that going to New York was very important because it was there I met the man that I was to marry which eventually resulted in my leaving the labor movement in 1950 to begin to work with him.

I. Now what was his name?

R. Sam Bordelon. But between 1948 and the time I left, I was almost ready to have a baby at that time, some interesting things happened to me which were very destructive to me at the time. It was then that I began to see the enormous potential that we had generated in Chicago, you know the labor movement, the brand new breed of union official.

I. Interested in social problems, interested in human problems, that type?

R. And even in a sense, temperamentally different from the kinds of people we meet in adversary situations in management. There had been enough going on and enough that I have seen and enough of the people I have met and loved and worked with. I began to see that the kind of man or woman that. does very well in scrapping with the foreman, in taking the necessary belligerant stands, that's out front in taking certain kinds of risks always has to be kind of important in the mix of union leaders we have. But among the union counselors I have encountered to a large extent, what I would call helping people, helping-type people. People who were less effective, let's say--this wasn't always true,

not by a long shot. I don't know very many people who were both, but I encountered a large number of people that in their own way had a kind of quality of sensitivity that if you or I were in the factory and wanted to talk to somebody about a problem, and it wasn't something like a wage problem or grievance, we wouldn't go to the Steward, we would go to some other guy who you know would listen, you know. And I had a very deep feeling that these people had great potential and that they could use more developmental work, and I, at that time saw them as becoming very active, not only in local unions but in their work with neighborhoods. Back-of-the-Yards Council had already been organized but we didn't have the kind of thrust of community based organizations we have today. But I had somewhere in my mind in those years, and this is like 20 years ago, a notion that these counselors could become a very important part of the backbone of indigenous movements in the community of Chicago. Now, all of this connected up with something in my own developmental process which is that I became very interested in what we were doing in worker education. And I became more and more critical of the technology, the techniques, the methods, the structuring of-what

was called and is called Worker's Education, because it was basically built around the authoritarian concepts of teaching. Again, to bring it home to today, it was the kind of Trade Union education in those days, which is causing student riots today in universities. They learned more passive and for the most part, no real attention was paid to treating one as an individual, he may be needing certain kinds of developmental work done for him.

I. Were the courses relevant?

R. Yes, I think the labor movement is a very practical movement and that's a great asset and a great liability, too. For example: teaching people how to handle grievances, parliamentary procedure, you know union courses about labor history are important to give you a sense of where this movement comes from. But leadership training? No. How do you make your union a democratic organization? No. What do you do about the fact that your present union officials are growing old? What about the problems of successian? These are all problems many people have pondered about, but most frequently Workers Education was what you might call utilitarian in-house education geared towards very pragmatic ends of making sure that the union knows

how to solve grievances, get good contracts, etc. Even within the framework of that narrow scope, our methods were fifty years behind the times in terms of how we conducted the learning experience; And I, at that time, became very interested in some of the things that were going on in the whole field of group process, of leadership training, the work Curt Neuman was doing at M.I.T., which eventually resulted in the setting up of National Training Laboratories. And this is now, I'm talking about 1948, so this is just the beginning of this for this country. I contacted Herb Phelan from the University of Chicago, who is doing some very interesting work at that time and still is, finding out whether people really do learn and how do they learn, and how we can ever find out a way that the learners can let the the teachers know whether they are getting anything out of it. And Herb is doing this research with his own students. So I began to train union counselors in how to lead discussions. I began to relinquish the chairmanship of certain groups and rotate the responsibility of the people in the group. I began to, in other words, especially with my graduate union counselors, I really began to use some innovative teaching techniques. And nowhere in the labor movement was there any support for this. There

was fright. This was regarded as a kind of a threat. The old union counsel or training design, was essentially to bring the expert in, he tells it all, they have a professional discussion and then he goes away. And I was going to use the training situation as a crucible in which people in the group could actually structure the use of the resource person where they could really start developing along lines that were more relevant to themselves. Change it, add on to it. I felt that after these years, that it was becoming kind of concrete, that it had a tendency that it would lose it's vitality by becoming too institutionalized. But all of this coincided with a couple of other unfortunate things. One was that this struggle for power was developing in the CIO. Industrial Union Council itself between the steel workers and the auto, workers as to, who was going to take charge of the organization. And Mike Mann was eventually taken out and sent to New York to become the regional director. The happy thing was that I was just about ready to have a baby. But the anxieties that had developed among a number of people about these innovative methods sort of fed into the tensions around 1950. And we had a visitation from the New York Community Services Committee here with my group in which they

quizzed the group in my presence as to whether these methods were understood, acceptable to them. By the way, most of the people who weren't frightened spoke with great enthusiasm about these methods we used. The result of it was that I announced my resignation to have my child, I had intended anyway to go. But I left feeling very hurt and distraught because my departure was almost exactly timed with Mike Mann leaving the scene and a struggle for power developing here.

I. Mike Mann had been a source of strength to you?

R. Yes. I very much supported him and he very well understood what we were up to. And he did everything he could to enable me to work. In any event, my job was taken over by others. They were people that I had trained - Union Counselors. And they picked two men from the Steel Workers Union, and that, of course, would indicate to you that the steel workers got hold of the situation. You see Mike Mann came out of the Retail and Department Store Employees Union, which is nothing in terms of numbers in the city, it never was. So in a true sense, the fact that steel or auto should take over the Council at that moment of existence was quite legitimate. But what happened in the shuffle was that the political changes, the jobs that were available,

the one that I had for example, there were two connected with my program went to people connected with the steel-workers union. It was fortunate at least that they picked people that had had some experience with union counseling. Since as we've always said, there's not much turnover in labor movement, those very same people are there today twenty years later. And a good deal of what we had built up in momentum those years sustained itself, although some residue is there. Much more so than the AFL. So that was a sad thing in my life, to experience the undoing of something.

I don't think that I have a right to speak about exactly what exists today, because I am not close to that picture. The men that are running these programs for the CIO and that labor unions project are good men. It's just that there doesn't seem to be the kind of, what should I say, the large vision. And it may not be entirely their fault. Because you cannot, without a great deal of risk-taking, move too far ahead of your constituancy. Now, it happened in those years, the CIO constituancy was really cooking. And now, you know, we have a lot of talk about what is cooking. So, what I went through, let's say from 1950 to 1960 when I was in a whole other world, was a nagging sense of sadness

because the people that I had talked to told me that for example that referrals had declined, that the tempo of training, the conceptualizing of the training program, the continuing development of the counselors that we had already trained didn't seem to be really swinging. That's a hard thing to explain because it's like you had really worked very hard, like in this case it was 6 or 7 years of my life. You get to feel some frustration when you sea that it had not become institutionalized around the larger vision. It has become institutionalized at some plateau, somewhere.

I. Of course, you started at the most exciting time, the great day. And now it's rich and fat and it has to be entirely different.

R. I can't accept that.

I. You think it still could have a crusading spirit? Could people with real power crusade? I think the only crusade is to get the power.

R. It's hard for me to respond in terms of a generalization like that. But I know many people who have great power who keep intact their spirit, their commitment, and you know their dreams about what has to be and their willingness to pursue those. You know, if we were to make a score card that would be a really interesting research

project to see what happened to those of us of the '40's- where did we go? How many are today in positions of power with really the things they felt in the '30's and '40's still compelling them, and which ones have abdicated long ago. It would be fascinating.

I. We're really talking about an institution. What in dividuals? Individuals have to come to terms with the institution.

R. Well, there are all kinds of ways to come to terms with an institution, depending on whether you are an administrator or not. I don't ever want to ever be part of an institution in which my role isn't seen as one of change. I mean it isn't worth it to me, to-be connected with an institution that takes my life's energy, my limited life span and simply grinds it up to keep things the same. I mean, I couldn't care less. And I think . there are a lot of people like me that are grains of sand in an institution, that deliberately, consciously choose to work at what they consider to be leading edges of change. No, I don't think it is inevitable for people to give up.

I. Do you think you could go back into the CIO and make a stand? Do you think you could do that?

R. Depending on my contract. I believe in very clear

contracts for one thing.

You think anybody. could get clear contracts? To go back in the CIO and move things move the institution forward towards social change?

R. In some places, I've discovered that there is no institution that I would work in that is so invulnerable, that doesn't have cracks, empty spaces, vacuums. It's like a very beautiful little novel that Oscar Talcov once wrote called The Monastery. The whole point of which is that the biggest trap that we're in is of our own fear. And we have a hell of a lot more freedom than we use. The trap of our democracies is that people don't understand that they are vulnerable, and there are many places to work in if you have the stamina and the skill, you know.

I. Do you want to talk at all about the individuals connected with the demise of your program if that's what it was? I mean you spoke of Mike Mann as a person who supported you, whose career, I guess, is in a sense hooked up with yours. Do you want to talk about the others?

R. You see I'm suffering from two decades of absence from this.

I. I mean at some point you confronted people, didn't you?

You said, "Look you can't do this, you must do it this way. You can't become moribund."

R . You mean after I left?

I. No, during the struggle.

R. During the struggle which culminated - it was never confronted on the basis of their not liking my program. The program was, I think, the best in the United States. And I had so much reinforcement from the outside, like people saying that. And they would use me to go into various places around, like when we ran national institutes and we would bring new people in from different cities that were starting this program, I was part of the training team to train those. So nobody could really come to Chicago and say that I've lost my marbles or something, or that I've run the program aground because at that moment it I was just really a great program. What was being questioned was certain new methods that I was using, and the anxiety that churned up with others. But it was so integral a part of the political shake-up that was going to take place, that it never got discussed on its own merits to speak of. And since then, by the way, the odd thing, is that, I didn't even know it at the time, but at the time the United Auto Workers Education Department was already beginning to develop

some of the same approaches and materials and so on and Lou Karliner there in Detroit, was beginning to realize that the kinds of techniques we were using were very archaic and they better start to catch up in the new education. Today the labor movement is still not up front with these techniques, but they are using things like buzz groups, you know, and rotating leadership responsibilities in a group. They're not too hot on sensitivity training and things like that. But there is beginning to be felt, in the labor movement, way behind industry by the way, I mean industry and, government are proceeding far beyond them, some awareness of the kind of things I was trying to do there. Today they are almost old hat. So, I was never engaged in any kind of struggle at the end, as to whether my program was good or not. I think the only issue was who was going to take my job, it was as simple as that.

I. Did you have certain people in mind?

R. No. This is not at all a practical situation, in which I would be consulted.

I. So this just happened without any confronting?

R. Yes. Who really should have confronted it was the Welfare Council. You see, there still remains in the

Welfare Council of Chicago, a pretty good budget for labor staff that is supposed to be doing this job. And I am really quite bitter about the fact that, having had a program of quality, that the Welfare Council would not have bargained very strenuously for the maintenance of the standards of the program. And they didn't.

I. Do you know why?

R. Chicken.

I. Did you go to them? Did you make any kind of appeal? Did you talk to people? Did you say that you thought they could do something if they wished?

R. No. You see, I must make it clear to you that this, what I call the demise, didn't appear that way out front. What was obvious was that-there was some serious questioning about union education methods. What was also clear was that I was very pregnant and that I was going to leave.

I. You would have left in any event--not taken leave.

R. Right. I was going to leave because I was going to get involved in a whole, new thing. Nobody approached me and said, well now, by the way I did have one woman

that was working for me that was kept on for a while. And I guess, as I recall that my thought was that she would be very well prepared to carry forward. So in other words, it was not a question of my first dumping the program and going off. I had a strong sense of responsibility. I, by the way, had the feeling that, we had trained a lot of good people. I had no way of knowing just to what extent they would carry on and with what degree of commitment. So I did not leave in any way to try to organize some kind of protection for this program. I didn't occur to me that the program would not somehow carry on.

I. You think the opportunity for confrontation came later then, after you left?

R. I think opportunities for confrontation exist in any, movement. I think the Welfare Council could have done a number of things, to insist on a certain quality of personnel, to insist on certain outcomes, to monitor the number of classes that were being offered, where they could have taken a strong position.

I. Would they have risked losing labor support if they did?

R. I suppose they were concerned. When I say "chicken," I mean afraid to really lay it on the line. Saying this is what we want and getting it out of the staff.

I. Now when you talk of changes in education techniques, it's grabbing at the heart of an American idea, really.

R. Way back then I was totally convinced that the Workers Education Movement in the United States was what continued to be extremely peripheral and that it was a serviceable thing for me to have. But much of what goes. on in training programs in industry, training programs in government, training programs most everywherei is that the trainers are really a marginal group. They're kept there and are used maybe to reinforce what the establishment wants the people taught. So it really more indoctrination that it is an orientation, than it is what I would call education, which to me means development of leadership, to train people for power, to assume power realistically, and democratically. But Workers Education movement in this country has never really been in my judgement a powerful force. If it had been you wouldn't be able to sit there and say to me; well the institution has grown fat.

I. I didn't mean to be provacative, it's just that I felt there was a possible explanation for it as you described it.

R. You see I really believe in the dynamics of agression. I believe you can take something like what that CIO was in the '40's and you can with the passage of time and

inaction and deliberate policies break the back of any cause. You can cause people to leave, you can put people down, you, cannot spend money. You know, it was all easy to kill.

I. Well, anyway you lived through the great ones--the great days, I'm very glad that you've talked to me. about it.

R. There's something and it's an organization formed called the Ad-Hoc Committee, last year, and one of my old counselors, Rayfield Mooty, is head of that. It's the National Ad-Hoc Committee to try to get more representation of Blacks and women into the actual jobs of the labor movement office.

I. Funny, isn't it? Because your first attempt was to get labor people on boards, now your attempt is to get Blacks and women on labor boards.

On labor jobs. So he asked me for that photograph and he wrote a brochure. Really what it is essentially doing is combining civil rights and theme songs for the Women's Lib, because he has a section there on women of steel, in which he is showing Black women who have really contributed to the steel workers union in the past that has no women to speak of. He's got my

picture there with some little story about what I did in union counseling. I'm the only white woman in this group. And I'm just wondering what this is going to look like. I have to laugh if Joe Germano and Frank Annunzio and some of my old friends see this daring group's brochure. But that all went on in 1950 and I never went back to that.

I. And I take it that you've not regretted it?

R. Well, I intuitivly always go to places to do things where something has to be kind of inventive.

APPENDIX

Myrna Bordelon Kassel, Ph.D.
515 West Belden Avenue
Chicago, 60614, Illinois
Telephone: A/C312 281-5676

RESUME

Academic

Born in Passaic, New Jersey, 1918; attended and was graduated from Passaic schools. Awarded scholarship to the New Jersey College For Women and was graduated with honors and special distinction in economics in 1939. Elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society during Junior year. Was awarded Legislative Fellowship by the University of Wisconsin and received a Master's Degree in the School of Economics in 1941. During 1940 and 1941 was awarded the Vorhees Fellowship by the New Jersey College for Women for advanced study in the field of economics. Completed residence and academic requirements for the Doctor's Degree in 1943 at the University of Wisconsin, majoring in economics and public administration. As graduate student, served as teaching and research assistant to Professor Selig Perlman. In 1946 submitted the doctoral dissertation and received the Ph. D. degree.

Labor Education

Graduate work was interrupted to undertake a year of field work as Education Director of the New York Women's Trade Union League. (1941-2) In this capacity developed and directed an adult education and recreation program for working women, including formal classes, field trips, conferences, radio seminars and a variety of special projects bringing the members of the League into broader contact with community organizations.

While serving as Professor Perlman's assistant, became associated with the University of Wisconsin School for Workers in the planning of the summer curricula and in the teaching of extension classes throughout the State. For a period of three summers, served as faculty member of the Summer School, teaching courses in labor history, union administration, collective bargaining and workers' education techniques.

From 1943 through August 1945, employed as the Education and Public Relations Director of the United Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Employees of America, CIO, Local 20, the Montgomery Ward Union in Chicago. Responsibilities here originally involved developing an education and recreation service for the members of the union. Because of the special difficulties which emerged in the union-management relationship during the war, however, these functions were enlarged to include the publishing of a weekly paper, organizing citizen's groups and enlisting both financial and moral support from organized labor for the Montgomery Ward Union.

Community Services

While associated with the union, was elected to serve as Executive Secretary of the Community Services Committee of the Chicago Industrial Union Council, CIO. In this committee, programs were developed which culminated in the establishment of the Labor-Welfare

Project by the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago. In 1945 was appointed by the Welfare Council to the staff of this Project.

For the following five years, functioned as Liaison Officer between the Labor-Welfare Project of the Welfare Council and the Chicago Industrial Union Council. This program was one of the first to be set up in this country for the purpose of providing information and training to industrial workers in the fields of health and welfare. An equally important function of this Project was to develop opportunities for industrial workers to participate in community welfare planning, both on a neighborhood and city-wide level.

During these years, developed and directed a Union Counselling program through which 1500 union members and officers took part in classes and related training programs which enabled them to assist their members in handling their health and welfare problems. Through this program, processes were set into motion through which thousands of out-of-plant problems were referred to appropriate health and welfare agencies throughout the Metropolitan area. From this group of trained persons, a considerable number of individuals was recruited for service on boards and committees of community organizations seeking labor participation.

As staff member in charge of this program, worked closely with both public and private agencies, helping to interpret the needs, attitudes and interests of industrial workers and assisting in the planning and development of agency programs designed to meet these needs.

Through formal training programs, institutes, city-wide conferences and publications, the Chicago program was developed and at its five-year mark was regarded as a model for other large metropolitan areas to follow in establishing their own programs.

During this period was invited to teach courses and to participate in special programs sponsored by the University of Illinois, Roosevelt University and the University of Chicago. Served on Executive Boards and committees of agencies and organizations, including the Adult Education Council, the American Labor Education Society, the Metropolitan Planning and Housing Council and the American Federation of Teachers.

Bordelons

Bordelons was established in August 1948 in the Hyde Park area of Chicago. At its inception, Bordelons functioned as a contemporary design studio specializing in custom furniture design and manufacture. In the spring of 1950, resigned the Welfare Council position to give full-time attention to Bordelons. Bordelons subsequently expanded its area to include the merchandising of contemporary furnishings from a wide variety of domestic and import resources and the development of an interior design service. In 1955 Bordelons moved its location to the Near North side of Chicago.

During fifteen years of operation, Bordelons achieved a unique reputation in it's field for taste leadership, design integrity and a high level *of* consumer service. Two national awards for distinguished merchandising were presented to Bordelons by the American Marketing Congress in 1957 and 1959. The firm has been the subject of editorial and feature commentaries in trade papers and magazines.

Served as President of Bordelons since 1959, supervising the interior design program, purchasing, advertising, display, sales training, sales promotion and general administration. With the establishment of a Contract Division in 1959, Bordelons *enlarged* it's scope to include services to business, professional, commercial and institutional clients.

In 1964 liquidated Bordelons in order to become associated with the Illinois Department of Mental Health.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Served as Assistant Director of Personnel services from March 1964 to December 1965. In this capacity developed programs in the areas of training and recruitment of mental health manpower, labor relations, and personnel administration. In January of 1966 was appointed as Assistant Director of Professional Services Division. This Division was charged with the responsibility for the planning, coordinating and evaluation of the Department's manpower, training and staff development programs. In conjunction with this assignment, represents the Illinois Department of Mental Health on the following agency boards:

State Council on Continuing and Adult Education
State Advisory Committee on Health Occupations
Comprehensive Area Manpower Planning Committee for the Chicago Metropolitan Area

Has served as a member of the faculty of the Labor Education Division of Roosevelt University, Purdue University Mental Health Technicians Laboratory and as a consultant to the National Institute of Mental Health.

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