

Al Shanker's memories of the UFT

I became a teacher in 1952 and I joined the Union that year, it was called the N.Y. Teachers' Guild. I started teaching in an elementary school in Manhattan, I don't there were other union members in that school. It was PS 179- Manhattan and then the following September I taught at 126 Queens-Astoria Junior High School. That was a major cell you might say of the Union. There was a number of us that joined at the same time. The salary was about \$2,600 a year, we had no duty free lunch periods, the principal used to keep us at faculty conferences for two and a half three hours lecturing us about we should come in early and punch the time clock and be on hall duty and toilet patrol, and the number of children in each class was huge. There were thousands of teachers moving in and out. It was such a lousy job. People were leaving, there use to be a World Telegram newspaper and they had a daily school page and everyday there were advertisements for teachers. Every few weeks we would get a new teacher in the school, somebody would leave. Conditions were terrible. I supposed that I joined because I came from a family that was very pro-union. My mother was a garment worker and had been a member of that union from the time she came to this country just before WW I, so part of it was the family tradition, and part of it was the conditions on the job. In those days there wasn't very much hope that a teachers' union could do anything, there was no such thing as collective bargaining, the government didn't have to sit and talk to you and negotiate, and there wasn't much hope that you could organize teachers. While most teachers were children of union members in NYC, you know if you are a child of a union member who graduated college and become a teacher you kind of say to yourself: I didn't go to college to become a union member, I went to college so that I could go beyond what my parents were, be more than they were and if I join a union in a sense I am saying I failed I didn't go beyond where they were in the first place. While there was a disposition toward, there were sympathies that were favorable to unionism because of where the teachers had come from in terms of their parents, there was clearly not a disposition to join because the union had been around since 1916. When I got there in 1952 there were 4 1/2% of the teachers had been organized so clearly there wasn't that commitment in that time.

In my home unions were just below God. My mother talked about starting to work in a sweatshop, when she came over she was working very close to I think 80 hours a week and what the union had done. Eventually it became a 35 hour week, she always said I know we started working at 80 hours a week and ended up with 35 hours a week and we had no health benefits and now we do have health benefits and we had no retirement allowance before so these things were there and the other thing was she had worked for a few short weeks in the Triangle Factory before the Triangle fire and then left. When she was brought over by her brother, my uncle, and he owned a factory that went on strike and she worked there. And she was a strong unionist so she went on strike and she

lost out because the strikers felt that because she was the sister of the owner she was a spy at all the strike meetings. They were negotiating that under no circumstances should she be brought back in the strike settlement and my uncle didn't want her back because she was out there striking.

The young turks who had just joined the Union got together after school at a pizza parlor to talk about what the strategy was as to who should be signed up on Saturday night at someone's home we made a list of all the faculty members and we said these are the people who obviously join the union and these are the people who won't and basically we use the common stereotype of age, religion and whether their parents were union members and who was liberal and who was conservative. It didn't turn out to work that way. There were young teachers in a school who were politically liberal and came from trade union homes and let's say they were Jewish and they decided not to join because they wanted to become principals and they felt that joining a union would hurt their ambitions. And then there were two spinsters, twins I think, Irish teachers who were in their 60s and owned a lot of real estate in the area, and they joined because they felt that the people in the Union were very helpful to them in talking about social security and giving them information. And we were in favor of a strong policy on kids who were violent and disruptive so the ideological presuppositions that we had significant exceptions in terms of younger people who felt it would hurt their careers so they didn't want to risk joining a union, and older people stood for standards and stood up for teachers. It was not as clear as you would think. The Irish twins were the Schulte sisters. Mary Schulte they went in on November 7 but they donated their salary to the Union and basically felt that they had helped the kids with lunch passes, and that these kids were very poor, and we're not going in because we want to earn a day's pay. They were very child oriented, they were very sympathetic to what the Union was doing and they weren't going in to break the strike.

In those days [1959-60] trying to organize teachers in NYC was very difficult, teachers were not interested in organizational matters, but something happened that year—a new retirement law had passed. Up to that time you had to serve thirty five years and be sixty five years of age before you could retire, and now they had a thirty year retirement law. People now had to opt to make greater contributions and all sorts of forms to fill out, so I figured people were really confused and one way to get into the schools was to be a pension expert, and to talk about pensions because everybody had to sign these complicated forms. There were a thousand schools out there, no one could understand the literature, so I studied the pension system and I developed a thirty minute to explain how the pension system works. I became a hot item on the circuit—I became a pension maven. And at the end of the talk I gave them a three minute commercial. The pension represented the largest sum of money in their lives, they were earning 2.5-2,600. to a maximum of \$7,000 and this was all government through legislation and we have lobbyists and we have

taken cases to court and I actually signed up people on the basis not on the basis of collective bargaining or on the basis of negotiating salaries which we weren't at the time but on the basis that we have taken some very significant cases to court. Just before this time we had taken an important case which gave us creditability. Both the State teacher retirement system and the City teacher retirement system decided that the mortality tables had to be changed. The pension consisted of two parts. One was the amount the City gave you based on how many years you worked, and what your finally salary was and the other was an annuity based on your life expectancy was when you retired. Since people were living longer than they use to live the City's position and State position was if you had saved up in your annuity X number of dollars and you in the earlier days at age 65 been expected to live for seven years and now you were expected to live for 14 years the amount you should retire on should be divided by 14 rather than 7. What they were doing were changing the rules in the middle of the game. Essentially saying that every couple of years as life expectancy was changing we will reduce your pension. We hired an attorney and went to court; the Teachers' Guild and the Empire State Federation of Teachers. The lead case was taken by the state and we tagged on to that. The lawyer the state hired was paid for out of dues, but the lawyer for the city was a volunteer lawyer-Ben Mazen-he later ran against me for president. For many years he carried cases, he was a teacher. He was a Depression lawyer who basically never practised on his own. Went to school and came down as a volunteer for the Union, and for something like 1938 until 1962 voluntary carried literary hundreds of cases in both the courts and state commission for the union. The judge who heard the case ultimately was Justice Saypol, who almost sent me to jail for seven, eight years but the case in the 50s was the Saypol decision and we won a magnificent victory which cost the City at that time \$40 million dollars. It was based on the provision in the NYS Constitution that said that public employee pension benefits constitute a contractual relationship between the state and the employees and may not be diminished or impaired. Very strong provision of the NYS Constitution saying this is a contract and you get into it you cannot change it later. Anything you win you win for everybody so all the people who weren't in the Union which was 95% of them said: Well that is very nice and shows that an organization can be effective even if I am not a member, so if 5% want to be taxpayers and 95% ride free that is wonderful. This shows you how hard it is to win members by winning court cases. There were many victories in those days which was very significant and there were very few victories which produced any members. They produced a certain amount of good will, which was important.

When I was brought into the office in 1959 there was one person who was a secretary, bookkeeper, receptionist, telephone operator, mimeograph operator, and there was one full time person, David Selden, and I was the second one. The president worked in the classroom full time and received no salary or stipend for coming in every afternoon and Saturdays and Sundays-Charlie Cogen-from

1952 to 64, well he started receiving a stipend in 1962. But for ten out of the twelve years he served he got no salary, no stipend, no expenses. He came down to the Executive Board meeting he would go to a delicatessen—Merit Delicatessen—and everybody would buy his own sandwiches. I remember going to an Executive Board meeting in 1956 the annual budget of the NY Teachers' Guild was \$35,000. The annual budget. The rent was cheap, it was a loft building on East 23rd St. that was a real rat hole. It burnt down and 17 firemen lost their lives. There were rats there.

The Union was built through all those years by people who never got a penny in salaries but whatever their expenses were to come down to the office, to send letters out, to have a sandwich, the Union did not have it. Later on when the Union did have it obviously it paid people and did provide expenses, but essentially it was built by volunteers.

In the early 1950s we had a president of the Board of Education, James Marshall, a very interesting guy and brilliant. Marshall sat down with Rebecca Simonson, she preceded Charlie Cogen, and Rebecca said modern employee relationships says you really ought to have ways in which employees can express their grievances, in which they should be consulted on policy matters, and Marshall set up a committee which included our organization and he came up with the Staff Relations Plan and the idea was that teachers in every school should elect a relations committee made up only of teachers. And the Staff Relations Committee had a right to meet with the principal once a month, and that any teacher who felt aggrieved had a right to take a grievance and the Staff Relations Committee could represent that teacher. Ultimately the grievance could go beyond the principal to an impartial staff relations officer, an arbitrator. We were the only organization that favored this plan, all the others opposed it. The Staff Relations Plan was put to a referendum in the mid 1950s and we won it in a vote of 15,000 to 13,000; it was the first test vote of the confidence the teachers had in this organization. The conferences with the principal took place during the school day and was the basis of forming the Union because even those people who were elected to staff relations committees and were not Union members they had no other place to go except for us. We said every Friday afternoon the Teachers' Guild Grievance Committee is here, that is ten people and Ben Mazin at the Teachers' Guild office and we will give you support. So every Friday afternoon there would be ten or twenty or thirty people from all over the city. Over the years we had built a reputation that this was the place to go: Teachers' Guild Grievance Committee on Friday afternoons. It built a lot of good will. We had a grievance structure even before there was a grievance machinery for people to go. We competed and elected members of the Teachers' Retirement System. We had the grand old man—Lou Goldman—everyone loved him and he wrote the pension book that everyone got.

Many of the people when I joined the Union had been involved for twenty thirty years and they were committed trade unionists. They

did not envision collective bargaining as a way of operating. They viewed the Union as a club made up of reborn trade unionists. There was a membership committee. You could not just send in your five dollars and join, there was a membership committee. The membership committee would meet and say: Why does this person want to join? They would also ask: What is their commitment to trade unionism? How do we know what they will vote for?

In March of 1960 we felt so strong after merger that we decided to develop six demands: collective bargaining, the checkoff, duty free lunch periods, promotional differential which was the compromise on salaries, negotiations with the superintendent, John J. Theobald and he had an interesting response: I do not negotiate with members of my own family. He could not have made a better statement from the point of view of building a union. Charles Silver was the president of the Bd. of Education, and from this we got some positive statements. The mayor was pushing them, Wagner was on our side. They wanted language that would allow them not to do because they didn't want to do it. There was no collective bargaining for any public employees. The law in effect then was the Condlin-Wadlin law said that any public employee that left his responsibilities for the purpose of improving his salaries or working conditions had to be fired. And if restored to employment would be place on probation and not receive a salary increase for three years. That was the law so those teachers, the union leaders who permitted themselves and had gotten their colleagues whipped up were taking a tremendous and militant step. Anything short of total victory was a betrayal. And some of the militants were saying and shouting: sellout, betrayal, nothing but promises, and we said they are promises but promises are better than nothing.

On Arthur Goldberg representing the UFT before the Bd. of Ed.

Right after the Nov. 7, 1960 strike we called George Meany and said we would like a prestigious attorney to represent us before the Bd. of Ed. He said, who are you referring to and we said Arthur Goldberg and he said O.K. So Arthur Goldberg came before the Bd. of Ed. to explain why teachers should have collective bargaining, and we thought this was such a coup and Charles Silver said: What did you say your name was, and who are you? [Here Al Shanker laughs and says]: So we hadn't really scored very well.

On the collective bargaining election of 1961.

No public employee had collective bargaining. And there was the issues of who votes in this election? There were many conflicting issues and easy for management to create additional problems. Mayor Robert F. Wagner appointed a blue ribbon commission to determine what the rules would be and they appointed an outstanding labor arbitrator to make all these determinations. Prof. Nathan Feinsinger from the University of Wisconsin, was

appointed an outstanding man in labor relations. He ran the hearings and made the rules.

This was now a huge bargaining election of 50,000 people. The whole AFT history had organized only 50,000 people across the country, and here was one election to represent 50,000 at once. We went to the AFT and asked for \$100,000 dollars pledge. They did. We went to Walter Reuther and he sent in some people to help organize, and some real talent. Some of the people stayed.

The Electrical Workers lent us \$100,000 and the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO lent us either \$100-200,000 and the Amalgamated Bank lent us some money with other unions saying look if they don't pay we will pay. Dubinsky put in some money. Volunteers came in and did much work. Essentially it was done by volunteers. We had list of names from the city clerks offices and we tried to reach every single teacher in the school system. Some of the smaller organizations went to the NEA and asked for help. They formed a new group: Teachers' Bargaining Organization. On the ballot were four groups: UFT, TBO, Teachers' Union, or a vote for no organization. We worked very hard with meetings every day, weekends, late at night. We had ads on the school page of the World Telegram every day. It went on for about a year. Many of the leaders continue to teach in their schools every day.

We never could have achieved success unless we had both the old timers and the young Turks on board. The old timers represented the traditions, when you have a guy like Charlie [Cogen] who is a department chairman, and an author of text books and a scholar, this represents to the older teachers this is a not bunch of crazies, they are not going to burn the place down, if Charlie willing to go out on strike I will go out, he wouldn't sacrifice a lifetime in the system. The young Turks did not understand. Charlie wouldn't have done it unless pushed by the young Turks. It was a terrific balance. There was much tension between the two groups.

It was a mail ballot conducted by the Honest Ballot Association. The first vote was overwhelming in support of collective bargaining and the second vote was in substantial support for the UFT.

On negotiations with the Bd of Education-Jan, Feb, March, April 62

We have a divided leadership going into negotiations. And the larger issue was: How do you bargain collectively in the public sector, no one has done it before. Here is a good Bd. of Education, they really want to bargain. Right after the 1st of the year, 1962, and we go out and collect all the demands from teachers and we end up with 800 demands, after all there was 106 different organizations, different groups, and the whole Bd. of Education sits there and goes through those demands. The problem is the Bd. of Education does not know what its budget will be for

the following year. It is in the process of asking for money from both the state legislature and the mayor. They say: We can agree with all sorts of things for you subject to our getting the money later on, and if we don't get the money you don't get these things. We say: No, you can't do this we are not going to bargain for soap coupons. Our people don't want to know if you get the money they want to know they have something. In April '62' we decided there is no point in dealing with the Bd. of Ed. they had no money, and what we needed to do is compel the city to come up with money before the budget was set in stone because what we could see happening is first we negotiate with the Bd. that doesn't know what its budget is, they can't give you anything. The day after their budget you negotiate with them and they know what their budget is and you can't change it. So where is the bargain?

These [the Bd. of Ed.] were very well meaning and good people and they wanted to arrive at an agreement with us and I must say they leaned over backwards and even stretched and discussed things maybe they should have discussed as public officials in a bargaining setting, but they were trapped by the budget process. How can we give you what we don't have? And they didn't have it at the time. And then of course we all foresaw that the day after the budget they would know what they have and that the bargaining process would be sort of a sham, because before that it wouldn't mean anything and after that it wouldn't mean anything. How do you fit a bargaining process into the legal constraint of a municipal and state budget making and law making process? And nobody had dealt with that up to that time. So we went on strike on April 11, 1962. Twenty two thousand teachers went out, though not a majority a significant increase over 1960 when five thousand teachers went out on November 7, 1960. For the first time in '62 we got an injunction and we had a long long meeting of the Executive Board as whether we should obey the injunction. With by and large the young Turks saying we shouldn't and the old timers saying we should. And I believe we shouldn't, except I thought that since we had a divided leadership that disobeying an injunction when you have two caucuses trying to kill each other inside was too risky. So against what my judgment was on the issue I went the other way. Essentially what you had was three conflicts going on at the same time. First there was a conflict within two factions within the Union. Then there was a conflict between the Superintendent of Schools and the Bd. of Education. The Board was trying to get rid of Theobald and Theobald was trying to ingratiate himself with the Union as a way of saving himself. So Theobald kept on making nice offers which kept on getting shot down by the Board. Then there was a fight between the mayor and the governor. They changed the state aid formula that year, and there was an argument as to when the monies under the new formula were due. The governor saying there is more money there and the mayor saying there is less.

A strike takes place and we do decide after a long and bitter angry meeting to go back to work the next day. Now they had problem of the Conlin Wadlin law. 22,000 teachers have been out

and the law says they are fired. Max Rubin of the Bd. of Education is very hurt because he had really tried to work a deal and he had helped the Union get collective bargaining and now the Union in a sense betrayed him and the Bd. of Ed. by going out on strike and he is very angry. And he felt the law is the law and what is he supposed to do, he is the public employer. So a meeting is called by Governor Rockefeller in his NY office on 55th St. and there was the State Commissioner of Education Allen, and Wagner, and the Bd. of Ed. and the Union representatives and the question was What do we do about the Conlin Wadlin law? Essentially Rubin says we have to enforce the law, and we say if you are going to apply the law then do it with all the teachers: do it with 22,000. Can you run a school system without 22,000 teachers? then go ahead. And the Bd. says we obviously can't get rid of all those people but at least the leaders we should be able to punish. And Rockefeller says to Wagner: Well this is your city do you believe you should discriminate against some people, and Wagner says no. It was all very embarrassing. Essentially Max Rubin was the hard liner, and Rockefeller was enjoying having a mayor embarrassed at not being able to enforce the law. Either he is going to be anti union on the one hand by being tough or he is a person who doesn't want to enforce the law. And what came out of that was ultimately an agreement that the state would have to study the labor relations and that was the basis of the Taylor Committee which resulted in bargaining practices for everybody.

The UFT had made it possible for other organizations to get collective bargaining. Well there were a few other districts that had some collective bargaining. Full blown collective bargaining came out of the UFT experience both at the state level and at the city and later on across the country. If we had violated the injunction that [a jail sentence] was obviously possible but the Conlin Wadlin law did not provide for jail sentences.

After the strike we signed up quite a few members. We signed up some before the strike because they wanted Union protection and a large number after that. The strike was inconclusive because the day we went back we just went back we didn't have a penny more the day after we went back than the day before so we still had to negotiate. There is no question, we had muscle, we had growing membership, and we then had a positive attitude toward a new group that was unionizing in Washington and the liberal establishment. And in a good number of the newspapers, especially considering the fact that this was illegal. In a way it was parallel to people saying that what Martin Luther King, Jr. was doing was right and it was doing a similar period of time. Here was a kind of civil disobedience by a group that had really been discriminated against and treated in a second class way and now they were acting up and it was therefore not viewed as a criminal illegal activity but as an honorable struggle for a legitimate place within the political labor framework of NYC.

Over the next few months we finished negotiating our first contract. What would be the result of collective bargaining?

There was no precedent for it. Would it be a memorandum of understanding, a series of resolutions by the Bd. of Education? A major breakthrough was not only the specifics and we had many specifics: in grievance procedures with arbitration; a major increase in salaries-the biggest that had been seen. I think we got more of an increase in salaries that year than we would have normally gotten in four or five years. It was huge. And breakthroughs in all sorts of working conditions. And it came out in the form of a contract. This was our first contract and it came out in the same form as a contract in the private sector. Later on there were various efforts in the courts by anti-collective bargaining groups to attack it, but we had a contract. And the Bd. of Education said: We will not enter into an agreement unless there is a no strike clause. And the agreement will terminate on June 30. This meant that if we were going to go out on strike we would have to go out on July 1st, which is the first day of the summer vacation. Or the beginning of September, and many of the young Turks said we would rather not have a contract because if we have a contract we are really giving up the right to strike at the best possible time to strike which is when the city is making up the budget, and when the state legislature is in session and there was a big debate within the Union-again. We said you can strike at other times and you have to have a contract otherwise you have no way of enforcing what you got. And we got the contract ratified. It was a one year contract.

I didn't like what the Bd. was doing. But you can not maintain a union on a constant basis of threatening a strike every couple of weeks if you didn't what happened and if you didn't put what you had in writing and enforce it and try to enforce everything by going on strike every couple of weeks when management did something to you, you would end up without a union. You needed stability and you needed to institutionalize it. It was great to have a movement and lots of volunteers and all the militancy, that was fine. We didn't lose it but it was also infantile to handle everything on the basis on instant militancy because teachers would have rebelled against it. The other side would not have tolerated it. It is one thing to have people who are sympathetic in different places but they expect something for the bargain they are striking, they expect a certain amount of stability.

On the 1960/62 strikes:

In 1960 when we went on strike only 5,000 thousand teachers went out so 45,000 crossed the picket lines, this is November 7, 1960. On Dec. 15, 1961 when the collective bargaining votes are counted thirteen months later we had to win over the votes of the majority of those who crossed that picket lines. That means we had to turn to the people who are very militant and say: even though you hate those people who crossed the picket line, even though they are scabs make nice to them because they are the future voters. We could not allow immediate emotions or how we felt about the actions of somebody doing something. What is it that we ultimately want to achieve here. not what would make us feel better today.

For them [the rank and file teachers] who risk that much, and had this very traumatic experience of putting their entire profession on the line to go in and months after that to be able to reach out was a political miracle I think there are very few instances in history where that kind of thing happens.

In 1962 we are heading toward a second contract and now you have Max Rubin who is sore as hell, he is out to get us. We are no longer meeting with the Bd. because he felt we are playing the Bd. against the superintendent, and one board member against another and they hire a professional Ida Klauss. A niece of Dubinsky's and the first solicitor of the NLRB—a brilliant lawyer. Very tough as a management person and very committed to collective bargaining. She was the person who wrote the monographs for the City's Labor Department and prepared the ground for other city employees for check off and other things. She is an intellectual, a lawyer and a person committed to collective bargaining. She is also very worried how this will fare in the courts and against previous public policy, so she is very tough in terms of getting new things but when you get something you are pretty sure that she devised it and put it together so that it will stand up. She is really not the enemy although you wouldn't know most of the time when you met with her. A real pro and I would love to have her back.

Max Rubin decided that they were going to whatever monies they got that year and make educational improvements and have no salary increases. We had very very tough negotiations with a tremendous amount of hostility. After a year of this we set a strike date for the opening of school the following September, 1963. Just a few days before teachers were to return to school Charlie Cogen was on one of these Sunday talk shows and he called for mediators. Wagner appointed Ted Kheel, Simon Rifkind, Frank Karelson were the mediators. They heard 700 demands in a day and a night. It was around the clock set of talks. We ended up with a two year agreement, which was a breakthrough because of what the Bd. of Ed. feels is a budget problem from year to year.

Charlie Cogen, Dave Selden and I were very eager to get a longer agreement not only because we felt that the city school system needed stability but all those teachers who were militant were already in the Union. Now the people who were not yet in the Union, we only had 50% of the teachers, we felt that to get the rest of the teachers were people who were frightened of militancy. They didn't want an organization that was going to go on strike every year. Now it was important to demonstrate the teachers that we were not irresponsible and out on the streets all the time. We were eager that parts of the contract deal not just with salaries and working conditions but with things that could clearly seen as being a benefit to children. That there was a public purpose to all of this. This became a major battleground between

the Bd. of Ed. and the Union. What is the difference between issues of collective bargaining and issues of public policy?

Take an issue of class size. Is it a matter of educational policy or is it a matter of working conditions. Well clearly if you have 50 or 40 children in a class beyond a certain level it is a working condition. Should you have all class sizes limited to 32, well that can eat up a lot of money. Should you say if you have a bunch of brilliant kids who are well behaved you could have 50 in a class, but if you have a bunch of kids who have real problems and are slow you should have 5. You limit management's discretion by making it across the board. What is a working condition and what is a matter of educational policy and where is the line?

We did negotiate a two year agreement and it went around the clock. Both sides were terrific and you used good strong arguments. Well we got an increase the first year but it didn't start until April so the actual dollars in the first year were very very little. But the second year had a better raise so the overall rate of increase over the two years was satisfactory but the number of dollars were small and we made great gains in the working conditions: class size provisions, things that bothered teachers in the schools, many things became subject to rotation, many perks were now in the open, and it took a whole huge patronage political system which was subject to the powers of whims, essentially one person: the principal and brought it out into the open where the principal now had to do it in the open and subject to grievances and sharing and no longer special rewards.

By 1963 Theobald was out and replaced by Calvin Gross. Calvin Gross had been in a small school district in upstate NY where he was about to be fired and then he was miraculously rescued by being hired in Pittsburgh. So from afar he looked quite good because he had a lot of support from the business and the labor community. The number two man at the Bd. of Ed. was Bernard Donovan and there was a great deal of behind the scenes maneuvering by people who did not want a Catholic as school superintendent. We also had a Catholic mayor at the time—Wagner. Donovan was clearly a very very capable person and they conducted a nation wide search. And a great number of very good people on the list. None of the people wanted to be school superintendent in NYC, so they found Calvin Gross and gave him a red carpet treatment. He was built up as a tremendous saviour. He came in the middle of many fights. He knew nothing about the NYC schools and Bernie Donovan really chopped him up. Essentially every piece of bad news that went out had Calvin Gross name on it and every piece of good news had Bernie Donovan's signature. He lasted a short time. When he knew he was in great trouble he was helpful to the Union because we were trying to put together a program of more effective schools (MES) and there was a lot of pressure to do something for students/teachers in difficult areas. We came up with a plan and he supported in and put in the first ten schools. The MES school was a great success. My kid, Jennie, went to one, and white middle class kids bused their kids across Brooklyn. Jennie travelled from

East 4th St. and Ave. C. to Kent St. and a lot of white middle class parents were doing that. And a lot of white middle class parents were doing that, it was a wonderful school. And we were integrating the schools. In the beginning a lot of car pools and later on the Bd. of Ed. provided buses. A three year old got on a bus and travelled to the other end of Brooklyn. It was an all day program and a summer program, these were very popular schools. They were going on all over the City. There were psychologists, social workers, guidance counsellors, it was a terrific program and it started with three year olds. It was a wonderful program. Parents associations of these schools that had been dormant became alive, because all kinds of things were happening in the school and they became alive.

By this time the superintendent of schools was Bernard Donovan and he was gunning for the MES schools. First the program was not his, it was Calvin Gross's and the Union was getting a lot of credit for it and it was expensive. And a lot of members of the Bd. of Ed. were out after it. It was an expensive program and they didn't want the Union to look good. The Union wanted to expand the program, and we were pressing at every set of negotiations to do so. They [the Bd. of Ed.] were not really interested in a program that cost money. It was as if everybody knew that money would do the trick and it was money they didn't want to come up with. There was near violence in places because parents did not want their kids bussed to schools and here were white parents lining up to insist that their children be bussed.

Here were children at the earliest ages, three and four learning in an integrated environment and this was quite simply a terrific environment for these kids. It became even more so if the child had parents who worked all day. Thus the child was involved in a learning situation all day long.

Then they started doing research. Research started with these kids and it showed that the program didn't work. An earlier program, Higher Horizons, was run in a few schools, and it was a good program, and it cost a lot of money and it worked. One year they decided they were going to expand the program to fifty other schools. But in expanding it they had none of the richness. They simply assigned one teacher as the Higher Horizon coordinator, and told that person to run a good program. So there was a lot of fraud, for when they had good programs that were rich they merely expanded the name without expanding the substance and tried to create the impression to the general public that they were really doing good. And they wanted to do the same with more effective schools, (MES) they wanted to water it down so they could expand it, and we of course refused to do that. We wanted to maintain the integrity of the program. They got a researcher to do a long piece of research that said that everybody liked it but it had no effect on children. If you read the report carefully, buried in it, it showed how effective the program was. The report was full of every statistic, every figure, every measurement you could possibly take and it ran several volumes, but buried deep in that

report was the information that showed how effective the entire program was. The program did show that if you took grade three, or grade four, or any of the other grades the scores remained the same. But buried in the report was a chart that said that students who are transients, whose parents move around, and who move from year to year and school to school don't do very well, but for those students who are in the same school year in and year out the program was a success. All of the scores they were measuring to show how effective the program was, was confined to students who moved around a great deal. They did not measure the scores of students who were in the program every year in the same school. They were measuring students who came in from other schools and did not have the full effect of it. What this transitory index showed is for the 20-25% of the students who remained in the program and didn't move: they made giant strides. If you didn't move and stayed in the program for long periods of time in the same school you did very well. Hidden within this whole masterpiece of research was the direct evidence that any kid who remained over a period of time made spectacular progress. We had a strike to preserve the schools but ultimately the Bd. of Ed. did something else: they went around to parents of neighboring schools and they said why should that school down the block have all those wonderful conditions when conditions in your child's school are bad? Why don't you insist that they dismantle the school so that we can equalize the services and the benefits. They actually organized and mobilized parent groups to who instead of fighting to have their own school become a more effective school merely fought to dismantle the neighboring one. Some years later the Bd. dismantled these and when we went to an arbitrator the arbitrator said that More Effective Schools are not really a part of hard negotiations, that these are matters of management prerogatives.

There were people who lived next door to me who were basically conservative and they fought to get their kids into the More Effective Schools program because they saw it as quality. These neighbors of mine were prepared to bus their child into a black neighborhood in order for the child to go to a More Effective School. They wanted their child in a high quality program. And while normally these people would not have been color blind the quality of the program out weighted any prejudices they had.

It was a very good experience for Jennie and if the Bd. of Ed. wished to do it today, well we spend about \$4 billion in the NYC schools today, so to put it in elementary schools alone, all of the MES were elementary schools, would cost around \$500 million per year to reach about 400,000 students. It is pretty cheap if you consider that reaching the 3,4,5,6,7,8, year olds where that block of time really matters if you can read, write, count; what we want to do is develop the basics. If you start with students at 8 or 9 you would probably be wasting money but if you maintained it with those students that you started at 3, 4, 5, 6, and continued with it right down the line you would do well.

We knew we were doing well because we had the first contract in the country, the first grievance procedure for public employees, because it had binding arbitration. Who ever heard of a government agency agreeing that some outside party is going to tell them that they are wrong and are going to have to comply?

In the 1962 agreement we got for most teachers a \$995. salary increase where as previous to that a typical increase was \$100, 200, 300 dollars. So it was practically three times what any previous increase had been during the previous decade. In addition to that we had all these jobs posted in a school so you shared the good jobs and shared the poor ones. In the 1963 contract came the limitations on class size because many classes at that time were in the 40-45 range and we brought them down to 32, 33, 34. We had a few exceptions [if the school building could not accomodate that class size limit] and these were troublesome. After all there was a baby boom and you just couldn't just snap your fingers and have a building go up. The exceptions were they could exceed the class size limitation if there was not enough space, if they were experimenting with team teaching, or if they had to create a half class. Half class meant that if you had a room but you could not compel the Bd.of Education to put have of a second grade class and half of a third grade class in together in order to comply with these provisions. By and large there was wide spread compliance. We had 55,000 teachers in the school system and there was probably less than 3% of them had problems with enforcement in terms of space or other problems. That was a major victory. We also run a duty free lunch periods for elementary school teachers: that was an absolute right. Fifty minute duty free lunch period, which was one of our strike objectives in 1960. In the junior high schools we had five teaching periods, one lunch period, one period that was free and one period that was when a teacher may be required to do various chores around the school, essentially non-teaching but other chores in the school. These were major gains. We limited the amount of time that could be spent on faculty conferences, some of the tyrannical principals could keep you for two, three hours. We limited the number of times these conferences could happen.

If you go back to the 1930s many elementary school teachers were graduates of teacher training institutas and frequently the principal was the only college graduate in the school. There was an authority relationship because the teacher was only two years out of high school, who then got some practical instruction on how to teach arithmetic or reading. They were very good but they weren't college graduates. And many people during the Depression waited eight years for an appointment and many of these principals were martinets. I remember as an elementary school kid I remember my principal walking into my classroom and berating the teacher in front of all the students. I remember a teacher quitting in the middle of a semester. I remember in elementary school I was a kid, a teacher crying and quitting in the middle of a semester. This was in Long Island City. The kids cried after that, after she left. The principals themselves were insecure. They wanted to

become superintendents. Each principal was very worried that there would be a mark against them and their own advancement would be seen by the superintendent. They were really sending messages out that the following had to be done otherwise it would be bad for me: "Here is what my boss wants and I want this place to operate like a great ship." The tough principal was near universal at the time.

This is still true today after all these years of collective bargaining we still have it today: That's why we are not going to attract and keep teachers of any caliber because people don't want to be treated that way, they would be absolutely crazy. Somebody who is in and vested many years, they are angry, they are bitter and they should be for being treated that way. And what we find now, you know we have parties for new teachers coming in, they say: I am having fun working with the kids and I am going to do all right on the job but what I can't take is that all of the experienced teachers in the school are telling me that I am crazy for staying here and that I should get out because the system is terrible and is going to destroy me. That is the feedback we get from new teachers. No system can survive having its outstanding and more experienced practitioners be so absolutely devastatingly negative and turned off on the system.

The relations with Bernie Donovan were frank and open. They were power relations. Bernie Donovan was the guy who tried to bring the NEA to run against us in the collective bargaining election. Once we got power he knew he had to deal with us. He knew a lot about the school system. And in an ordinary period of time he would have been a good person to deal with. That is he was a knowledgeable and pretty tough management person for the most part did keep his word and did want to maintain a decent relationship. The unfortunate thing is that we ended up with Ocean Hill Brownsville later on and the year before Ocean Hill Brownsville, 1967, had a substantial interference in the bargaining process by Mayor Lindsay and by a member of the school board who was essentially trying to pit the parents of the city against the Union. That was Alfred Giardinio [?].

Donovan was not innovative. He had been a good principal of a school and had a sense of fairness. He was not a martinet, he understood that you had to maintain good morale, on the other hand he had a pretty good notion of what it took to program a school. He was a intelligent and fair manager, not particularly creative and not innovative—a good traditional administrator. He was not easy to work with but he was pretty good to work with.

When I was elected President of the UFT [1964] we had about 30,000 members or 50% of the teachers out there. Membership is voluntary and those that didn't join got the benefits anyway. We had gone from 2,400 to 30,000 which was pretty big. There were a lot of people who were afraid, we had organized by this time all of the militants. What we desperately needed was a period of stability. What we needed to do was appeal to the more conservative teachers. We had to appeal to teachers who were frightened of the trade

union aspect. We provided a health insurance rider through our dues and that brought in a tremendous number of members. Actually with each contract and each settlement we got major jumps in membership. Most of the organizing took place with our volunteer chapter chairman in schools. We ultimately signed up 97% of the members before we got agency fee, so we ultimately achieved 97% voluntary membership on a very high dues structure. Whatever it was at the time. This was on checkoff but they could get off checkoff whenever they disagreed with us, it was up to them.

On taking office as president of the UFT.

I took office as President of the UFT on July 1, 1964. Schools out but summer school is on and vacation playgrounds are open. Because we did such a good job with teachers the teachers who taught summer school and worked in the playground formed their own committee, and they want us to represent us. We are now engaged with the Bd. of Ed. saying: These are our members who are working overtime. They are working in tutorial programs and evening programs. Remember there is no Taylor Law, there is no State Public Employee Relations Board, so the only people we can appeal to is our employers. The Bd. of Ed. sat on it and stalled.

The minute I took office there was a strike of the summer employee playground and these were all or most of them our members. A committee called the strike. I think they were getting \$2.50 cents an hour. There was no sick days, no seniority rules, and they went on strike.

I found myself at the bargaining table with a committee of these people and the Bd. saying you don't represent them. But you have a strike and most of them are our members. It was a frightening experience because it was grassroots and difficult and we did get a settlement and did represent them.

The evening high school leaders who had struck were under the leadership of Roger Parente who was one of the leaders in the opposition to me and Charlie Cogen and he had lost to Charlie Cogen and then lost to me. Roger Parente calls back into session his evening high school teachers and he decided to call a strike for the following Feb. 1 for the evening high school teachers only. That strike was scheduled for Feb. 1965. Parente wanted a contract, a salary increase, grievance procedure, seniority procedure and this is at the very time when the Bd. of Ed. is about to recognize the UFT as the sole representative for all the part timers who work after school. Essentially what we have is a leader of the opposition who is trying to embrace the UFT and start his own union.

I call him in and ask him what is he doing. He says that he has to represent these people, it is our committee, and I say that our contract is up next year. Remember this is 1964 during the summer.

And our new contract is going to include all the teachers, including the evening school teachers and all the other people. And I say if you have a strike six months early in which the focus of attention is the evening high school teachers make another \$24. per evening and that is the whole focus and not on everyone's problems then that is a strike not against the Bd. of Ed. but against your colleagues, the very people who are going to be out but they don't know that it is not within their self interest to lead with the evening high school teachers issue. It is really a strike against the UFT, against the exclusive bargaining rights of the Union. You are saying that you are going to take one group of people and their interests are going to become paramount to everyone else's. Let me tell you what I am going to do. I am going to go around to everyone of the evening schools and tell them what I am going to do about it. I went up the school I use to teach in, Wadleigh Junior High, in the evening an evening high school. I had asked to be invited to the school. I came to the school and there were the evening school teachers. Roger was sitting there. And somebody said we have Mr. Parente here to debate with Mr. Shanker and each one will have ten minutes. And then somebody stuck a tape recorder and said Mr. Shanker will go first. I said I will start as soon as you turn that thing off. It is clearly an unfriendly atmosphere. I am your president and I did ask to come here. You elected me, the teachers elected the Union, and I came here to discuss something very important with you and it is not going to be a secret because I will say the same thing to every evening high school. I also said that I am not speaking for ten minutes I am going to spend an hour with you and if Mr. Parente who is not an officer of the Union, he ran for office and was defeated, I wrote to you to ask for this meeting. This is my meeting. Meet with him if you like but not at this meeting.

I said if you go out on this strike in Feb. you are going to destroy the ability get a decent contract for all teachers and what you are going to do is, you are going to have your strike and then the tutorial people after school will have their strike and the vacation playground people will have another one and then maybe the elementary school teachers will have one and maybe everyone else will go out on their own. What will the United Federation of Teachers be, what does united mean? You will end up cutting your own throats and the public will not tolerate it and say collective bargaining for public employees results in strike every few months by somebody else and it will be very destructive. I said no strike is to be called unless it is to be called by the UFT. I told Roger that I will take action if any other group calls a strike because the only group that represents the teachers in the City of N.Y. is the UFT. If you call a strike that means that you want to be recognized against the UFT. You want Roger to be sitting there even though he wasn't elected to do that and I was elected to do that. I will tell you what I will do if you have this strike: I will personally enlist thousands of teachers to take your jobs and I will be one of them. We will march through your picket lines because you will be picketing against the UFT and against unity. We will not only take your jobs but if the Bd.

of Ed. every reinstates you who will be engaged in a wild cat strike against the Union we will shut the day schools in the City down. You have the best after schools jobs in the City. There are people who would give their right arm for these jobs. If the Union appeals to people on the basis of unity and self interest you are not going to have them. I went to each of the 16 schools and said the same thing.

I told them that the Union was going to win all these things in the next contract and they could have a committee within the organization. Roger then tried to negotiate a vice presidency in exchange for bringing the committee in. I said we don't change our constitution for every group that threatens to go out on strike. You want to change the constitution come on in and do it accordance with our constitution.

Years 1965-66.

The first contract I negotiated was in 1965. It was quite difficult to do, and Donovan was superintendent. By the time we had to leave for the AFL-CIO convention, it was right after the Watts riots, we had an agreement with Donovan and thought it was great. We went first to San Francisco first for a little vacation, and as we were having breakfast the phone rang. I said to Abe Levine that it was Donovan, he is going to break the deal. And sure enough, he raised a few things that look like quibbles but each one was a major item that he had pulled back on. So we denounced the fact that he had pulled back and had gone back on his word. We had a strike threat, no contract no work. They were major items that he had tried to pull back on. The funny thing was we went through a convention in Los Angeles, I was a floor leader, and it was filled with debates, and on the last day a group of us went out to dinner and in the middle of dinner I got a fever, and when I got on the airplane I realized what had happened. Just before I left from NY two of my children had chicken pox, and I thought that I had chicken pox as a child, apparently I didn't, and in no time I went to 103 degrees with all the pox in my mouth and all over my body. Flew back to NY and stayed in bed a couple of days and as soon as I could get out went into mediation. Three mediators came in and, Theodore Kheel, and of course nobody wanted to be in the same room with me, so I did the mediation in isolation. Jules Kolodny was the person who got on the phone and talked to me in another room. I did the negotiations on phone. Then we had a ratification vote with some 12,000 teachers on Randall Island. I hadn't shaved because I still had the pox, and I had stubble and pox-I didn't look good. We got good salary increases but the biggest things that were cheered in that settlement was the fact that teachers no longer had to bring a note from the doctor every time they were sick. Donovan watched the proceedings of the ratification on television, and when I announced a salary increase there was mild applause, announced a number of other benefits all greeted with mild applause, but when I announced that you no longer have to bring a note wild applause. A few days later Donovan said I guess I didn't have to give you

the other things all you needed was getting your people released from bringing a note. He had a good sense of humor.

This was a time of great growth. It was also a time when Lindsay had a fair number of strikes: the transit strike the first day he took office, social workers in the Welfare Dept., sanitation later on. Federal aid and state aid was coming in, there was a lot of money around.

We sought long term settlements and negotiate them early. Three years settlements if we could. Each contract brought very substantial improvements. The Bd. of Ed. never wanted to go for two years, always claiming that it was illegal for them to mortgage their money. It was a kind of catch-22 situation with them claiming that they didn't know how much money they had, and if you waited long enough they did know and then they would claim that all you could negotiate for is what they had. And they would never give you what they had. And then they would say that they wanted to put so much away for this, and that, and so on. So now we had to negotiate by arguing that certain things should be reduced. Essentially we were almost forced to threatened strike or go out on strike in order to increase the pie. Remember that up to that time each of the strikes had worked for us and lasted only one day. Those strikes were filled with fear for after all it was a tough law, everybody could have been fired, all sorts of things could have happened. Up to 1967 we had only two strikes, each one lasting one day. There was a big teacher shortage, on the opening day of school there was always a big headline "3000 teachers missing" and quickie programs to create instant teachers. There was a feeling that you had to win a strike: there was no way of losing. And the feeling that the longer a strike the more you would get why ever end it. Strikes were short and sweet and something came right after them which is good. Essentially we had adopted a no contract no work provision which proved successful in getting both sides to be reasonable. The termination date of each contract was automatically a strike day, which proved to be very successful in getting both sides to be reasonable.

I remember I was once sitting with Mayor Wagner, I think it was Wagner or it could have been the president of the Bd. of Education, and said to him how come when we were in the last set of negotiations you said there was not a penny more and yet when a hurricane came you found millions of dollars. He said that was a disaster. I said in other words if we became a disaster you would find more for us too. And we both laughed.

1966 and IS 201

1966 was a very important year because with the opening of school was IS 201. IS 201, a brand new school which won an architecture prize. It was air conditioned, no windows, and the Bd. said it would be integrated. This was the summer that black power became a phrase used across the nation. They selected Stanley Lieser, a white Jewish principal who had been in Harlem for many years. He

had spent twelve years developing Afro-American materials. He believed in the notion of ethnic pride long before anybody else was doing it. His assistant principal, a black woman, Beril Banfield, who is a biographer of Marcus Garvey, and they put together a faculty which was 50% black and 50% white. As they were about to open there was a group about to boycott the schools. And Bernie Donovan was meeting with that group. One of the demands was to oust the principal, essentially they were saying that if it wasn't going to be intergrated they wanted a black principal. Bernie Donovan obviously entered into an agreement with the protesters saying that they could name a black principal. This was just when the kids were going to arrive for the first day of school. And Stanley Lisser, Donovan said, had asked for a transfer from the school. When that happened it just shot thorough that school like a bolt of lightning. The teachers decided they were going to close down the school. They didn't ask for our permission. They did call and say they hoped we would support them. They were absolutely outraged. They loved the man, they had worked with him before. They were outside the school, black and white teachers. It was unanimous. I got a call from Donovan and he said that he wanted to meet with the teachers. We all met in the library of the Bd. of Ed. The whole faculty was there, along with Mr. Lisser and Donovan. I was in the back of the room. Donovan said that he didn't do anything, that Mr. Lisser wants to leave his school, here he is. And Lisser stood up and said that he had asked for a transfer. A black teacher stood up and said that she had worked with him for many years Mr. Lisser and I know you don't want to leave the school. I can tell when you are telling the truth. You want to stay. And half the people sat there and just started crying. They wept. And Lisser started weeping. I cried too, I sure did. And Bernie Donovan said you realize that you are on strike and you are defying the Condlin Wadlin law, if you go back right now I won't dock you a day's pay. The carrot and stick were right out there. It was a religious meeting. Teacher after teacher got up and they just said, we are not going back there, this is a great principal, it can be a wonderful school, and we want you back Mr. Lisser. And right there and then at the meeting Donovan changed his views and said OK Lisser is going to go back.

What happened was the boycott was reinstituted and the group that was there started hitting the Union, with the charge that the Union did not want a black principal. Well there was no black principal in the City at that time. Not one. It was a very tough exam, and there were relatively few black college graduates in the north. There were plenty of black college graduates in the country but none of them had taken the exam and passed it. If you wanted to appoint a black principal you would have to get around the Bd. of Examiners and break the system. And that is exactly what that group, the boycotts protesters, was trying to do.

It was one of the days when I felt that if the Union had done nothing else but to give teachers a feeling that they could stand in front of a superintendent and state their feelings and say we

are not going back to that school unless the right thing is done. It is one thing for a whole city to be out on strike, there is a certain anonymity, a certain feeling of strength when 20,000, 3,000 people go out but here was 100 people who feel so deeply and being cowed by the threat that the law is being brought down on their heads, or by the threats and intimidation that took place outside of the school. It was democracy, it was solidarity, it was the individual's dignity that they felt. It was just a beautiful and remarkable event.

The group that was boycotting decided that the issue was white teachers' union, or white Jewish teachers' union as some of them put it does not want blacks to be principals. From a public point of view almost everyone was on our side. Roy Wilkins wrote a column saying that we don't care if the principal is white or black as long as he is good. Whitney Young did the same thing and the N.Y. Times, Daily News, all said the same thing. Everybody was saying that the teachers were right and Donovan was wrong in capitulating. There were two things that happened. First I was deeply involved in the civil rights movement in the south and the north. These were marches in Selma and sit ins at the University of Illinois, we would go to restaurants in the late 1940s which did not serve blacks and we would go as an integrated group and insist on service and the restaurant would close down. The movie houses were the same thing. I went to Bayard Rustin and said what is happening here is going to destroy the civil rights movement. Civil rights is civil rights for everybody. I suggested that Dr. King come to N.Y. and lead a civil rights march. Bayard agreed and we then met with A. Philip Randolph who at that time had an apartment on 135St. Randolph thought it was a wonderful idea and said it should be done because of the inter-racial nature of the civil rights movement. No one should say that civil rights means only civil rights for blacks and not whites. Randolph and Rustin called a meeting in his apartment for black Harlem leaders, local elected officials, bankers, educators and others. I did not go to that meeting. After the meeting Bayard told me that they all agreed a white should have a right to teach but everyone had a reason why he himself should not be involved. The only two left were Randolph and Rustin. King was not called because he would not come into a place where the civil rights community did not ask him. He was not asked.

The group that was boycotting outside the school were not training youngsters to engage in vandalism inside the school. While the faculty was together there started to be fires and damage within the school. The school was being ripped up. Lisser did leave and the school went through one principal after another.

The irony is that all of here are so close to civil rights and the different groups that represented civil rights. This effort to paint the Union as an anti-civil rights group in contrast to what our record has been both as a Union and as individuals. Sandy Feldman who had just joined us the year before and come from the civil rights movement itself. She was an active participant, not

someone who had just sent in a contribution and here the boycotters painting us as anti civil rights. Now the whole thing began to get painted as not only opposition to black principals, but also opposition to community involvement or as the word community controlled. One of our concerns was that the selection of supervisors become a patronage thing or a racial thing. We had many criticisms of the Bd. of Examiners. Examinations in our mind was not the only way to select supervisors but using these jobs as patronage would also be wrong. We participated in an internship program that was developed especially for minority teachers. This was done to prepare them to become principals. The new examination was done to fit the internship. So we were involved in that. We were not in favor of having some political power pick someone. We were in favor of the development of a new system, which would meet that result. What you needed in a principal was not someone who could simply pass an examination who knew all sorts of vocabulary words that nobody ever uses. It was a ridiculous examination. It meant that someone could use the language pretty well, and that is an important thing. Does this person really know anything about education, and the quality of leaders was certainly not measured.

We decided to find some places where we could develop some models of community involvement. So into the Union came these people from Ocean Hill Brownsville, and some people came from the lower East side, all of them interested in the idea of community involvement. And then we went to the Ford Foundation and asked for a couple of experiments, a couple of areas where we could test this out. We said to the people from Ocean Hills Brownsville that if they supported the elementary schools there in becoming MES schools we would support their being the governance structure in Ocean Hill Brownsville. I met with George Bundy and I said: Do you really believe that the reading scores and the math scores in these schools are going to go up by taking a bunch of officers and making them the governing structure? And he said: Of course not but they won't blame you when their kids fail, and they won't blame Lindsay, and they won't blame the City, they will have no one to blame but themselves. We made the deal with Ocean Hill Brownsville group. I said to Sandy it is not going to work because Donovan will give them only half of the deal, and what do think will happen. They will take it. And that is what happened.

The radical left loved it and the radical right loved it. Bill Buckley was a supporter. It was anti governmental.

What was interesting is that after Lindsay got legislation to increase the size of the Board of Education we discovered during the strike that a majority of the members of the Bd. of Ed. had grants from the Ford Foundation during that period.

1967 Issues

In the beginning there was a very cooperative spirit and a very friendly spirit with the people who were involved in 1967. I did

not have any inkling of what was to come. The Ford Foundation put a lot of people on the payroll and financed a phony election, it was a gathering there was no real money put in there to improve.

Now we also are going into negotiations and bargaining. There are also a series of racial incidents that are ugly. In Brooklyn Sonny Carson of Brooklyn CORE is terrorizing a few schools. In one school a teacher is falsely accused and he is ousted without any due process, and essentially Sonny Carson had come into the school and terrorized the teachers. What had gone on in the streets outside of IS 201 had now begun to come into the schools from the streets. The Bd. of Ed. wanted to destroyed the MES program. And we wanted an extension of the MES and the negotiations were unsuccessful. Well we were asked to pick some names that would be mediators and we worked on this list and one morning, as I drove down to be on one of those talks shows that are aired on television on Sunday mornings I hear on the radio that the City had already picked three mediators, none of whom had been on my list. I got to the station and was asked what I thought of the names the City had picked and I predicted a strike because these three knew nothing about education. It was a horrible thing to say to me that first the mediators would be chosen by agreement and then ignore the list.

After we educated these arbitrators regarding the Union and its history and what the different groups within the Union wanted the arbitrators went back to Lindsay and he said that all the Union wanted was money, so they threw a great deal of money at us but went back on class size and more effective schools. We just went out on strike. We couldn't take that. Lindsay could not believe that we would go out on strike, and he called me and I told him that he was dead wrong.

Lindsay then got on television who urged parents to volunteer as scabs. That was the greatest thing that happened to us because those parents lasted only four hours. When they got out they knew what being a teacher was like. He also had the support of Florence Flast who was president of United Parents Association. She made a terrible mistake because we always had good relations with that group.

The strike lasted 14 school days, almost three weeks. This is the first time the Taylor law is in effect. We had opposed the Taylor law. We called it the RAT--bill Rockefeller And Travia. Travia made the deal because the Democrats had the majority. This called for two days penalty for each day out, and fines against the Union, no checkoff, jail sentences, and this was a different sort of strike with penalties and risks a lot higher.

We narrowed our demands down to a dozen and we got at the end of the 14 days almost all we asked. And a commitment to study the expansion of MES.

Lindsay used the racial line against us as he did against the social workers, the transit workers, the sanitation workers, who needs education the most: blacks and minorities.

One of the provisions that we were asking for and did not receive was a provision that something be done about disruptive children in the classroom. The previous year we held a leadership conference in Arden House where we had taken 100 of the top leaders of the UFT and spent the weekend analyzing where the Union was going on this issue. One of the people we invited to visit with us was Mary Ellen Reardon who was president of the Detroit-Federation of Teachers. They had just negotiated an agreement and in that agreement they had a provision that if a child is noisy and disruptive in the classroom the teacher may remove the child from the room. And then there was a due process procedure. She was cheered and the UFT teachers wanted something like that. So we proposed that and the disruptive child issue became a racial issue. Black groups said that what was being asked was that white teachers be permitted to throw black children out of the classroom. We got some language in the agreement but it was a cumbersome procedure, and never used.

Doing this strike I was in court under an injunction that was brought under the Taylor law. We did negotiate make up time so that the teachers did not loose any money in going out on strike. It turned out to be an economic victory, the teachers made great gains. I was fined, and people sent money. Martin Luther King sent a check, I still have it.

On going to jail.

Christmas time I went to jail. It is not nice. This was not a jail loaded with criminals, it was called the alimony jail. When you go into there they take everything away, your razor blades, you can keep a book. There were no mattresses you slept on a blanket which was on springs. It was a dormitory. Women were upstairs, most women from other countries who had come here, most prostitutes, and on their way to being deported. There were two men who were there because they didn't pay alimony. Most of the people there are witnesses in murder cases, which essentially means the police believe they know who did it. You get up first thing in the morning and sweep the place. Then you go down and have breakfast; they spent 60 cents a day on our food, basically you didn't do anything. I did some reading, play some bridge with a few of the other inmates there, watched television. They knew who I was they had been following my coming into their institution, so I became a guidance counselor for them. Each one told me how he was framed and how he really did do it, what could he do, and what kind of lawyer could I recommend. I remember what I read very well: Benson, on the economics of education, and the other one was Malamud: The Fixer. And I did a lot of walking back and forth. there was no exercise area. They did have a solitary confinement cell. I got a lot of mail and there were demonstrations every day sponsored by the Central Labor Council. I could see them from the

window, and there was a round the clock vigil by Union members. They were there from the time I went in until I came out. There were always pickets outside. I got literary hundreds of packages of fruit and cake, the prisoners loved it while I was there, they never ate so well. One cake that came in was a beauty and started slicing it down and when we got to the middle we couldn't slice because there was a file inside. At first everyone laughed and then everyone there just said shutup because if the guards found out this would be the end of the goodies. Two guys took the file and figured out a way to get rid of it. Edie [Mrs. Shanker] came but my kids could not. Edie was all set to come on Christmas day with gifts from the kids, we had not been told anything and she had not been told anything, and the guards told me that there would not be any visiting hours today. On Christmas and New Years the guards like to be home with their families and they reduce the number of guards here, therefore there can't be any visitors. So I called Edie and she was very angry, and she called people in the Union, and together she decided to come down anyway and called the press corps. It was a very cold day and she is standing outside knocking at the door with these Christmas packages in her hand and she came with a quote: A Scrouge must run this city. That picture was front page, it appeared in Turkey and Greece.

Ocean Hill Brownsville-1967-68.

We were working with Rhody McCoy and at one point he came to me and said he needed help, he didn't know what to do from an education point of view. We agreed to sponsor an Arden House conference for people from the governing board and educators to come up with an innovative program. On one level there were a lot of creepy characters floating around but on another level it looked like it was going to work out. For those who wanted to transfer out we arranged that, and we went through that year trying to make it work. In May the notes came in the letter boxes of the teachers telling them they were dismissed.

Anybody who received a note was the person they wanted to get rid of. There were two people who had the same name, and one got it and it wasn't the right person. This immediately became a confrontation. There were local militants who were threatening them, and now this was building.

It is now May and June and we are trying to get the teachers in, and get charges brought against the teachers if they are guilty they are out and if they are innocent they are go back. We did get a hearing before Judge Francis Rivers, a black man, and a vice president of the NAACP, and he found them innocent. And when they went back to their schools they still couldn't get in. We then had a series of mediation sessions in Ted Kheels' office. We wanted to maintain the notion of due process. Then came the summer. All we did was to shut the schools in Ocean Hill Brownsville-to contain the issue. And we said that if Rhody McCoy is able to hire scabs and open up the district, thereby rendering our limited stoppage

ineffective then we will have to shut down the whole city. The Bd. of Ed. had by now flipped, they now had a community control majority. Over the summer the Bd. came through with a new decentralization plan that was to go through right away. It was announced just before schools were to open, and it was just as devastating as the problem we had in Ocean Hill Brownsville. It essentially said that all of the rules and regulations of the Bd. of Education which contained many of the basic working conditions of teachers, will now be up to each district to decide what to do. They were tearing up working conditions which pre-existed in the contract and which would have been put in the contract had we ever thought they were at risk. Including sabbaticals, sick leave, this was basic stuff.

In Sept. we went out on strike and it was very solid. We had 55,000, or 57,000 teachers out plus the supervisors, the school custodians locked the school and the strike was over in one or two days. Lindsay called me down to City Hall and said: Al you are absolutely right, we can't change your working conditions, and I'll see to it that these teachers who have been judged OK by Rivers will be sent back. And we had a press announcement, but in the middle of this press conference Lindsay's p.r. people were saying that they weren't sure the teachers would be taken back.

We went back to school, we did have an agreement that all these rules and regulations would be maintained intact. The teachers tried to get back to school the next day, the day after that, and I got back to Lindsay and he just said that he couldn't do it. I said what's your problem and he said he can't do it. Then he said the strike is over and you'll not be able to get the teachers out again. I didn't know if I could get them out again.

We had a big meeting and I told them that the mayor had lied to us and we had a huge membership meeting, and I told the rank and file that the mayor had lied to us. I said what is the choice? If the mayor feels that all he has got to do is lie to us, and that is the end of the strike, and we are powerless then what is any agreement going to be worth in the future. And so we voted to go out on strike again. This time it ran for quite a few weeks.

The mayor appointed John Doar to a vacancy on the Bd. of Ed. He became the president of the Bd. He met with me. He said I understand your problem this is exactly what I did for Bobby Kennedy down south. This is not a contract problem this is how to get compliance with laws that already exist. If you go back I will agree to do what I did in the south. I will set up teams of people I will set up sheriff teams and observers and we will get compliance. And you can have people on these teams and you can have a direct pipeline to me so that if there is not compliance I can take action, and clearly knew what he was talking about. I was confident that he meant to do what he said he was going to do. We entered into an agreement with the monitoring plan that would take place. We ended the strike. The first day the teachers tried to get in and they were not allowed in. the second day they still

were not allowed in. One day they were put in empty rooms, another into an auditorium, another day they were threatened. One day they were given the names of their children, what schools they went to and where their wives/husbands were. It was a process of tremendous intimidation. I asked Doar when it was going to happen and he said we are not going to do it. I said why not and he said because the whole city is going to burn down.

This is what we kept hearing from Lindsay. He kept saying look whether you are right or not doesn't make any difference if you get what you want the whole city is going to burn down. Nothing is worth that. He made those remarks over and over again. He made these remarks in Gracie Mansion. He told them to many people—a whole negotiating committee. Now we went on strike a third time.

We had overwhelming public support—not newspapers. I could have run for mayor in 1969. There were taxi drivers who wouldn't charge me for the fare, there were newspaper vendors who gave me free newspapers, I go to a restaurant and there would be other things.

I had a private meeting with Ted Kheel in his home in Riverdale and he had the Commissioner of Education—Allen there.

At one point Lindsay invited me to come to Gracie Mansion for breakfast and I went with Harry Van Arsdale and he was very eager to settle and He said that he would make a public announcement and put it in writing. Any school where there is violence or the failure to have due process, if you will tell me to close the school I will shut the school down. I'll use my police powers, I'll have the police come to the school and empty it out and keep it closed. I said: Look you can't do that. There is no way a mayor of the City of N.Y. can give that power to the head of the Union. I don't want the power, I don't want to have every teacher who has some fear in that school tells me that somebody threatened them, I am going to have to close the school down. It is not a reasonable way of doing it. And I did not have faith that he would do it either, because he had gone back on his word. That gave me an idea.

When I was meeting with Kheel and Allen I pointed out that the mayor had made me this proposition and that couldn't fly, but that some variation of it could. If the commissioner would appoint three people, I would give him the names of the three people. They would be my three appointees, and nobody else would know it. He would know it and I would know it. They would be acting in his name, and they would have the power to enforce and suspend and so on. We picked three people who were not UFT members, John Burnell, and two others, and not in our direct control. The appointment of that commission with the powers they had would end the strike.

Basically Bernie Donovan fell apart in this whole thing. Here was a guy who looked like a very strong superintendent and he really couldn't order or wouldn't order the teachers reinstated. He could at any point early in the game removed Rhody McCoy, suspended the

school board. He could have done anything.

I think he didn't like them, he didn't like us. One day he would come down on our side to weaken them. I think he wanted a prolonged conflict. From the public point of view, he is a very brilliant politician and no soft guy either, and the way he moved from one day to the next. Everything he did lengthened it. Because it built one side then he built the other side and whoever was about to make it he really stood in the way of getting it resolved. It is hard to explain, this is not a weak man, a man who knew the school system very well. My gut reaction at the time was that he wanted it to go longer. I don't think he cared that much if the schools were closed over a period of time. I thought he felt that it was something that was very weakening to both sides and he didn't like either side. He would come out stronger. He looked like a poor victim, he was treated in the press very nicely. And if you looked at the clips right now you would to know why any newspaper editor wouldn't come down and say why the hell didn't the guy who has been in the school system so many years and knows something about it, why doesn't he take action. Do something here, do something there. He never did. In those days the superintendent had a lot more power. The mayor would never have dared to order him to do things the way Koch does today.

I would say that it was 80% successful. Remember that Richard Nixon has just been elected president of the United States and we have a new contract that we must negotiate in 1969.

Para Professionals Being Organized.

The largest number came in around the time of the Ocean Hill Brownsville strike. They were hired by the community boards. They wanted to come into the Union because they were paid very little-- something like \$1.65 an hour. Some of them came in with a hostile attitude and were spying on the teachers, to see if the teacher was really teaching the children.

They were torn between their community loyalties and those who hired them, and on the other hand they wanted a union to protect them. Remember who hired you and where you came from. They had no security they had no contract. As soon as the strike was over we got into organizing them, we were in competition with District 37. What happened was that it was a close vote and the last votes came in from Ocean Hill Brownsville, people who Rhody McCoy had hired. And those 300 votes from Ocean Hill Brownsville and that brought it over the top for the UFT. And we won.

We did not have full support from our own members. This is not the first time it happened. Some of our members did not want us to organize the school secretaries, they opposed the idea of having para professionals in the class. They did not want mothers living in the neighborhood in the classroom, they felt a good deal of insecurity, and we simply did not have full support from our own members. Now we had to negotiate a contract for them. The Bd. of

Ed. used a wonderful rationale as to why they shouldn't get much of a raise. They said the inherent value of these people is that they live in these poor communities and if we give them enough money to move out they were no longer be community people. Wasn't that a great justification to keep people in poverty. We had to threaten strike for the para. The question was would teachers respect the picket line. I went back to jail at this time for the Ocean Hill Brownsville strike and I wrote a letter from jail to the members saying that there was future for the Union in NYC if we didn't have the para professionals and support them. I came close to saying that if the teachers were not going to support the para-professionals I would leave. The hope of ending the racial conflict that existed was putting the para-professionals together with the teachers. This would demonstrate the lie that we were white racist. And we would do the same thing for black and Hispanic people that we did for teachers. Very reluctantly teachers voted and they ultimately came to understand. Many of the paras were able to go to college under our contract, and many of them are now teachers, a few have Ph.Ds. many have Masters degrees. The Union encouraged them to move ahead. It is the most successful affirmative action program in the United States. Six thousand by and large welfare mothers went to college and got degrees. Sixty percent are enrolled in college, all of them were high school drop outs to start with. They had to enroll in high school equivalency programs in order to remain in the program. We offered the high school equivalency. It gives a very clear picture of what can be done to people on welfare, if you think in broad terms. In our college programs they don't get a single credit for life experiences. You must have an avenue of mobility otherwise it will be a disaster for these people, you are talking about a generation of black teachers in the future.

On Racism Within NYC.

Most of that was just a lot of nonsense, it was built up. There was some racial conflict in the city but the extent to which the average black or Hispanic person in the city was against the UFT and viewed us with animosity was exaggerated and we knew it too. Let me give you an example of what I mean. The community action agencies called a mass rally in Ocean Hill Brownsville when Rhody McCoy was bounced in the middle of the strike--he had been suspended for a few days by Donovan. And every major black politician said he was going to be there and how many came: under 100.

I remember one day Jack Javits called me and said: All this has got to stop, everywhere I go they tell me to get into it, people are polarized and he said I want to talk to you. I asked him to meet me after a breakfast of the Central Labor Council at the Hotel Commodore and we would walk downtown to the office. He met me and we walked down Park Ave. and black secretaries and others are on the street and here he is telling me how polarized the city is and one black person after another comes up and tells me not to give in to those s.o.b-s. we don't want our schools to be run by a

bunch of goons a bunch of hoods, they tell me. A black bus driver gets out, he wants my autograph, and here is Jack tells me how polarized the city is. I said Jack watch and see what is going on. This is week seven of the strike, and I am supposed to be the person every black hates because I am a racist and trying to destroy black children. And all these people are coming up to me and telling me that what the Union was doing was good for the city, and for the kids. I think he was getting a lot of flak from the Jewish community for not speaking out on our behalf. Koch didn't speak out and he too wanted it over.

1969 and the new contract.

In 1969 when I started negotiating a new contract I got hundreds of letters from our members telling me to remember no strike. They were absolutely terrific and the membership was great.

Now I began to run around on national speaking tours to all sorts of groups, religious groups, educational groups, teachers groups. That is how I got a salary increase. Up until that time I was being paid as a teacher on maximum. During the strike there was all this resentment that Rhody McCoy was earning 34,000 dollars and I was earning \$17,000. My salary was raised to his. I have to be grateful to Rhody for that.

I guess I was the most well known teacher, leader in the country. It did put me on a national circuit. Even though the teachers kept on writing in that they didn't want a strike I figured that the City didn't want one either. The mayor had just lost the primary, he was going to run on the Liberal Party ticket, and the mayor was really worried. I said to the city and the Bd. of Ed. you are going to drive a lot of teachers and a lot of parents out of the city. They have had enough. It would be a very nice thing to settle this not on the eve before school opens but to settle it early. And if we have a settlement I don't have to go until midnight the night before. It would be a wonderful thing if we told the people and the kids and their parents in June. Before they all go off. And we are going to have three years of peace. And that is exactly what we did and we made some really nice gains from that. We collapsed the salary increments. The other things we negotiated that year was an improvement on teachers' pensions. We got the mayor to agree to sponsor legislation that would make our pension base on the last year's salary and not the average of the last three years. In addition to the salary we got the pension and a lot of other things. We did not endorse the mayor nor any of his opponents.

We went up and I shook hands with him on the steps of Gracie Mansion and after we settled and I said and if we held out another week you would have given us more would you, and he said damn right.

I have always tried to leave the other side in a position where if we were vulnerable they wouldn't squeeze the last ounce. The point

is not to kill the other side. During that period of time a new Bd. of Ed. came in with decentralization with Murray Bertram and Joseph Monsterrast, they turned out to be just great. They had an understanding of collective bargaining, of the school system, they knew how to work with the community boards in this early period.

Decentralization under Bertram and Monserrat

Now we had to involve ourselves in the election of community school board members. The Ocean Hill Brownsville fight, that whole legislative fight was just fascinating. The legislation was there. We could have gone up with a view to opposing all of it, and after the strike I think we could have succeeded in defeating any decentralization. The notion that there should be some sort of input on the part of local communities was a good idea. What we wanted to do is maintain collective bargaining as central and maintain some strong central regulatory authority. And we went up to Albany and met with Stanley Steingut and he wanted to know if we were willing to negotiate. And we spent weeks negotiating with Blumenthal and a whole bunch of Democratic legislators. And we entered into an agreement with them and then they backed off the agreement because Jerry Kretchmer and Patterson mostly Kretchmer told them that he would campaign against them in their districts if they went for it.

So it fell apart and then we had to work with Rockefeller and we did. Up to that time we couldn't get in the door to talk to him. We were the outsiders. I sat outside. I don't know how many weeks I couldn't get to see his secretary. The doors open up and they did work with us. Essentially was the elimination of any examination system, we wanted some kind of standards. By and large the body of law established by the Bd. of Examiners is pretty good, and they all go out if you eliminate the Bd. of Examiners. You lose everything by making a change that looks good on paper, but the time it gets litigated you get your new body of interpretations you have nothing. We maintained central collective bargaining, a central board, a pretty powerful chancellor, the decentralization law was a great victory for the UFT. We had two major victories that year.

The 1970s.

The 1970s are divided into two parts. The early 70s are really looking up. We have a Bertram, a Monserrat at the Bd. of Ed. and a pretty good relationships and another good contract. Donovan left and Irving Anker comes in. A lot of new teachers who are very well qualified. It looked like a pretty peaceful era in which because we have demonstrated our tremendous power in 67 and 68 we didn't have to demonstrate anymore. People knew that we could close the place down and we could stay out and therefore we didn't have to shout any more. I didn't have to use the word strike. I could just say I hope things will not be unpleasant next fall. And everyone would know, it was almost like that.

When Lindsay decided not to run we supported Abe Beame and in addition we had the good relationship with the Bd. of Ed. For the first time in all these years we would really have a friend in City Hall and we had a good relationship with him when he was controller. A former NYC teacher and a friend of some of the officers of the Union and in 1974 I ran for the presidency of the AFT. Believing I would negotiate one last contract in 1975 and leave. Then of course came the City's fiscal crisis in 75, which was the low point for the Union in all these years, it was a disaster.

The minute we had to do all that lobbying on the decentralization law and they could see who was mayor who was governor and which person on which committee they realized that the question of politics was life or death. From that point on the Union has collected huge sums of voluntary money and telephone banks used in community school board elections. Some years later we were paid quite a compliment. When Nelson Rockefeller was Vice President and he opened a house in Washington he was standing around and one person said all the old political machines in the country are dead it is really a new time. And Rockefeller said there is still one powerful old fashioned machine left in this country and he said the teachers in NY. I got some calls on that.

The fiscal crisis was a big disaster because the schools were hurt worse than any other agency. Basically all the other agencies had relationships with the business community. The police had met with the business community to see if they could curb crime and make it safe for tourists, and shoppers and so on. When the cuts came the businessmen sat with the mayor and the governor, and with fire it was a matter of life and death, along with hospitals. Plenty of grass roots visibility. The schools of course were schools for other people's children. The schools had traditionally kept away from the business community. We didn't play a role in trying to get business involved with schools. We did have some good relations with some business groups, we were not knee jerked opposed to them.

Ultimately we lost about 15,000 teachers laid off and that meant that class size went up to 45 in many cases. Who ever had lay offs there weren't even lay offs in the 1930s during the Depression, the city didn't hire people. The rules were that a person is laid off on the basis of seniority and license. It means that if you taught in an elementary school for ten years and then went to a junior high for ten years and then decided to teach in a high school and taught there for two years, you had two years of seniority even though you had 22 years in the system. Well people came to us with this problem. Instant erosion of all working conditions and a salary freeze so people were not getting any money. A salary freeze for us is worse than anybody else. Remember that a policeman begins at pretty close to where he ends. Fireman same thing. Teachers remember start at 14, and ends at 34,000 so there is a huge spread. If you are frozen as a policeman or as a city civil service you are missing 2,000 but if you are frozen as

a teacher then you are frozen at a level which is very far away from where you are going to go. The city also felt that because the Bd. of Ed. is not a direct agency of the city that it was easier to make cuts there. Remember 97% of the teachers lost were also Union members, so we lost those dues as well.

We went on strike. Usually when you go on strike the mayor calls, the governor calls, the mediators call everybody wants to settle it. This was exactly the opposite. The city and state were going to show that times had changed, they were no longer doing business as usual. In order to restore confidence of the business community the governor who we had just help elect, not only had we helped put a mayor in we had also help elect a governor, nobody would talk to us. Nobody cared. We could stay out on strike as long as we want. We could stay out two years. They weren't interested in opening the schools. They were saving money every day the schools were closed. And they were demonstrating that the city isn't the old city of dealing with unions on a power basis but the business community could really start investing in NYC because now we are tough and we are going to manage things fiscally. The deal on the city pattern was in terms of wages was determined by DC 37. And it was a deal that worked against us because it was workers earning under a certain amount of money got their full increases, earning over a certain amount got nothing. So essentially we were at the high end of the scale.

I tried to reach them all over and there was no way of doing it. The mayor didn't want to talk, the governor was running away from me, there was no one to deal with. So we ended the strike and there I had to the strike was the strongest we had. Everybody was out everything was locked up there was more support and enthusiasm but no way of ending it. The only way of ending it was to call the membership. When we started the strike a few days before school was supposed to open we had 30,000 teachers marching over the Brooklyn Bridge. We had Madison Sq. Garden and Felt Forum and all the streets surrounding there with 35,000 teachers rally. And then we called them back to Madison Sq. Garden and I had to stand up and say that there was no way of ending it on a satisfactory basis and if we stayed out longer we would be trying to squeeze blood out of a stone. It wasn't going to work. There were a few things that we did iron out as a result of the strike, things they wanted to take away from us and we prevented them from taking away from us. But the longer they stayed out the more we would lose.

We were in fact finding. We had a wonderful fact finding report that had no affect on anybody. The City was in the middle of going into the tank, and the fact finders came out with a nice report of what we should get, and it was immediately filed.

Essentially it meant that there was no collective bargaining. The City was in receivership. The mayor wasn't running the city anymore, you had a control board, you had a whole bunch of deputy mayors that were put in by the bankers, and by the business community. And you might as well lock the mayor up in some jail

or send him to some foreign country. The fact is that there was no employer to deal with. It was a kind of suspension of collective bargaining, during that period of time. It was very very hard to see at that time how we would get out of it.

On becoming president of the AFT.

I just couldn't carry out my plans to leave for the AFT, because to leave the local at a time like that would be leaving when everybody is depressed. They would have said well he is getting out, I just couldn't do it. From a personal point of view it would have been the most wonderful thing to get out and away from a horrible and depressing situation and it was precisely for that reason I couldn't do it. Here I was with two big jobs to do, running a national organization, and running a local.

On the merger creating NYSUT--New York State United Teachers 1972-73

Before that time NYC and Plainview, and Kingstons, and Yonkers, were just a handful of teachers outside of NY [C] who were organized essentially if we wanted to do anything in Albany we had influence with NYC legislators and a few from the surrounding communities where some of our members lived, but we were dealing with a rival union and the rest of the state, and spending a lot of money trying to raid their members. And not too successfully--it was very slow. And one of the major achievements was to propose merger within the state and the result was in 1972-1973 the creation of NYSUT which now has 250,000 members in the state. So now when we are involved in a U.S. Senate election or a gubernatorial election if we need legislation, well in the last few years we have gotten good pension legislation. We have had some major revisions in the Taylor law. And we have been able to do it because now we are not just the UFT which is a good city organization--a city organization can't do anything by itself in the NYS legislature. Rockefeller was right, yes he was. No question about it.

NYSUT is an example of what teachers could do all across the country if they pulled together in an organization that was effective. This state organization is a model, there isn't anything like it in the country. The reason the organization is strong is because we don't tell them what to do. We have lots of consulting and lots of talking and if we didn't have something where in the end they felt was their decision...all we need is to have Al Shanker tells you to do so and so and they would tell Al Shanker where to go.

On Stavisky-Goodman Bill

We now have a great state organization and a great city organization, and we did something during the fiscal crisis which

shown the importance of a state organization. We went to the legislature with the Stavisky-Goodman Bill, which essentially says that the City had to maintain a certain ratio of support within its budget toward the Bd. of Ed. There really said never again are you going to do what you just did to education. And it passed the legislature and the Governor vetoed it. And everybody was lobbying against including the other unions. Because they were treated better during the time [city fiscal crisis]. Well we not only got it passed but I think for the first time in 125 years overrode the veto of the governor.

On the fiscal crisis and being a political force in NYS

From Carey's point of view to restore faith and confidence in the city, and a bankruptcy in the City would have resulted in a bankruptcy in the state as well. Remember the City was \$13 billion dollars in debt. It is a lot of money for the City for N.Y. A lot of money for anybody. Real money, and a major part of the economy for the whole state and the taxing authority, the state and the city are inter-connected. I was filled with horrible feelings for the governor at that period of time. From his point of view, in terms of trying to get the business community to see that we are pulling ourselves together, I don't know that he could have done anything else. He earned our support over his four years. In his first four years I think there was 67 pieces of teacher legislation that we sponsored that he signed. Sixty seven pieces in four years, so we did very well, we really did. We did well in terms of state aid for education, we had changes in the Taylor law, we had all sorts of things that happened. We did get a good return on our investment.

It is very interesting. We are always in a position of having to fight these politicians. And we almost didn't support him for reelection, some of our people got up at a meeting and were ready to endorse Duryea. We had pretty good relations with Duryea and I said well wait a minute, and I didn't know what the answer was going to be and I said before we decide not to support Carey how many pieces of legislation passed in the last four years, let's review it. And somebody actually sat down and did a count, and it was 67 bills passed. And I said do you know any other organization in this state that has had 67 of its bills, not nice bills that are generally applicable to everybody, these bills were for our own people only. Sponsored and written by us. Do you know of any other organization that has ever had that sort of record in NY State? Or anywhere else. What are we doing. So he doesn't answer our calls. He goes out and says a couple of things that are nasty once in a while, but when all is said and done this is what the payoff is: 67 pieces of legislation. So we had a special convention, people had to stand up and say look he hasn't said good things about us, he is not easy to get hold of, there are a couple of things that we wanted that he vetoed, a couple of big fights, here is the record. And we pulled it all out. And it was almost unanimous. There were 2,500 people in the hall. I don't think any of them loved him but once they saw that, they not only

voted for him they went out and worked for him. And they did a terrific job. And he knew it.

On his personal life.

I get maybe three days a month at home. I am on the AFL-CIO Executive Council so I have got AFL-CIO conventions, AFL-CIO committee meetings, I have Council meetings, I am on the State AFL-CIO, that is a convention a year and that is another bunch of meetings. There are state federations all over the country and I am often the keynote speaker because I am the national president. There are strikes in Chicago, or Ohio, or Michigan or wherever there is a strike that lasts any period of time they want me to be there. I am flying more than 500,000 miles a year. And I am doing international work as well because the US Information Agency wants me to go overseas and talk to people, you know teachers' unions and people there. Here they send me to jail but overseas they use me as an example of democracy in action and what things can be like if you have a democratic Union, what you can do for your members. Which is true. It is part of the charm of being an American that they take a guy who is thrown into jail here and send him overseas. It is wonderful and I love. So I have been to Africa a number of times and Finland, and Japan a few times. I was part of a commission the International Rescue Committee put together you know the boat people from Vietnam and all those camps in Thailand, so I went to visit these camps and came back and testified before the Congress. So as a result of national prominence it meant getting involved in even more things, all of them very interesting and very important. When I went to these camps over there I thought about what would have happened if my parents couldn't have come here, and ended up in some camp in Europe. It was not a junket where I can see myself.

On the City Fiscal Crisis.

It didn't make any difference [regarding the pension money invested in City MAC bonds] because City Hall wasn't in control. Mayor Beame tried to get certain things, he tried to get the increments reinstated, and so did the deputy mayor. But they weren't in control, when you had were people like Steve Berger over at the Control Board, and Frank Marrichola [?] and a whole bunch of people who gave us a very terrible and very hard time. And we were still ended up being treated worse than anybody else. Beame went to court to say we shouldn't lose check offs, you know he tried to mitigate. You know we had to live without checkoff for a period of time. So here we were with the teachers very depressed. We collected our dues by hand and about 95% of our members paid their dues in advance in that period of time. Unbelievable. Nobody would have predicted that a bunch of people who now have 40-45 kids in a class, and with all these layoffs and with feeling that the Union can no longer do very much for them, because you can't go out on strike, and yet the money came pouring in because they knew that the Union was in danger. It was love it was sophistication, because the easiest thing would have been for

any member to say: What has the Union done. look at their problems, and they were saying that, but the very same time that they were expressing disappointment at what has been happening to us in recent years, they did not use that as the occasion to take actions which would be harmful and destructive. On the contrary instead of the checkoff working every two weeks at a time they paid in advance. It certainly was true that the Union is a family.

On the future.

We still have a very large number of people who were around in the 60s and early 70s and especially the 60s. And those people of course who went through, there is a bond there where they know what it was like before collective bargaining. And that bond is very very strong. For those that have come in since the fiscal crisis, those who have not been through those days of strikes lasting one day and then a good settlement, and big changes, now it is mostly behind the scenes. It is a matter of maneuvering for months to get into a position to get into arbitration, it is a matter of spending a million bucks for research people on legal stuff to develop your case. It is a matter of doing some clever foot work in Albany, we no longer have to send thousands of people up there or send all these letters. They know we are an important organization, but it is a matter of working very cleverly. That is not as exciting for a member, it is not very involving. Sure we come to members during election time, and there are certain campaigns that we have, but it is a lot less involvement and we haven't made this transition well. It happened quickly. You know when we had a program that was filled with action constantly and there was a lot more of it than I have given you here. If we went through newspaper clips you would see that there are four five crisis a year, people had to get mobilized, had to do things, and now, mostly of these things are handled quietly. Unless we have a much better system of communication, many members think that nothing is being done. It is hard for members to see that waiting for a year without a contract did put a lot of pressure on the City and they did have to come up with a lot more. It looked like what we are doing. Waiting doesn't seem like doing anything. Striking is doing something. Going to a rally is doing something. Waiting is doing something if it compels the other side to move, to sweat, to put pressure on them. There is no question that what we finally gotten couldn't have been gotten, it wasn't there in the beginning. It wasn't satisfying for them. And I think it is important.

I think there is a tremendous amount of demoralization of teachers in the schools. That demoralization comes from the way teachers are treated and the way working conditions are. But partly it comes from a lack of involvement within the school itself in terms of bring about changes and improvements. The inability to be able to do something. The desire is there, teachers have never had the power to do it, to been able to do it. And even if you said poof you have the power it would in many cases be like a bird that has been caged for a long time: you don't fly immediately.

For the past thirty years there have been tremendous changes in the schools, mostly on a collective bargaining level. You still have within the school basically an authoritarian set up. I think that the next step for teachers, if we are going to get people into the schools, look we no longer have people trying to avoid the war. We no longer have the refugees from the Depression of 1932, we no longer have women who can't find jobs, and feel that it is either nursing or teaching. That's why we have 13,000 temporary per diems. Next year it will be 16 or 17,000 and the following year 20,000. These are uncertified teachers, most of them shouldn't be teaching. They are not qualified under state law. They are needed because you have 35 children sitting there and you need somebody over age 20, and has gone to college, and you have gone and found somebody who is available. Some of these people are good people who are on their way to professional schools and they want a year or two to make some money and have this experiences. Like a guy who years ago was looking for a change from going to Columbia, but a lot of them can't find anything else because they were at the bottom of their class and they shouldn't be teaching either. And when you get a lot of unqualified people what happens is the pressure is on for more supervision, more mechanical accountability devices, and the more you get this more and more mechanical and authoritarian supervision the fewer good people will be attracted. And the less willingness on the part of the public to support the institution. It is a vicious circle. So it is extremely important that we move to change that authoritarian relationship. The school population in NY is now turning up and that means you need very good people more than ever.

I think the new people still come into this job the job of teaching with a very pro union feeling. They may not all have it when they come in but they get once they start working. It is more like old fashioned factory work as they see it, it all depends on how they are treated. But teachers in the schools still feel as if they are in a factory. The schools in the City of NY still have time clocks. Yes. And when we say of course we expect teachers to be there on time. There are other ways to see if the teacher is there or not. Take this out. Well we are not yet at the point where teachers have a negative attitude about unions. They may have it some time but I don't see it here. I also don't see it nationally. The number of teachers joining unions nationally including among younger and newer teachers all across the country is increasing and not decreasing.

If we don't institute a program similar to More Effective Schools it will have ramifications that are greater than at any other time in our history. The demographics are there. When social security started there were 17 people working for a living to support every person on social security. In the year 2000 there will be three people working for every person on social security. And one of those three people will be black or Hispanic. What that means is that if the black or Hispanic is one of the three workers is

unemployed because he doesn't have the skills to learn anything, two people who are working one will be supporting the person on social security and the other will be supporting the unemployed worker. You know what that means in terms of people standard of living. It means each working person is supporting one other adult. Forget about the children. It clearly untenable. It will result in all kind of strife and warfare, abandonment of the old and the ones who haven't made it. It will tear apart the social fabric. It is more than just a nice thing to do for other people. This breakthrough of getting these kids to move more rapidly into employment and middle class in terms of the use of language and everything else is not something which is a nice luxury. It is not like when we had a baby boom, and a handful of kids over here on the fringe, well if they didn't make it we will support them on welfare-big deal. You can't say that any more and know what you are talking about.

Look what happened in California. Three years ago. The new governor is elected and given a 2.6 billion dollar increase in education over two years. Who presented the legislation to him. Not the teachers or parents but the Business Round Table of California. These businessmen, high tech businessmen get together leaders of the 80 largest corps, and say unless we do something about education in the state our industries are going down. They got the help wanted sign out and they can't fill their jobs. Exactly that's why I say people do care. It is in their interests. Isn't it wonderful that is not only parents. I think there is more awareness today, especially if you compare it with 1974. In 1975 I don't think you would have found one out of hundred businessmen who thought it was their job to lobby in a state legislature for aid to education. Or be interested in what teachers' salaries are in order to get quality people across the nation. And today they are, all across the country. The polls show that when asked would you be willing to pay higher taxes in order to improve education the answer is yes. It is happening. Southern states are increasing their budgets for education. I see a tremendous amount of support from the business community all across the country. There are thirty commissions in which the business community has played a major role. There are regional conferences with business and so forth.

The idea is to turn it into a real profession. The speech I gave a year and a half ago calling for a national teacher examination, and that the Union three or four years after such an exam goes into effect will refuse to take into membership any person hired by a school board who can't pass the examination. This had a tremendous effect across the country showing that the Union was not a narrow self interested group, interested in getting more members but that it was interested in the quality issue. What has happened here is that a lot more money coming in but with that is a permanent core of business people pressing at the state and national level for not only money but structural changes in education, in which teachers have greater power and a new look at the system of supervision. Do you really need a principal? Perhaps

it would be better to simply have the senior teachers as the partners, the same way other professions run their organizations. Decision making in a colleague relationship instead of an authoritarian one.

I think it is a period in which the whole system can be revolutionized.

Education is not just going to be improved through legislation at the top, but with an enormous amount of grass roots support in every aspect of American life.

UFT's role in the year 2000

The way in which we work will be different in the sense that teaching will have to be elevated to a profession. That means a massive movement as far as salaries, and a restructuring of what the profession is like. We are not going to have 2.2 million teachers in the country. We are going to have fewer high qualified people and they don't do all the work. They do a lot of the thinking and the planning and the organizing, and a lot of other people who are qualified do the other work. Essentially that is the job ahead of us. The teachers will be seen by the public as experts the same way the public perceives that others in American life are experts, and where teachers salaries are not 3 or 4% of what they have now but double what they have now involves a totally restructuring of the schools. If you expect people willing to pay you have to offer a level of talent and service. You want people who can exercise judgment, who can look at a child can say this is the best way to reach this child. And if that doesn't work there will be another approach that will.

I hope that the UFT will take over several schools. To create models to show how kids and teachers can both be happy and productive. I have started talking about this idea. No one else can redesign the institution unless the teachers do it.