

Chandler Forman

BOOK 28

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Interview with Chandler Forman
By Barry Kritzberg
October 19, 1970

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Early Newspaper Work in Minnesota	1 - 4
Depression	4 - 5
Union Organizing in Minnesota	6-12
Work on Herald Examiner in Chicago.....	12-13
Organizing the Newspaper Guild in Chicago.....	14-23
Hearst Strike	24-31
Communist Influence in the Guild.....	32-35
Anti-left wing forces in the Guild.....	35-37
Problems in Guild Functioning.....	37-42
Left vs. Right	42-47
Offices Held in the Guild.....	48
American Newspaper Publishers Association vs. unions	49-52
Guild Growth After World War II.....	52-60

Interview with Chandler Forman

By Barry Kritzberg

October 1 , 1970

I. When did you begin your newspaper career, Chan?

R. I got out of the University of Minnesota in 1924 and I went from there to the Duluth Herald right into newspaper work. I had worked on the Minneapolis Tribune copy desk while I was still at the University of Minnesota. I grew up on a country newspaper in North Dakota. My father was editor and publisher of the weekly Hankinson (N.D.) News. I learned the printing trade in my father's shop and was a full full fledged journeyman before I got down to the University.

I. Did you belong to the printer's union?

R. I got a job in Minneapolis working part time while I was a freshman. My training under my father was good enough so that I was provided with a full working permit. I worked part time in a union shop. That was very brief however. That was the last time I worked at the trade.

After getting out of the University of Minnesota I wanted to get a job on the Minneapolis Tribune. I thought I had a job, but there weren't any open. It was in the Spring and I sent out a lot of letters. I got a job in Duluth in June but it got damn cold there in January, 30 below, so I went to Rockford, Illinois. I became a sports editor although I knew very little about sports. I was there for eight or nine months and I went back to Minneapolis. where I got a job on the Morning Tribune in the sports department. I worked for ten years as a sports writer and editor.

- I. When did you first go to the Minneapolis paper?
- R. In 1925. Those were the years of prosperity and peace in our country, under Coolidge and Hoover. It wasn't until '29 when the big crash came. It really didn't affect us much out there.
- I. What were working conditions like before the crash?
- R. Generally speaking, in Minneapolis, on the Tribune, the Journal and the old Daily News and the St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch and the St. Paul Daily News they were about comparable to other parts of the country. Hours were long and the pay wasn't big but there was a lot of freedom. The people working on the newspapers as reporters, copy readers, photographers and artists liked it. They made a living. That was general among other white collar workers -- long hours.
- I. There are certain special things about the newspaper business that more or less hindered the development of the union. One of these was the idea that newspaper business is a romance.
- R. And a profession. The publishers emphasized that. They later grabbed the organization called Sigma Delta Chi and really tried to use it for a while as a counter organization to the Newspaper Guild. That tactic didn't last very long, because it just didn't work.

- I. There were several associations then that possibly had conceived of the unions, beginning as far back as 1895 with the I.T.U. And there was a branching off from this in the '20's called the American Journalism Association which prided itself on not being involved in typical trade union activities like collective bargaining. This, again, is the idea of professional association. Was this a common attitude?
- R. I hadn't heard of these organizations out there. We were unfamiliar with them, although somebody working on the Minneapolis Tribune had been one of the organizers of an abortive union attempt in San Francisco quite a long time before that. It really wasn't that professional. It was just people liked to work on newspapers. Just like people getting into show biz.
- I. With the crash in '29 and the change of conditions did you feel that this had something to do with this changing attitude?
- R. It had everything to do with it. Specifically the Minneapolis Tribune where I was working was a prosperous newspaper with morning and evening editions. I was working on the morning newspaper. Things had always been rather nice. The hours were not long there and they did pay overtime. It wasn't really a bookkeeping process, but you got more than time and a half if you worked overtime. It was probably a sop, in a way, to keep people from leaving. Even then the lure of public relations was strong, because it paid a lot more money.

- I. There weren't conditions in the Minneapolis Tribune like there were in some of the Hearst newspapers, like frequent firing?
- R. No. Actually from 1925 to 1935 there were virtually no staff changes on the morning Tribune. When the crash came, our publisher was a staunch Republican and a firm believer in Hoover's philosophy. He really believed it when Hoover said, "Prosperity is just around the corner," it was just a temporary thing. So he poured his own money, which he had lots of, into the paper. He did not cut salaries or staff in hopes of riding this out. But about 1933 it really hit there. Things got real desperate. Advertising was way down and money was beginning to run out. They came through one week with a 10% salary cut. Later there was another 10% pay cut along with a 40% staff cut. They tried to do it on a very humanitarian basis, not on a basis of who had the most talent or could contribute most if he stayed, but on whether he was married or not and had children, and all the other humanitarian considerations.
- I. Who was the publisher there?
- R. His name was F. E. Murphy who inherited control of the Tribune. He didn't come in as a professional newspaper man. He had wide interests otherwise, including farming -- experimental farming. *(See note at end of manuscript)
- I. Very different then from the pattern of the rest of the

country as far as developing. In other words it was a very happy and stable kind of situation, a place where you'd think a union would be late in coming to. It came to Minneapolis before it did Chicago.

- R. That's true. Probably the very stability of that staff had a lot to do with it, because in Chicago on the Hearstpapers with which I'm familiar there was a great turn-over and that was a haven for drinking newspapermen. They would go there and pull out. They're not the best prospects for organization. They were always happy to latch onto a short-time job even if they had to move soon. After the second staff cut came in Minneapolis we heard rumblings of union talk. They didn't call it union, but a guild. Everybody was familiar with a column that Heywood Broun had written in the New York World, "So Let's Organize a Union." It was a kind of a catalyzing thing and it got things going. Everybody was talking about it.

On a Sunday night as I was getting out the morning sports section and the rest of the staff was getting out the rest of the newspaper, over the AP wire came a long story which was really labeled, "not for publication," about a meeting that had been held in Cleveland that Sunday afternoon in which several hundred Cleveland newspapermen, and one of the leaders was a former member of our staff in Minneapolis, had called a meeting in a hotel auditorium and virtually 100% of Cleveland's working editorial newspapermen had attended. The first thing that they did was to get it out into the open on the floor and say, "This is

an open meeting. We are here to organize a union." I don't know whether they used the term union or not. Everybody in that room signed up as members of this new organization. So that very evening after reading this, along about midnight seven of us from the staff went over to an office in the annex and sat down and said, "We've got to do something about this. Let's get in contact with the other newspapers and have a meeting and we'll have it next Sunday." And we did.

- I. This was in 1933?
- R. 1933 and it was in September, so they had the meeting and it was held in the ballroom of the Learnington Hotel in Minneapolis. Virtually 100% of the working newspapermen on the five newspapers in the Twin Cities attended. The first order of business was what went on in Cleveland and shall we do likewise. It was pretty unanimous that we should. In the meantime members of our staff had been in contact with Cleveland and New York, including Heywood Broun, to find out what came next. And there was talk of a national organizing meeting to be held in Washington. It had all come about in that intervening week. We elected a delegate to go to this and took up a collection to pay his fare to Washington. His name, is Gilfillan, and he's still out there. He's now a public relations man. He was an assistant head of the copy desk on the Minneapolis Tribune.

- I. This meeting in Washington was in December of 1933?

R. I'm not sure. It was late in '33. It was attended by delegates from a large number of groups around the country that organized their local guilds. They were calling them that. One of the things that they did at this meeting was to set the first national convention and they decided to hold it in St. Paul in 1934 in June. The first convention was held there. Heywood Broun was elected President and Jonathan Eddy of the New York Times was hired as first Executive Secretary of the Guild, the only paid person in the national organization at that time. They set up headquarters in New York in the old World building in a small office.

I. Were you at this first convention?

R. I was not a delegate. I was there and was Chairman of the Entertainment Committee. Entertainment was very important to the newspapermen at that time. We set up a bar that ran all week and the only agreement we made was that the bar would close during convention sessions. It was really a very interesting convention, part business and part social.

I. What came out of this convention?

R. The first Constitution of the American Newspaper Guild. I don't know how many towns and cities and newspapers it represented, but it was a large number. That was the beginning of our national organization and the beginning of a period in which some members of the Communist Party and fellow travelers who were active in labor organizations

all through that period took part in the organizing, because they had the techniques and they worked through a popular-front sort of thing. They didn't identify themselves as Communist Party members. They used the cell techniques in their own operations and they were out in front trying to get control of offices and meetings of the newspaper guilds. In this they were reasonably successful, without getting in the way of the principal objectives, which were union objectives.

- I. Would you say this was true because the newspapermen were inexperienced as trade unionists?
- R. That was the period of the organization of the CIO, the Committee for Industrial Organization it was originally. It was led by John L. Lewis, the head of the mine workers. He helped finance the early organization of the Guild. Lewis loaned the Guild its first organizer, Bill Davey. He came off the United Mine Workers payroll and his salary continued to be paid by the mine workers. He was assigned to Chicago. I came to Chicago in 1936, three years after the original organizing in the Twin Cities. Davey came in during that year and tried to get Chicago organized because Chicago was very backward. It never has been completely organized. In the meantime New York was solidly organized as were San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cleveland and other cities, including the Twin Cities.
- I. Was there much resistance to even moving into the AFL when the Guild was first formed?

- R. Sure. Most of the newspapermen were reluctant to consider themselves union men. They felt that just an organized presentation to the publishers would accomplish what they needed. The publishers were intelligent, decent men and the working newspapermen believed that when the publishers were made aware of the inequities, if this was presented graphically by members of the staff, that was enough. They workers were quickly disabused of this idea, of course, because there's one thing a publisher, just like any other employer, is reluctant to do, and that is to give his employees more money. That really was the key.
- I. That was the key then to moving into the AFL and finally the CIO?
- R. Well, there's a qualification there. The AFL was not as difficult as to swing over to the CIO. The members of the Communist Party - a really tiny minority in the guild - had a finger in most of this, because they were interested in a strong unionism set up that they could control. They had been pretty strong in the CIO mostly under cover. In the guild, they didn't identify themselves as Communists and some of us didn't know for years who was who. They were not in control of anything except key offices. There never were enough of them.
- I. But even as you said, their being in these positions did not necessarily conflict with trade union purposes today?

R. No. They used good trade union techniques. They were trying to get trade union type discipline into this setup, because you can't control anything unless you've got some discipline. The discipline of trade unionism, which is traditionally American, was what they used, really. And that was the reason for them helping to push the Guild into the AFL and later into the CIO, and also to get the strength of the labor movement behind this fledgling organization. Let me go back just a minute to this Minneapolis situation. The thing that really tipped the scales in Minneapolis, and that's a fairly conservative newspaper center, was that while the paper was unilaterally cutting newsroom salaries 10% and later another 10% and cutting the staff 40%, the printers' union, with a contract, negotiated a smaller and later reduction and the printers' union was able to control the layoffs on a seniority basis, a bitter object-lesson to the editorial workers who had no say whatsoever in what was done to them.

I. This then was a clear lesson in trade unionism?

R. It sure was and they got it quickly.

I. Earlier, I think it was in 1919 in Boston, all the newspapermen in Boston organized and got themselves together and the simple fact of their organization was enough to get them a significant raise, but as soon as they achieved it the unions collapsed and fell apart. Now, what was

there about the Guild that was able to keep it going and nothing collapsed once it achieved this?

- R. It was the times. To start with there was a depression. That was the first time that newspapermen had faced the reality of the economics of the newspaper business and how they were completely dependent on newspaper publishers' whims or paternalism.

Then the NRA came in and the Guild used the NRS and achieved through the NRS the forty hour week and time and a half for overtime and some minimum salaries. The minimums were pretty low. You can't believe, looking back -- twenty, twenty-five, thirty dollars a week -- in, that range, for a journeyman-newspaperman. Those were minimums in our cities. Then the Wagner Labor Act came in and that was the thing that protected these organizations from being torn apart by organized opposition of employers.- Many publishers, even back in the early days of the Guild and before that, belonged to such labor-busting organizations as the Citizen's Alliance. They. really were labor-busting organizations. A lot of the terrible union-busting techniques came out in the La Follette Committee hearings later and you can read about them now in the records of Congress.

- I. There was also an attempt to make a union shop into some kind of an attack on freedom of the press, wasn't there?

Actually there were several appeals that went all the way to the Supreme Court. Then there was another one

involving firings and that involved freedom of the press, also. That was the Watson case out of Los Angeles or San Francisco. I think the Supreme Court ruled against the publishers in all those cases involving freedom of the press in connection with working conditions and minimum salaries and union contracts.

I. Why did you leave Minneapolis? Was it because of the union business?

R. For personal reasons.

I. You weren't one of those 40 that were dismissed?

R. No, I was very lucky. I rode through that whole thing.

I. What paper did you come to in Chicago?

R. I came then to work on the Herald Examiner in '36.

I. That must have been quite a change from Minneapolis!

R. Well, I rather enjoyed it. The Hearst papers, whereas there was a lot of tyranny of sorts involved in running the Hearst papers, there was also a lot of personal, freedom around the newspapers. You could do anything you wanted as long as you got to work somehow. Freedom of speech was really something around a newspaper office. You could even talk critically about William Randolph Hearst or any of the top brass just as long as you came to work and got the newspaper out the way they wanted it. I worked there for a short time and then went to the old Times -- worked there for a year and a half. Then I

went back to the Herald Examiner where I worked for two years until the long newspaper Guild strike came along.

I. You were at the Examiner?

R. I was at the Examiner when the strike came in December of '38.

I. What about the unionism in Chicago? It started a little bit later than in Minneapolis. Had it started in '36?

R. Bill Davey was here trying to organize. I attended several meetings, but I had lost interest for other reasons. I was inactive at that period and when I got to the Herald-Examiner there was a very active Guild unit in each of the Herald Examiner and the Evening American, with strong leadership including some of the top people. One of the news editors was a leader in the organization.

I. One thing I noticed about the early Chicago deal is that there seemed to be quite a few more of the smaller foreign language papers involved, particularly the Abend-Post, the German paper.

R. Of course they had a tradition of unionism in labor organization coming out of Germany. Many of the earlier immigrants had left Germany to get away from political persecution. Germans had pioneered in so many social things, things that we didn't, get until the '30's.

I. They didn't really emerge as leaders of the Guild here?

R. No, partly because of their narrower interests. It's a specialized newspaper appealing to people who read a foreign language. They were just units and participants.

I. I know that Heywood Broun did come to Chicago early. I don't know if it was 1933 or 1934 on some kind of organizing tour. A lot of people turned out to see him, but when Jonathan Eddy in 1936 came to help do the real organizing, he could only get a handful of people out.

R. That's right. I was here at the time Eddy came in trying to get a meeting going. I attended one of the meetings. One of the problems of organizing at that time, and one of the Guild problems we had, was Jonathan Eddy's personality. He was a very dedicated guy. He quit a job at the New York Times, a very high paying job as a reporter. He came from a rather wealthy family, incidentally, but he had a rather abrasive personality and he was very strongwilled. He didn't have any charisma. He didn't have that magnetism that Broun would have had if he was doing that same kind of work. He upset many of the local leaders, when he came to town, by his tactics, and that later led to his being booted out of office at the San Francisco convention in 1948.

I. Was it that late?

R. Oh it couldn't have been. It's got to be earlier than that. He didn't last that long. There was a San Francisco

convention in 1948, but it wasn't then.

I. It wasn't 1940, was it?

R. I'm sorry. It was in 1938, because the second convention in San Francisco was ten years later. I recall that now. I wasn't at the 1938 convention but attended as a member of the International Executive- Board in 1948.

I. There were reasons for the greater difficulty in Chicago. It wasn't quite the clear demonstration of trade unionism and its values that you got in Minneapolis. One thing was the kind of conditions at the Hearst papers, the big turnovers.

R. Turnover was a big thing and they used the fact that there were Communists mixed up in the Newspaper Guild as a defense against the Guild in Chicago quite successfully, at the Chicago Tribune for instance.

I. How early was that?

R. It was before the Hearst strike, because during the Hearst strike several of the leaders of the unit at the Tribune were very active in helping the strikers.

1. The Tribune unit was almost exclusively underground, wasn't it?

R. I would say so. In order to get rid of "troublemakers;" the Tribune actually made a deal with two of the leaders to get rid of them without having to go to the NLRB.

I. Weren't there a couple of cases from the Tribune that did go to the NLRB? I think Virginia Gardner?,

R. Those cases were settled on a negotiated basis. There was nothing compelling the Tribune. It was Virginia Gardner and Cozy Dolan. Virginia in later years worked for one of the East European Embassies. Cozy went to the Metal Workers Union, the one that has headquarters in Denver, in which there was strong Communist influence.

I. Did you have much contact with the German language group?

R. Only in meetings. Actually at that time I wasn't very active except as a member in the union. I had been through this organizing trauma in Minneapolis and been quite active and when I came down here I'd had enough. I got tired of it, not that I did so much in Minneapolis, but I just didn't resume activity to start with because there wasn't very much here. I attended meetings and I had personal reasons for not having as much time and energy.

side 2 I. When you came to Chicago and the situation was obviously different, aside from being more fun and a little bit looser, but the economic condition was obviously not the same as in Minneapolis and there were a series of staff cuts at the Examiner and I think these things were the catalysts that got people going and finally brought them around to the Guild. How were the working conditions in 1936, '37, and '38, just prior to the strike, on the Examiner?

R. They were reasonably good. When I first came to Chicago, everybody was working a forty-eight hour week. The NLRB had put in a forty hour week by edict but it had been thrown out by the Supreme Court. They later resumed a forty hour week on the Hearst papers as well as other newspapers. This is as I remember it. There could be some inaccuracies. So I was working a forty hour week for forty-five dollars a week, which was more than they had been paying previously. I don't know why they hired me for forty-five dollars a week, but they did and that was more than they were paying other people on the copy desk and I was very surprised. I got this job, in Chicago after I had lost one in Minneapolis. On the Herald Examiner I worked for Kenneth Davenport who had a rather wild reputation for riding his men pretty hard, but I didn't find him difficult to work- for. He was really a very misunderstood guy. There were a lot of things involved that made it more legend than reality. But I worked for him happily for two and a half years during that period. It was a great desk to work on. Some of the best copy-reading in the country was being done on that desk and you had pride of achievement. If you could work on Davenport's desk, you could work anywhere. He trained some of the best in the country. I wasn't personally very unhappy with the situation, but there were things going on in other departments particularly. You remember that we were in the CIO and they had organized the so-called Commercial Department -- some advertising salesmen, but mostly the- circulation department, the white-collar

workers in the circulation departments, the branch managers as they called them who had various areas in the city where they were charged with getting customers and deliveries. That was a strong part of the unit at the two Hearst papers. They fired a couple of people and Guild leaders made issues out of it. The typical person working there, as long as he wasn't being pushed around as an individual, wasn't too unhappy, considering the times.

- I. What brought about the Guild then? I was under the impression that these waves of firing and insecurity had a lot to do with it.
- R. That's true. Most of that happened before I came to Chicago. I came there in '36 and most of this happened between '30 and '35. That was the period of real turmoil. For people who came to work there, conditions weren't so bad. These Hearst executives personally were affable people, not too difficult to work for. The firing waves, all the orders came from on top. They would order a staff cut, people from outside, they'd come in and order them cut. Even then, some of the local brass had ways of alleviating that. If you got fired in Chicago today word would get to New York and you'd probably be hired on a Hearst paper in New York the next week and guys that were fired in New York would pick jobs in Chicago. If they fired forty people maybe twenty of them would be hired back the next week at one Hearst paper or the other.

- I. Many of them right back?
- R. Yes many of them right back. I'm not trying to defend the tactics because they were pretty bad. I'm talking about person ally inside the shop when things were alright. If you were the guy that got fired, you were in trouble and it was sad. Salaries were pretty low and hours were long. When I came to Chicago things had improved a great deal economically. Things were picking up again in '36. Salaries had gone from what used to be thirty-five dollars on a copy desk and I was getting forty-five and later I went back to the Examiner for fifty-five. In the meantime, after they had resumed a forty-hour week, while I was working there in '36, they had organized strongly in New York. In New York, the Hearst management had posted a bulletin board unilateral notice, really a form of recognition of the Guild in which they had set some minimum salaries in New York on the copy desk and reporting and rewrite and had cut the work week back from forty-eight to forty hours. So because of the organizing of the Guild here Hearstexecutives immediately posted the same bulletin board notice in Chicago. So in one week I got a raise. from fifty-five to sixty dollars and a reduction of hours from forty-eight to forty.
- I. What year was that?
- R. It must have been '36 or '37.

I. Wasn't part of the intention of the bulletin board statement to avoid dealing with the Guild?

R. It was to avoid contract relationship with the Guild.

I. Oh, to keep an open shop.

R. Yeah.

I. Was there any fear that something that was put up today might be taken down tomorrow?

R. That was a strong thing, although this bulletin board notice in New York had been negotiated by the Guild.. It was an informal contract and incidentally, such a bulletin board notice posted by management was the first form of the Guild on the old Times.

I. Was there ever anything like this at the Tribune?

R. I wasn't very familiar-with things at the Tribune. It was rougher over there and I think it was mostly underground. I really don't know.

I. Didn't, the Tribune have to follow the going standards in terms of wages and hours?

R. I'm sure-they were as good or better all the way around than the others. It was a plush journalistic set-up. The Colonel prided himself on having a good staff, paying good salaries as he saw them, and on having good working conditions, including a pension fund. I don't know when that got going, but it was there long before it was any place else in Chicago except possibly the Daily News

which has an old pension fund. It may go back before the Depression, I'm not sure.

- I. At the Hearst papers then, there were at least a certain number of people who were reasonably happy with what they were doing and they were getting their money and reductions in hours and yet in 1938 there began a strike in December. What would you say was responsible for this?
- R. There were several issues that had developed. One was that newspapermen generally had a good feeling for their brothers. They are soft-hearted people, people with some social conscience. There were some obvious bad things going on and not only in their own department. They knew that people were being pushed around. They personally might not be, they may have had it good, but there were whim firings and then there were just petty persecutions by tyrannical assistant city editors and chief photographers and such. That wasn't necessarily a weakness of the Hearst set-up at that time, but any place where you had a straw boss with jurisdiction over a small group of people, if he just happens to be the wrong kind of personality or a vindictive kind of person who gets mad at somebody, he could do all kinds of things to make an employee's life miserable. That is one thing that members of the Guild, later on-under the contracts, found to be one of the greatest of benefits -- the protection against petty persecutions by department heads and assistant department heads because you had the grievance procedure and before that you just had to

quit. There was no defense. You tried to go over his head and the boss would almost always uphold his department heads, but with the grievance procedure you could go in and correct these things. The threat of a grievance session usually led a department head or straw boss to be reasonable and cut it out. That was often the approach of a Guild officer or steward or unit chairman. He would go and say, "Now look, cut it out. You don't want a grievance session." And that would usually be enough. I don't mean there was a lot of that, but that was a great protection for people who were being pushed around.

- I. None of these things were available in '38 when the strike was going on?
- R. No and I think that had a great deal to do with organizing. When you were aware -that you were okay and things weren't happening to you, but they were happening to other people for no good reason and sometimes that would be a real hardship to find out that a guy was having trouble getting a job, because times were tough and his family was suffering. I think that had a great effect on people who at that time, on a personal basis, felt that maybe they didn't need the Guild. We had a lot of that kind of people among the leadership. Especially the leadership. The chief of the copy desk, a guy who rated as a new editor, was one of the leaders in the Hearst strike. He went over to the New-York News and had a very top job after the strike.

- I. With this feeling then that whatever persecution was happening to someone else, might happen to you, that in itself doesn't seem a sufficient explanation for the strike. I'm sure there must have been other things that built this up to the point that the strike came.
- R. There's no question about the fact that there were techniques of organizing and of leadership, some of which came out of the techniques of the Communists. They kept people thinking about the injustices and the inequities. I don't want to overemphasize the influence of the Communists. It wasn't probably nearly as strong in influence as it seems when you recall it. The grievances were legitimate, not only on the Hearst papers, but generally through the business. Newspaper men are bright enough., having gone through most of the Depression, to recognize that these things shouldn't go on and there must be some kind of protection. Then there was the influence of organizing generally. This was a great period for organizing and these were white collar so-called "professional" people and yet they could recognize that their problems with their employers were basically the same as other trade union people. That was also a great period, the Roosevelt period for general welfare and recognition of social issues. I think that the typical newspaperman, for maybe the first time, became really socially conscious, became conscious of social issues and thing beyond themselves.

What tipped off the Hearst strike itself were some very specific grievances. I have difficulty even now

getting them down without refreshing my memory and digging into the past. Part of this is because the period was painful enough that a lot of this was driven into the unconscious and you're not very anxious to get it out. When you start talking about it with other former strikers you can see the look of pain come into their faces. I didn't suffer as much during the Hearst strike as many of them did. Many of them suffered a great deal. Deprivation -- all kinds of things happened to them during that period. I was fortunate enough not to go through some of the pain that they did. But I can see that some of this is driven back into my own unconscious. I'm not very eager to talk about some of the painful parts. And some of the things get rubbed out of your memory bank. Your recall isn't very good.

- I. In reading through the strike bulletins and other things in the Guild offices about the Hearst strike, it seems that the morale was quite remarkable. I was wondering if this was something just on paper or if this was really so.
- R. No. It was really there. They had a good organization. To start with these are kind of outgoing people, people who are homogeneous in a sense. They quickly organized a good set-up for the strikers. Remember this was before the days of strike benefits. There wasn't any money in the Guild's national treasury or the local treasury. We had to scrounge for money to support the strike and the people in it, to keep them eating and to

keep them from losing their houses. There were one or two who did lose their houses on mortgage foreclosures. The Guild set up a strike headquarters downtown and over the 19 months of the strike there were several different headquarters. One was in the basement of the Randolph Towers Building. It was an ideal set-up. They set up the bar of the old night club where the buffet dinners were served. There were three meals a day served during the entire Hearst strike. Many of the people ate all their meals at strike headquarters and brought their families down. The support from outside was remarkable. This was a very popular strike because people didn't like Hearst. Hearst was a bad name among the country's liberals.

- I. One of the things, too, that interests me about the Hearst strike in Chicago was that the techniques of the strikers were quite remarkable. They were not the typical kind of techniques used in standard strikes. And for a union that was only five years old at the time, and in Chicago much less than that, it was always a very impressive demonstration and considerable skill that had been learned in a short time. As newspapermen I felt that they were more familiar with publicity techniques and used these probably to much greater advantage than other trade unions had.
- R. These were bright, creative people and some of the techniques they used were new and were quite remarkable,

for instance, they got out a newspaper, which was partly a newspaper and partly telling a story of the strike. It was a well edited, well written publication. The strikers would go out and distribute these house to house, ringing the bell, handing them the paper and talking about the strike. They set up a speakers bureau in which they went out to raise money. We had to raise money to eat. They would go to labor organizations in town and get funds and they got a lot of it. Many hundreds of thousands of dollars went through the till in those nineteen months. That was big money then. They sent a chain of speakers around the country doing similar things. They had a movie of strike activities that they used to spread the word and propagandize and to raise funds. Raising funds was very important, because at no time during the strike was there any regular money coming in from the national organization. They didn't have any money. We also had a parade down State Street every Saturday at noon when most people were there. We used the sidewalks and everybody on strike would be in it. We had a parade theme and I was in charge of this. We would costume the front part of the parade. We would go to a costume house and set it up with signs and costumes. I remember during the strike, William Randolph Hearst and three of his sons attended a Costume Ball in California and the picture appeared in the paper of these four Hearts. Here these poor people are down here on's strike and we used that picture far and wide and we went over to a costume house and we duplicated this picture

in real life and used it in the parade with a big blowup of the original picture. There were many other techniques we picked up and used during the strike; we had to be a popular strike in order to survive.

- I. Not only that, but you had the opposition of the newspapers of course. You couldn't get your story in the newspapers. If I remember correctly, there was a radio blockade as well.
- R. We had a sound truck, too. The original sound truck was dumped into the river by sabotage at one time. I don't think that bears going into. We used the sound truck all over town and somehow the police were reasonably tolerant of our activities. Management went into court and got injunctions against many of us for violating court orders, including picketing with too many people. Probably more than half of the strikers were under an injunction at one time or another. I was. It wasn't until late in the strike when Arthur Goldberg, later a u. s. Supreme Court justice, took over our legal defense that we finally got rid of some of these injunctions and had some reasonable chances of winning the strike on some basis. Goldberg really did a great thing for us on a voluntary basis. Incidentally, if I'm not mistaken it was Goldberg's first work in the labor movement. That was where his interest started and he finally got into the CIO as General Counsel and later finished up as Secretary of Labor and the U. S. Supreme Court, then

finally in the U.N. I thought that was interesting, because his first experience as a labor lawyer was voluntary, just to help these poor newspaper guys who were having such problems.

- I. During the strikes there were a number of attempts at negotiation. It seems that often, from what I've read, the negotiations themselves were almost a Hearst propaganda tool. That is they really weren't intending to negotiate anything at all. It was merely one more tactic for attempting to lure people back to work. would you say that this is a reasonable evaluation of the early negotiations?
- R. Let me put it this way, there was also a feeling among some of the strikers, who were not in the strike leadership, that there were people in our leadership who wanted to prolong the strike and who were not very much more eager than Hearst management was to have these negotiations successful.
- I. What was the feeling on this? What was the feeling of the leaders?
- R. A lot of the rank-and-file strikers felt that this was a Commie organizing tactic, that they were using the strike at that period. Not that this was a Communistic strike, but the few party members were using this, hoping to convert people to Party membership. As the strike was prolonged and as it seemed there was no hope and they

were being pushed around more and more, they hoped maybe they could get some people into the Communist Party from among the members who were on strike and from around town, among other people who were a good set of contacts in other unions for these people. That's a difficult thing to put your finger on.

I. Was there also a feeling that there might be some personal animosities between the Guild leaders and the management that prevented negotiations?

R. There is no question about that. There was one in particular, whose name I won't mention, who had a very bitter personal altercation with the -management before the strike. He had a very top job on the paper before that and they demoted him. The motivation of his activity as a strike leader, and he was a very bright guy and he stayed within the labor movement the rest of his life, was a personal thing. Many people thought this was a big factor in his being active or even being on strike at all.

I. At the beginning of the strike I'm sure you have the feeling it's not going to last very long, but it became evident that it was going to be a long drawn out strike, didn't it?

R. I can't say that that's really true until it had gone a long time, because many of the people were always hoping, and then there were these false negotiations and false hopes built up off and on during the entire nineteen months. It wasn't until the last six months of the strike that a lot of people thought that the thing was going to

have to be ended, and not on the basis of a victory for the strikers or everybody would go back to work.

- I. What was the feeling after the folding of the Examiner after striking eight months or so?
- R. There was a feeling that that was going to make it much more difficult to settle, because all these jobs were wiped out. It was going to be obvious that they were not going to have room for all the people who were on the Examiner on its successor paper.

- I. When the strike began in the earlier months, what was the attitude of the management and what techniques did they use to break the strike and beat down the morale?
- R. They used the classical techniques of strike breaking. All types of things from trying to lure people back to work, to telephone calls to wives and promises. Then they used sluggers. Many of them were the toughies that were working in the circulation department dating way back to the circulation wars. Some of the people involved who dated back then were really semi-professional sluggers. Some of our people were badly beaten up during the strike. At that time on the circulation trucks, they had gear shift handles and if you unscrewed them, they made great clubs. They'd crack a skull open with a knob on top made of metal. There was a lot of head busting by these guys. They even tried to gas us with their exhausts by backing up all the trucks and turning on their motors and shooting smoke out from the rear into the picket line.

I. This was early in the strike?

R. Lots of these things were early in the strike, when they still had some hope of busting it up.

I. That was how Merrill Meigs got his nickname?

R. Yes. Monoxide Meigs. The worse casualty, as I remember it, was a young guy who was taking pictures of the union busting going on at the picket line. He was across the street taking pictures and one of these circulation guys came over and grabbed his tripod and cracked it over his head. He ended up in the hospital with a skull fracture and he finished up in a mental institution years afterwards and he never was normal again.

I. Some of these things, though, like the attacking of the sluggers and the dumping of the sound truck were turned for your own advantage in terms of publicity?

R. Oh sure, and I'm not sure there wasn't a bit of provocation on the part of our people. I wasn't very familiar with these things. We were accused of provocateuring and I think there was a certain amount of that. It's an old radical tactic.

Forman 32

10/30/71

Tape 2

- I. Earlier in the discussion you placed some emphasis on the role of the Communists in this. Of course there were others who had much to do with the Guild's functioning in Chicago too. Could you put that in a better perspective?
- R. Yes, I think it needs to be. When we start talking about the Commies, it's got to get distorted in relation to the whole picture. There were some Party members in the leadership of the Guild. I'm convinced of that and I was then, but there also were some strong non-Communist and anti-Communists in the members of the strike leadership. They really managed to keep things in reasonable balance during the entire time of the strike. Toward the end of the long nineteen months on the bricks, the non-Communist or anti-Communist people in the Guild, those who were not interested in using the union for Party purposes or organizing purposes for the Party, began to get pretty firm control of things. One of the things they did was to bring in Arthur Goldberg as counsel of the strikers and the Chicago Newspaper Guild in trying to end the strike. His ability and his interest in the strikers themselves, was great, and he was a real humanitarian and he wanted to do something about these guys who had been out so long. He had a lot of influence in getting the thing pulled together and shaping it up. so it could be ended by negotiation and of course it eventually was, something short of shambles.

- I. Was there other attempts at mediation from other outside agencies?
- R. Yes. The AFL and CIO at different times tried to do something about getting the parties together. Hearst obviously intended to play the thing out to the end. He had already lost the Herald Examiner and he was trying to weaken the Guild. So he did play it out virtually to the end, even though he had nothing to gain by prolonging the strike.
- I. Did the mayor or anybody like this intervene or attempt to intervene, or were they asked to?
- R. I'm sure they did. I don't recall the facts about their intervention with any political people, although I remember that they did. Whatever they did was ineffective.
- I. During this time the Spanish Civil War was starting. How did the Communists feel about this?
- R. This was a sidelight that was very interesting. Besides the Hearst unit there was a large and rather strong Times unit, which was opposed to the use of the Guild for political purposes by anybody. At that time the Communist party and "fellow travelers" were very interested in getting popular support for the rebels in the Spanish Civil War.
- I. Was there an official Guild position on political action at this point?

R. Not in connection with such a thing as the Spanish Civil War. The Guild did often take a political stand to support the candidates who were supporting the things that labor was interested in. During the strike they had an all-city meeting of the Chicago Newspaper Guild at which the left-wing people in the Guild tried to get a resolution supporting the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, and actually to get some money to support it. They were raising money then, sending volunteers to Spain. At this meeting there was a resolution of support on the floor, but the anti-resolution forces turned out in full at this meeting and it was obvious to the supporters of the Spanish Resolution that they were not going to win. The opposing forces to the resolution introduced an amendment to the resolution condemning the Soviet Union for its intervention in Finland and I recall that one of the supporters of the main resolution for the Lincoln Brigade got up and read from the Encyclopedia Britannica in support of Russia on the grounds that Finland had originally been a part of Russia. Finally when it looked as though the movers of the left-wing resolution were going to lose in a vote, there was a lot of disorder around the hall by the left-wing people who were scattered around and somebody signalled the chair who recessed the meeting on the grounds of disorder, a parliamentary move that prevented the resolution from being voted down.

- I. This meeting at which this vote did not come on the Spanish Brigade, was in a sense a turning point almost, as far as the contest with Communist influence in the Guild?
- R. No. The contest was really a sub rosa thing. It never was out in the open as such. You remember that at the tail end of the Depression a lot of people were sympathetic to the Communist movement, not as a movement, but they were in that popular front period when they were trying to join with others to support various things that they could claim credit for and get people over on the left wing side of the picture. I'm sure it was at that very meeting-that the large majority of the Guild members of Chicago, who were trying to keep the union as a union rather than a political instrument, realized that they had the strength to handle it.
- I. Realizing that they had the strength didn't mean that they had the organizing tools and pertinent things that those who were Communists did have.
- R. Sometime during that period there was a small caucus organized and its purpose was to teach the techniques of handling meetings, because the left-wing people in the Guild were past masters at parliamentary procedure and a small group of them could really take over a meeting. So there were classes by the anti-left wing forces in the union and in the Executive Committee itself to train the other people in parliamentary procedure

so they could meet and have some success in countering the left-wing movements.

I. How long did this teaching process go on?

R. Several months.

I. By that time they thought they had sufficient grounding?

R. By then things had moved towards ending the strike. It was obvious that there was nothing more to be gained by anybody, including the left wing. They were also running out of money. There was no money in the National Guild coffers at the beginning of the strike and all the money that was used to support the strike and the strikers was raised by campaigns and contributions from other unions and other people who were sympathetic to the Guild strike and people who were opposed to Hearst. Hearst was a pretty impossible person at that time, generally. A lot of liberal people who were not particularly interested in movements rallied to the support of the Guild and the Guild strikers and sent money. Several hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised during that period and that was quite a lot of money in 1938, '39 to keep the strike going and to support the strikers.

I. There are several aspects about the strike settlement and it's been said fairly often that the strike broke the Guild in Chicago but set it on its feet nationally.

R. That's true. Because of the pressure of the Guild strike in Chicago and the threat of other strikes on other Hearst papers, the Guild nationally was able to negotiate what was known as the Hearst Memo. The Hearst Memo set minimum conditions on all Hearst papers where there was a Guild contract, and the negotiations for contracts on each of the other Guilds newspapers started with the Hearst Memo as a basic part of it. This was recognition by Hearst of the Guild, of the Guild's strength, and that the Guild was probably here to stay. The pressure-of the Guild strike of Chicago, without any question, was the means by which this Memo was brought about.

I. What about in Chicago after the strike? Was the Guild really broken?

R. The Times Guild remained very strong and there were other members on the other papers. I'm not sure when they were organized, whether it was afterward or not, but the main strength of the Guild after the Hearst strike was over was the Times Guild. The Times and later the Sun in 1942 and 1963 had pretty strong Guild units there. Shortly after that the Daily News was organized pretty solidly.

I. Were these at the time closed shops?

R. No. Actually the Guild has never had a closed shop. The Guild had a union shop called the Guild Shop, because the closed shop, I believe, is outlawed now by the Taft-Hartley Act. But even in those days there was no such

thing as a closed shop. On the Guild shop, we had variations depending on how it was negotiated and the strength of the units that negotiated the Guild shops. Usually there would be an escape clause for people, the very few of them, who did not want to belong to the Guild, who were already on a newspaper, and the union shop would exclude them and it probably would say that anybody subsequently hired must join the Guild as a condition of employment. Sometimes there was even an escape for them, like one out of five or one out of eight employees might decide not to belong. They put this on the basis of free something or other.

- I. One of the reasons used by Hearst to dismiss Guild men who came back to work afterwards was that the AFL contract had been called for nine out of ten to belong to this AFL union. So they used this as a reason for dismissal of those Guild men that had been on strike. Now did you have problems with people after the strike about joining the Guild or participating?
- R. Anybody who has been on strike, I mean there's numbers of people and they've had enough. There's things that have happened to them personally and it hurt them, so numbers of them would feel reluctant to become active again. Some of them were hold-outs on rejoining the Guild after they got back in the Guild jurisdiction. After the strike was over and after the people who had returned to the Herald American, the remaining Hearst paper, under the strike settlement, had lost their jobs

as most of them did, quite a large number of them were unemployed but, happily, temporarily. Jobs were still scarce and many of them didn't want to leave Chicago. The beginning of the Chicago Sun saved a great many of them from real hardship and from long unemployment, because there were jobs open and many of them who were not then employed - virtually all of them were very competent people, such as artists and photographers and some people in circulation - got jobs on the Sun. These people, some of them for at least a while, were hold-outs against rejoining the Guild because of the bitter feelings about the strike. They'd been hurt and they didn't want to be hurt again. Later, practically all of them became members of the Guild on the Sun and later after the merger on the Sun Times.

- I. One other problem for the Guild, which I think most people forget about now, and that is the simple problem of collecting dues. There was no such thing as a check-off in those days.
- R. There was an interesting outcome of the check-off problem on the old Times. To start with there were still some hold-outs who weren't members of the Guild and Wade Franklin was then Chairman of the unit.
 - I. When was this?
 - R. In the early forties and he decided that everybody ought to be in and he went around and persuaded all the hold-outs to come in. Then they went to management with this

nearly 100 per cent sign-up and said that this was a big argument for a Guild shop that you didn't have till then, and they wanted a check-off. Somewhere along the line, with all these people in, they got a voluntary check-off. People who wanted their dues checked off could have it, and Franklin again went around and practically persuaded everybody to sign check-off. They had to voluntarily sign the check-off. It wasn't compulsory in the contract.

- I. When the Times merged with the Sun, that was 1947; the situation then was very different from the Examiner American. ~~The~~ Guild, I think, did have something to do with protecting a number of people with jobs after the merger; didn't it?
- R. Yes, their joint meetings with the units. There were two separate units still. It was still the Chicago Sun and Times, not Chicago Sun Times. There were two separate staffs and two editorial managements after the merger and in the same building after the Sun Staff moved over to the Times building. There were obviously going to be a lot of people dismissed for economy reasons because of the merger, they had a tremendous payroll with two staffs, They had a lot of pressure from Guild units to resist as much as possible the staff trimming and to make it as easy as possible on those who were leaving. Publisher Marshall Field III came up with one thing that made it a little easier for the people. He offered double dismissal pay. That was such an attractive thing that there were many people who asked to be included on the list. That

didn't mean they necessarily got on the list. Most of them didn't, management still picked the people to go. To many of the dismissed employees that was a pretty handsome chunk of severance pay. That continued through three sets of dismissals.

I. Was severance pay really something that the Guild more or less came up with first?

R. Severance pay was never heard of in this country until the-Guild got it into some of its earlier contracts. They got the idea from the Australian Newsmen's Union, which already had something of this nature in their contracts and it proved to be a very attractive thing.

I. Who knew about this?

R. I don't know.

I. It seemed to come up in a number of contracts that were being negotiated in the early '40's and-late '30's.

R. That's right and it was a tremendously attractive item for negotiations for almost all newspaper men who joined the Guild, because arbitrary whim dismissals had been historically a bad scene on American newspapers. This seemed to be the greatest protective measure you could possibly get into a contract and it proved to be so. It was probably the one clause in a newspaper Guild contract that stabilized employment in the entire industry. It cut turn-over way down.

- I. When you say cut turn-over, do you mean management turn-over or both kinds?
- R. No. It cut staff turn-over. When it costs money to fire an employee any department head with budget problems is going to be very careful and is going to have to have good reason to justify this. Any large-scale dismissals would just cost a large amount of money and they would have to go hire a staff again anyway. It just made it a very costly thing.
- I. I'd like to go back now to the Communist issue again. This time I'd like to ask you about the issue on the national level. This was something that came up about the same time the Hearst strike was on, didn't it?
- R. That's right. Most of the Communists in the Guild leadership were secret Communists. None of them admitted they were members of the Communist Party. They posed as liberals and they backed causes that were favored by the Communist Party, but not as Communist causes.. There were a number of them in rather key spots in the Guild nationally. Some of them were organizers and one of them was an Executive Secretary who was the key guy in the national picture who most people suspected was a member of the Party, at least he was playing Party games in the Guild. The reason they were able to keep these people in office was that they were pretty effective on union issues. They knew what to do to get good contracts and they knew the techniques of organizing and they were quite success-

ful in advancing the union cause and at the same time they were advancing the Party cause. They knew the techniques of handling conventions and meetings and at that time the national officers were elected at the Guild conventions, and all they had to do was to be sure that enough of their supporters got elected as delegates to the convention to keep themselves in office. They were very clever at handling procedures at the convention and doing things that would keep them in control. The only feasible way to beat them and to get them out of office was to get the election of officers on a national referendum basis. This issue came to a head at the Guild convention in Memphis in 1940. The anti-administration forces were well enough organized to have taken control of the convention and to force through the referendum resolution, which was to put the election of the officers in the hands of the members of the Guild around the country by mail ballot or local ballot. But by some very unusual parliamentary procedure and divisive tactics, the administration was able to abort this movement and it took -another year before the anti-administration forces were successful in getting the referendum measure across at the convention. They did so in Detroit and in order to do this, there was a national caucus-organized known as the Pro Guild Caucus. Several key people were in there. One was Sam Eubanks of San Francisco and another was Wilbur Bade of Minneapolis. -Bade really was a politician and he organized the movement across the country to elect anti-administration delegates to the Detroit convention.

This was done and the action taken at the Detroit convention was to change the Constitution to provide for national referendum elections. In the first referendum election the administration was beaten quite decisively and Sam Eubanks became the Executive vice-president. The Pro Guild Caucus elected a full slate, including thirteen anti-administration board members, which took control of the Guild permanently. All were anti-Communist, non-left wing people.

- I. Was the '40 convention really decisive in crystalizing the anti-left wing forces in the Guild?
- R. Yes. They learned a lot of things about how to do it at Memphis, too, and if you read the Memphis Convention proceedings with this in mind, I think you will see how the anti-administration forces were out-manuevered. When Ken Crawford was elected President of the Guild at that convention, he was a Newsweek columnist and a Washington delegate.
- I. How did this movement come about nationally? What were the issues?
- R. It was an open anti-Communist issue. By that time people had become really aware of what was really going on in the leadership of the Guild. Union issues had been turned around and made political issues in support of non-union causes by these people who had been using the Guild and that got people pretty upset. There were a lot of conservative people scattered around-the country in the

Guild, too, and they became more aware of being used and there were a lot of liberals in the country at that time who were not Communist, really were anti-Communist, but they didn't feel as strongly about it as they did later. They didn't realize what harm the Party could do if they got control of anything.

I. Can you give me some examples of some of these causes that the union was being used for that got people aroused?

R. There were many similar issues to that of supporting the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and there were many organizations that were Communist Party fronts. There was a Refugee Defense League of some kind and a lot of other such things which had to do with Communist causes, national and international. They actually would go in and get the Guild to appropriate money for these causes, but chiefly it was the prestige that the Guild was able to give such movements that they were after, because the Guild was composed of most of the top newspapermen in the country.

I. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was a very typical kind of thing?

R. That was a typical thing.

I. Were there similar attempts elsewhere to get support for this and were they defeated, or was it one of these things that some places they did get support and some places not?

- R. This sort of thing went on in many places. In the New York Guild local the left wing forces really kept control after they were pushed out of office nationally and it took several years before they actually got the Communist influence out of the leadership of the New York Guild, which was the largest Guild in the United States, with several thousand members.
- I. The CIO didn't have the Communist-purge until very late in the '40's.
- I. Remember, the CIO is composed of autonomous unions. The CIO started as an inter-union committee for obtaining union objectives. You mentioned the fact that it wasn't until the late '40's that the left wing forces were purged out of the CIO. The majority of the CIO unions were well under control of non-Communist and anti-Communist people, good union people. They were quite serious. There were only a few unions where they still had considerable influence and it was at a CIO convention in Cleveland where they pitched out at least one of the left wing unions. Their influence in the CIO as such had not been very great for many years before that. John L. Lewis was a pretty strong character and he kept things under fairly good control. For union purposes are organizing purposes during most of the period of the CIO's existence, and he admitted this later, he used the Communists in organizing, because their techniques were good and they had lots of experience, more than most people, which causes some difficulty later when they did shake them

out of many places.

- I. Non-Communist Guild leaders felt this way, too, at one time, that the Communists were useful as organizers.
- R. Yes. The bulk of the rank-and-file Guildsmen didn't know anything about Communists. They wouldn't believe it if you told them. These people were masquerading. None of them admitted they belonged to the Party. The only time they did was when they were recruiting somebody and they got him in the corner alone and tried to sell him a membership in the Party, which they sometimes were successful in doing.
- I. If this thing was so much of an underground kind of movement, when it became an issue in 1940, was it clear that people were directly establishing some anti-Communist cause?
- R. Yes . It was a major factor in the election, in the Memphis Convention and the Detroit Convention. At that time it was pretty much out in the open. They had gotten rid of some of the full-time employees in the Guild, organizers and local administrative officers who were probably members of the Party.
- I. Did you have a hard time convincing people of this?
- R. They were pretty well convinced. The main thing was to tell them who to vote for and to tell them who these people were, which side they were on and it was important for them to vote.

Forman

- I. Later on, you became a national officer?
- R. Twice during my Guild life I was active -- in organizing days in Minneapolis and then I came down here and I was not active. Then I got into the strike, but I was not active in the Guild prior to the strike. I was preoccupied with other matters, just trying to make a living. After the strike was over I felt that I'd had enough and that I would just be a rank and file member. In 1945 somebody persuaded me in an emergency to become Treasurer for the Chicago local just to finish out a term. Before the year was up I'd been persuaded to run for the International Executive Board and that was an election in which practically the entire administration slate of Pro-Guild Caucus candidates were elected without opposition. There I was back in activity again at a local and national level. Not too long afterward the President of the local resigned and I was asked to move in as President. So at one period I was local President and international Vice-President, which is quite a load. I stayed on-the National Executive Board for eight years.

I. What years?

R. 1945, '46, '47, '48, '49, '50, '51 and '52.

I. Was there much change in the Guild as far as cut-back activities during the war?

R. Yes. We were under the War Act and there were ceilings on salaries. Employment was pretty stable. They were

really short of people everywhere, because of the large number in the service. The Guild maintained its activity during that time and maintained the union on a fairly reasonable basis considering the leadership. There was a lot of organizing activity around the country after the war. Some of the locals went under during the war period, small locals that didn't have many members to maintain and they just faded.

I. Did any of them come back after the war?

R. Some of them, but most of them were very small and the emphasis shifted to organizing the larger newspapers.

A number of large papers were organized during that period, among them the Baltimore Sun and the Chicago Daily News.

Then organizing began in Canada and that became a very fertile field as its salaries were very low compared to American salaries. Working conditions were not good and they were anxious to get into the Guild. They tried to build themselves an organization, particularly on the Toronto Star, which was the largest newspaper in Canada.

The Star became one of the largest locals in the Newspaper Guild after they became organized and still are. So a lot of the organizing activity went on in Canada. There probably was more active organizing in Canada and more successful than anywhere in the U.S. at that time, all the way from Vancouver to Montreal.

I. Were they in the Guild in the beginning? Did they ask to join or were they actively recruited?

- R. They asked to come in. They sent emissaries to the Guild headquarters, which was in New York, and asked for help. They wanted to come in. The Guild gave them help. The national Guild put Canadians on the payroll as organizers.
- I. What was the philosophy then? If you got the big papers you would be able to move on?
- R. The small-newspapers Guild locals never really paid their own way in dues. The small newspaper local really has to be subsidized by the rest of the union and there's a limit to the amount of money available for that kind of subsidization. In addition the American Newspaper Publisher's Association has developed some pretty good union-busting techniques for use on small dailies. I won't go into what they are but the Guild ran into it over and over again. A newspaper and editorial staff of maybe twenty or thirty people in a small city would ask the Guild to come in and sign up maybe 95 to 100% of the staff and then petition for an election. By the time the election came - after a long period of management stalling - the union-busting tactics of the publishers, using the formula and tactics of the ANPA which are still pretty secret, was able to defeat the Guild in the election after the Guild had originally had a 100% membership.
- I. In a sense that was almost what happened in the Hearst

strike in the election afterwards, wasn't it?

R. That was a different situation. Remember the so-called AFL locally chartered unit at the Herald American was composed of people who had left the strike after a month or two and gone back and were very bitter about the strike, and who had been considered scabs by the Guild, and who were not interested in coming back to the Guild, most of them. That was a completely different situation.

I. But the intention of the Publisher's Association was basically to establish some kind of company union?

R. Not really. They didn't care one way or another. As a matter of fact practically no place on any small newspaper have any local unions been formed after the Guild has lost its election. The publishers used various tactics. They used lots of statements about the Guild and what they would do to these people. Then they raked up the Communist issue, too. They would go back and dig up 1941 Commie stuff and make it look like the Commies are controlling the Guild now. They actually used those tactics in small cities and got away with it to a certain extent.

I. Some of these smaller papers in Chicago succeeded in organizing though.

R. Yes. The locals in the large newspapers could give considerable protection and a lot of expert help in negotiating and organizing and handling grievances in the local.

In other words, it was a big city where they did their organizing rather than a small town where they were isolated and didn't have this?

- R. It still costs to maintain a small unit or a small local, considerably more than any dues income the Guild could get nationally from the small union locals. And there was a limit to how much there could be.
- I. This period that you were on the International Board, was a period of tremendous growth of the Guild, because it was Canadian.
- R. Yes, and the Baltimore Sun is a big unit and a big paper with a lot of status. In recent years the only large one that I can remember getting is the Oakland Tribune and that was only because Senator Knowland was back and took over control of the paper. They had an independent union over there, non-affiliated with anything and they had never affiliated with the San Francisco-Oakland Guild, because the publishers had always given them the same raises, the same benefits that the Guild would be able to provide. When Senator Knowland came back and took over, he proved to be such a bad employer in direct charge of the paper, that the unit got together and asked the Guild to come over and sign up the whole staff and they moved in a body into the San Francisco-Oakland Guild and are members to this day.
- I. When did that happen?

- R. It was the year after Senator Knowland was defeated for re-election as Senator. He went back to journalism when he was beaten. He went back to his family paper. His family owned the paper.
- I. Wasn't it true that the Tribune had succeeded in keeping out the Guild here in essentially the same way, by matching the Guild?
- R. Yes. Then, because of the turmoil of the Hearst strike and all kinds of things -- the history of the Guild in Chicago was one of turmoil over the years, the Tribune staff was always a bit gun shy. They thought they were getting the benefits without joining. This organizing they had was very difficult for the Guild. They had perfected union-busting tactics. Some of them were pretty subtle.
- I. What about the Guild now? Do you feel it's a strong union today in Chicago and nationally?
- R. I think it's never been stronger. I think it's very strong and this is a resurgence because there was a period when things were rather flabby after the war. Things were pretty good and new people who came into work on these newspapers didn't realize the value of the union. They thought that this was something that just came from management, all these good conditions, basic salaries. Somehow, in the last several years, there's kind of a new group of young employees who seem to be more aware of the value of the union and they have kind of taken

over and given it renewed strength. I feel that the Guild units, the Guild locals have never been stronger here or elsewhere in the country.

I. Do you feel there's any prospect of future organizations?

R. I think that circumstances will have a lot to do with that. It depends a lot on the economic situation of these newspapers. Such a thing as happened in Oakland, where they were in the same situation as the Tribune and it didn't look like there would be any prospect ever of having the Guild represent the Oakland Tribune editorial employees, and suddenly within a month they had a Guild unit there and they won an election shortly afterwards.

I. It seems almost that no matter how many words you might use to convince them or persuade them of the usefulness of the union they never can see it until they are in some kind of stress situation.

R. Right. And remember that in order to maintain the Guild in strength they had to continue to raise the dues until they seemed to be quite substantial to people who were not familiar with what the Guild has given them.

I. If I'm not mistaken, Guild dues are still considerably lower than what other unions pay.

R. They are considerably lower than many of the craft unions, but they seem substantial to the people working on a paper. Of course, we also have assessments that have to be enough to support strike situations and our numbers

were so limited. Because of the nature of our craft, we can't have mass membership. A strike can be a very expensive thing supported by a rather modest number of people and assessments and dues.

- I. What ever happened to the CIO idea of organizing through the plant? This is something that the Guild doesn't seem to do anymore.
- R. Partly because it wasn't very successful. It was successful in the beginning where they did an effective job of organizing -- New York and Los Angeles and- San Francisco, especially San Francisco and New York where in one swoop they organized a plant. Where it was delayed so management could put up some kind of defense, and meet these organizing tactics in the other departments, then it became more difficult. It's partly because in the white collar departments of the non-Guild there were large numbers of women employees and girl employees who had no interest at all in the unions. They are not good material for union organizing. They'd organize a new department and you'd think you've got them organized and there would be enough turnover so that in six months you've lost a whole large segment of the membership. That's been the experience of the Guild in many situations where they tried to organize the non-editorial departments.
- I. Does the Guild really feel that they can go it on their own in a strike without some kind of support? Generally

newspapers manage to publish when they're struck.

- R. That's not been true. That was true for many years, but the inter-union cooperation, starting with the World Telegram strike, was the first time that the mechanical employees refused to cross the Guild picket lines and that changed the whole picture. So there's a lot of inter-union cooperation and I have no idea how effective it will be from now on.
- I. Is it true that in Chicago, too, that there is cooperation?
- R. To a more limited extent, partly because the Guild is not completely organized in Chicago, only on the Sun-Times and Daily News and with half the jurisdiction organized it's difficult to have an effective cooperation of people on other papers in that situation.
- I. You have held a top job on two occasions anyway, and you have seen it now for a long time, how do you feel about the whole movement of the Guild? Do you think it has changed newspapers, not only its employees?
- R. Many management people have made that statement publicly over all the years of the Guild organization. The Guild contracts and the higher wage levels, the minimum wages and the grievance procedure, but particularly the minimum wages, the higher wage levels and the dismissal pay clause has brought a stability to the business that it never had before. It's certainly improved the caliber of the

employees. When an employee costs more money, the management is going to hire more carefully and that's been true ever since the Guild started-getting higher standards in the newspapers. Even before the contracts, even before the Bulletin Boards, they were already starting to stabilize staffs. People who were not covered by Guild contracts - managing editors, executive editors, brass all the way up, most of them conceded that their salaries depended on the wage floor set by Guild contracts. It pushed their salaries up.

- I. This is one thing about the Guild that was probably unlike other unions, in that people had experience on both sides. That is they begin as Guildsmen and they move up on to the management side and I think this gives them a different feeling about the Guild, too, because I know of occasions when someone has been on one side of the negotiating table on one contract and the next time on the other side.
- R. There's an interesting aspect to that in that management at no time has been hesitant to promote people who have been active Guild leaders and who have negotiated contracts for the Guild and who have engaged in some pretty strong union activity. As a matter of fact, many people have been promoted to real top jobs because their ability had come to the attention of the management primarily by their Guild activities, their ability to get along with people, their, leadership ability and so on. Many management people have said that. Some of them who hadn't said it publicly will get a Guild leader in a

corner and say, "Look, I'm on the other side," but, "you're really right about the fact that the Guild has done these things for its men and incidentally for me."

- I. It's always had, even from the beginning when the Guild joined the CIO, this feeling about this was a special kind of union. There was something unique about the Guild and this feeling is still there isn't it?
- R. Yes, that's true and I think there is still a craft feeling, despite the fact that we are technically a CIO union. Most people feel that they are craftsmen. Many of them are not very sympathetic about organizing non-Guild non-editorial departments. Some of them feel that this may make it more difficult for them to negotiate conditions.
- I. This actually did happen when the Guild was in the ITU in the early, early years.
- R. There was no Guild then -- a union, yes.
- I. Right. When they finally did separate in the '20's it was because of this feeling on both-sides that they were just getting in the way.
- R. Of course, remember that these were very isolated, small unions. The only one that lasted any length of time at all was in Scranton, Pennsylvania.
- I. Is there any particular reason why this one survived?

R. It was in a strong union center, where the mine workers were very strong and where a lot of these people were sons of miners and the union was a big factor both locally and even politically. They had the backing of the mine workers. If I'm not mistaken, a local of the old news union moved into the Guild in Scranton. I'm not sure. I've got a vague recollection of something like that happening.

I. Well, thanks very much.

*Note:

Fletcher Wilson, a retired Chicago Sun-Times reporter, recently recalled an incident that he believes triggered the organization of an editorial employees union at the Minneapolis Tribune, where he was a young copy editor in 1933:

"Frederick E. Murphy, the late publisher of the Minneapolis Tribune, made a remark which accelerated the organization of his editorial staff in 1933.

"At a staff meeting he called he announced that the merchants on Nicollet Avenue, the primary downtown business district, had forced him to reduce advertising rates because of the depression and this would necessitate a 10 percent pay out.

"He said it would have to fall on the editorial and business office employees only. He said:

"I can't pass it on to the craft workers because they organized. It is too bad you aren't organized."

"The editorial people recognized good advice and quickly organized Local No. 2 of the Newspaper Guild.

"Murphy must have regretted the remark."

	page
<u>Abend-Post</u>	13
Abraham Lincoln Brigade.....	34,35
American Federation of Labor.....	9,33,38,51
American Journalism Association.....	3
American Newspaper Publishers Association.....	50
Bade, Wilbur.....	43
<u>Baltimore Sun</u>	49,52
Boston, Massachusetts.....	10
Braun, Heywood.....	7,14
Chicago.....	5,8,18,19,25,48,51,53,56
Chicago Daily News.....	20,37,49,56
<u>Chicago Sun</u>	37,39,40,50
<u>Chicago Sun Times</u>	39,40,60
<u>Chicago Times</u>	37,40
<u>Chicago Tribune</u>	14,15,20
Citizens Alliance.....	11
Communist Party.....	8,9,29,32,42,45
Communists.....	23,28,32,33,35,42,45-47,51
Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO.).....	8-10,17,27,33,46
55,58	
Cleveland.....	5,6
Crawford, Kansas.....	44
Davey, Bill.....	8
Depression.....	23
Detroit.....	43,47
Dolan, Cozy.....	16
<u>Duluth Herald</u>	1
Eddy, Jonathan.....	7,14
Sam Eubanks.....	43
<u>Evening American</u>	13
<u>Examiner American</u>	40
Gardner, Virginia.....	18

Germany	13
Goldberg, Arthur	27,32
Hearst, William Randolph	12,26,36,37
<u>Herald American</u>	38,51
<u>Herald Examiner</u>	12,13,16,17,19,30,33
Hoover, Herbert	4
LaFollette Committee	11
Lewis, John L.	8,46
Los Angeles	55
Meigs, Merrill	3
Memphis, Tennessee	43,44,47
Minneapolis, Minnesota	1,2,5,6,10,12,16,17,43,48
<u>Minneapolis Tribune</u>	1,2-4,6,60
Montreal	49
Murphy, Frederick E.	4,60
National Labor Relations Board	14,15,17
National Recovery Act	11
New York	6,18,19,55
New York News	22
New York <u>Times</u>	7,14
New York World	5,7
Newspaper Guild ...	2,7,8,11,18-20,22,24,25,32,34-48,41-43,46-57
<u>Newsweek</u>	44
<u>Oakland Tribune</u>	52,54
Rockford, Ill	1
St. Paul, Minnesota	7
St. Paul Daily News	2
St. <u>Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch</u>	2
San Francisco	3,15,43,55
Scranton, Pennsylvania	58,59
Spanish Civil War	33,34
Supreme Court	11,12,17,27
<u>Toronto Star</u>	49
United Mine Workers	8
United Nations	28

University of Minnesota	1
Vancouver	49
Washington, D.C	6
Wilson, Fletcher	60
<u>World Telegram</u>	56