

EM: ^{Edward Mark} Mr. Shanker, give us your background, education and involvement in collective bargaining.

AS: I was born in New York City on the Lower East Side in 1928. I attended public schools in New York City and did my undergraduate work at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. In the post-World War II career, between 1946 and 1949, I majored in philosophy and I had another undergraduate major in history and a minor in sociology. I then went to Columbia University where I did graduate work in philosophy and had two assistantships under Professor Charles Frankel in the Philosophy Department. I was mainly interested in political theory, ethics, and metaphysics.

In 1952 I sort of ran out of money and patience and decided that I would teach for about six months or a year in a public school just as a kind of change of pace thing. In 1952 I became a substitute teacher in the elementary schools in New York City. I taught in the elementary schools for six months and then started teaching in junior high schools. I became immediately impressed with the notion that teachers needed a union.

The reason was clear because here I was with all of my courses for a Ph.D completed with only the dissertation to submit and salaries for New York City school teachers in 1952 were \$2,400 per year. The basic salary was \$2,400; there was a \$200 cost of living bonus that they added onto that, so that it was \$2,600. Now this is after the Korean War inflation. We had

no lunch periods and we had huge class sizes and there was no time during the day for the marking of papers or seeing parents.

It was a totally autocratic structure and I became very convinced that teachers needed a union. I joined what was then Local 2.

It still is, of the American Federation of Teachers, only then it was not called the United Federation of Teachers. It was called the New York Teachers Guild. I worked as a volunteer in the organization from 1952 to 1959 and in 1959 I was employed full-time by the AFT to help bring collective bargaining about.

It should be noted that in 1959 there was no group of teachers anywhere in the United States of America that had collective bargaining or a contract. In 1960, one year after I was employed, and I don't mean to imply that this was a one-man job, since New York City has over 900 schools and at that time 50,000 teachers. But I was certainly one of the people who helped. The day before Jack Kennedy was elected President there was a one-day strike which helped to bring about collective bargaining.

The election for collective bargaining agent came about the next year. In 1962 the UFT in New York City negotiated the first contract for teachers in the country and it was an outstanding contract. Well, it was a contract. This was something that teachers didn't have before. It had a grievance procedure in it which culminated in binding arbitration of grievances. Teachers that year received a \$995 salary increase which was quite something in 1962.

That became the basis then of the whole collective bargaining movement across the country. For instance, the NEA in those days was against collective bargaining. They thought that collective bargaining was something that bricklayers and garment workers and steel workers and auto workers did and that teachers shouldn't do because if teachers were engaged in collective bargaining, people would think that they too were workers and that this would somehow lower their professional image in the eyes of the public.

What happened as a result of the breakthrough in collective bargaining is that the NEA was compelled over a period of time to modify its policies and teachers all across the country, both in elementary and secondary and in higher education have developed a new way of operating.

EM: What gains have teachers in New York obtained through the collective bargaining process?

AS: Salaries have gone up very substantially. Of course, salaries go up anyway because of inflation so that one has to measure these things in terms of real economic gains and not just dollars. But it used to take New York City teachers 16 years to reach the maximum and now New York City teachers get a \$500 increment every six months and in seven and one half years they reach a salary of over \$20,000.

We have a welfare fund so that not only our doctor and hospital bills are paid for but our dental and major medical and disability. As a matter of fact there are thousands of drug stores in the Greater Metropolitan Area and any teacher in the city can walk

in and have any prescription drug filled free of charge for any member of the family. That is part of the plan.

Class size was reduced from what was not an unusual forty to forty-five in those days down to a maximum of thirty-two and thirty-three. Teachers then had no time to eat lunch. They were always on cafeteria patrols and yard patrols and as part of collective bargaining they gained the right to eat, as we call it. They gained a fifteen minute duty free lunch period. Also, teachers in elementary and junior high schools had no preparation time; that is, they taught from the minute they walked in until the minute they left. Under the agreements reached over a period of several years teachers in the elementary schools gained a daily preparation period of fifty minutes where they could mark papers or just relax or meet with parents or do whatever professional work that they wanted to do or had to do.

In the junior high schools they acquired two such periods a day over this period of time. Teachers were relieved of yard patrol and hall patrol and cafeteria patrol and all kinds of police and clerical functions. Our contract runs for over one hundred forty pages of specific benefits. I don't know that going through the list of these things is a good substitute. Anyone who wants to read it can read it.

EM: What is the most important thing teachers have gained?

AS: I would say that the most important thing is the dignity that teachers have acquired as a result of their feeling that if they stick together and if they work together that there is hardly anything that they can't do or can't accomplish.

Before the contract, before collective bargaining, any irrational demand which was made on them by, let's say, some muttonhead of a principal. Some of the stories were just outrageous.

There was one principal in a school who had teachers go around the student's lunch room and take eggshells after the students may have crushed them and put them into the soil in the garden in front of the school to neutralize the acid of the soil. The teachers did it. They were assigned to do it and they did it.

Another school, a principal looked with binoculars from his fifth floor office as the teachers lined up their students in the yards outside. He sent notes down to some teachers saying that their class was not standing in line perfectly.

For years teachers took these terrible insults and assaults upon their dignity and their and their professionalism. Once they had a feeling of collective strength that changed. Supervision changed. Administration changed. The way in which people would talk to each other and what they did, all of that changed. I would say that the self respect and the dignity are the main gains. The word, professionalism, sums it up. Teachers for many years didn't unionize because they felt that it was unprofessional. Yet what teachers were before unionization and collective bargaining was the very opposite of a professional. After all, a professional is a person who, by virtue of his or her expertise in a given area, has a good deal of decision-making power. Self determination you might say. Lack of supervision. The less of a professional one is the more supervised and the more controlled one is. The more the professional, the more self-directed a person is. Yet, we in education have been

very much like workers in an educational factory until recently: told exactly what to do. Our ability to make decisions had been very small.

The coming of unionization and of collective bargaining has enhanced that professionalism. It has meant that teachers who were not able and willing to stand up to irrational authority by themselves are now willing and able to do it collectively. That, I would say, is the greatest gain that we have had. You can always argue dollars and cents and you have to go into a statistical analysis to see what inflation has done for your dollars. But we know that we now work fewer hours and that we have more time for professional development. We do know that we are relieved of nonprofessional chores . . . police and clerical functions. This is very real. We also know that we now have an ability to stand up against administrative abuses which we never had before. These are gains that are very real.

EM: All this is true of elementary and secondary education, but what about higher education in collective bargaining?

AS: Well, problems in higher education are not, of course, identical with any other field. Every field has its own characteristics just as there are certain differences between guidance counselors and elementary school teachers. There are certainly great differences in higher education. There are traditions of governance. There are traditions of participation by faculty, but when you cut through all of it you have to say the following: first of all, there are a tremendous number of grievances that exist in higher education which are not just individual grievances.

They are group grievances. They are collective grievances and therefore you have to have an organization that is able to help solve those grievances. That organization has to sit and deal with whoever management is, whether it be a Board of Regents or whether it be the administrators. These are not going to be resolved on a one by one basis: that we are going to do this for Joe but we are not going to do it for Mary. It is going to end up being a rule. I think that that is the first thing. There are collective grievances that are going to be solved through organization or otherwise they are not going to be solved at all.

I think that the second thing that is very crucial in the field of public higher education is that the life and death of higher education is political. It depends on what legislators do. It depends upon the tax structure. It depends upon public policy. Take a look at what has happened recently in the City University in New York when they abolished the free tuition policy. Twenty-five percent of the students left, and when twenty-five percent of the students leave that will mean that probably the same proportion of the faculty is going to find itself in jeopardy.

You need a contract that will provide for working conditions and job security. That will see you through various political administrations and political conflicts. That will develop these benefits as a matter of permanance. Thirdly, being part of a union movement, which includes other workers whose sons and daughters who are the consumers in this system, is very important. The fact that unionized college people will be able to call upon the AFL-CIO for support means that instead of fighting alone for a lower tuition policy or for aid to higher education and

expansion of higher education, it means that you will have direct access inside of a much broader movement. Let a college professor say, "We want universal access to higher education", and everybody will say, "Of course you want it because you are interested in your own job and your own bread and butter, your self interest and that is a selfish thing to do." But if you are part of a state AFL-CIO you get the whole labor movement to support that same goal. Then that is not a self interested point of view, because the labor movement is supporting it as a matter of public policy because they want certain benefits for workers they represent: maybe people who dropped out four or five years ago and who would like to return, workers who would like to get a higher education. Your whole ability to maintain higher education, to maintain jobs for your members, and to be able to maintain the benefits from one political administration to another are very much dependent on unionization and collective bargaining.

EM: Some faculty tend to fear that collective bargaining is going to bring about time clocks, regimentation, and a loss of the freedom that faculty members often have in doing their particular job. Do you have a comment on that?

AS: Well, you can get time clocks and regimentation without collective bargaining. Time clocks were put into New York City schools in 1911. That was a long time before we had a union. As a matter of fact, if we had a union in 1911, the time clocks probably would never had been put in. We would have protested against them. No. I don't think that is fair at all. I think that if you want to prevent time clocks and regimentation, you have to be organized to prevent it. You need that organization and you can't get it

without a union. You will be absolutely defenseless if the administration were to start to do certain things.

EM: Another issue that comes up is the question of strikes and the relationship of a local to a national or state federation which calls a strike. What is the relationship between them?

AS: You are referring to the question of sympathy strikes?

EM: Let's look at sympathy strikes first.

AS: Well, that is a big bugaboo among people who don't know. Take New York City for example. New York City teachers have had a union now since 1962. That is when we got collective bargaining. Have the teachers of New York City ever been out on a sympathy strike for anybody else from 1962 to the present? They have not. The teachers of Boston have been unionized as well as in Washington, D. C. and Pittsburgh and Chicago and Detroit, Gary, Indiana, Miami, Jacksonville, Florida, you name them. They are all across the country. These are all teachers who are in the AFL-CIO. There is not a single instance of a sympathy strike.

By the way, you don't find sympathy strikes in the private sector either. They don't work. Look. Suppose that the teachers in Minneapolis or the teachers in Milwaukee or the teachers in Eau Claire were out on strike because of their own school board trying to do something terrible to them. Now if their own Board of Education didn't care about the fact that the schools were closed here, do you think that they would care if the teachers of New York City went out on a sympathy strike for the City of Milwaukee? How would it help? It doesn't mean anything. That is why it doesn't happen.

EM: Let's take the case of a strike in the University of Wisconsin System and a particular campus doesn't want to go on strike or certain members of that university don't want to strike. They think it is unprofessional to go on strike. What happens to those individuals?

AS: Well, they wouldn't go on strike. Nobody could force them to go. Of course, whenever you have a situation which is a kind of a life and death struggle, you would expect that there would be a lot of hostility between those who were risking their careers and their positions and going out and those who decided to go in. That is a fact of life. Whether they were affiliated with the AFL-CIO or not would not change those feelings at all. That would create some very, very great problems. But beyond that the people who go in as public employees would still have a right to a job and the people who went out would be striking for whatever conditions they are striking for. But certainly no union could compel any individual to do anything. Not in the public sector.

EM: There are two fears that people often associate with collective bargaining in higher education. One is the fear that collective bargaining will threaten academic freedom and the other is that collective bargaining will destroy faculty governance.

AS: Well, first there is the academic freedom question. I see the very opposite. Unless the faculty has the collective strength to enforce its decisions on academic freedom, then all you are left with are committee reports. Someone is dismissed because they have expressed unpopular views or they have disagreed with

the administration and you call in some Academic Freedom Committee and the committee looks at the evidence and decides that this is a violation of academic freedom. Their report is duly filed and they maybe get one article in the campus newspaper and circulate it and that is it. But unless you have a procedure guaranteeing the rights of the individuals involved, then you really don't have very much in the way of academic freedom. Freedom in this country is not based on some general philosophical notion. It is based on the fact that we have courts that we can go to and constitutional guarantees which in a sense are the basic contract that we have in the country. Unless you have something similar on campus, you don't really have very much. So I would say that you need collective bargaining and a union to enhance that academic freedom.

EM: How about faculty governance?

AS: As far as self governance is concerned, collective bargaining would not infringe on self governance. The governance procedures that you have in higher education could continue to exist. There is no conflict. As a matter of fact, collective bargaining in most parts of the world is moving toward what is now known as worker participation or co-determination in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and in Norway. I think, more and more in this country, we will come to see, not only in higher education but even in the blue collar fields, greater participation in the actual operation of the institutions.

I would say that we are dealing here with empirical questions. We now have had unionization in higher education for a decade.

Can anyone come forward and show that in those institutions that have been unionized, academic freedom has suffered? I doubt it very much. Can one show that where one does not have unionization, that academic freedom flourishes to a greater extent? I think the same thing is true of the whole question of participation in self governance. This is an empirical question. There are many institutions in higher learning that have unions and many that do not. Many that have collective bargaining and many do not. Now I think, of course, one would have to take into consideration the traditions that existed before, the size of the institution, the question of whether it is one of the elite institutions in the country that has certain unique systems of participation or whether it is not, but I would think that it is certainly possible to look into this without flag-waving and without scare tactics which contend that if you have collective bargaining certain horrible things will happen. The point is that there now are large numbers of institutions with collective bargaining and a large number without. It should be possible to show that all of these institutions that chose a union, they got time clocks. Well, that is not so. Or they lost their academic freedom. Not so. Or they lost the previous participatory mechanisms that they had. Just not so. Now, the evidence is there and it shouldn't be debated as a matter of philosophy, it is a matter of fact.

EM: Let's turn to the question of higher education affiliates within the AFT. How many university professors are organized and how many of them are in the AFT? How do they fit within the structure of AFT?

AS: Well, in the first place I should say that a very substantial part of the membership of the AFT is made up of members in higher education. I would say that probably 60,000 out of our 475,000. It is the fastest growing sector of the American Federation of Teachers and so we are devoting a major part of our efforts and energy. Now, each local has complete autonomy so that there isn't any problem that you have here, for instance, or the people in CUNY or the people in the California colleges or anywhere else have. You determine what your own policies are. If you are engaged in collective bargaining, you determine what your own bargaining requirements are and you determine what the settlements are.

Being in the AFT does mean, however, that you have certain services available to you. You have the services of the national organization in terms of lobbying. In Washington we are working very closely with a coalition of higher education groups in order to maintain a high level of public support for public higher education. We are leaders in a group which is a coalition to maintain low tuition. Maintaining low tuition is a basis for maintaining the health of public higher education.

The AFL-CIO itself is a major lobbyist on the Hill for aid to students and aid to higher education and for maintaining continuing education for people. What you get is this: One, you get a lobbying effort. Secondly, research facilities in this area. Thirdly, bargaining expertise. If you want to do your own bargaining, you do it. If you want some help in terms of that bargaining, either people being at the table with you or if you just want it in terms of backup materials or someone who is

constantly available to you either in person or on the telephone when you are bargaining, you have that too. Now at the state level you have the same kind of thing. The fact is that your university system budget is determined by state politics.

Being in the AFT means that you are a part of the state AFL-CIO which is one of the major lobbying and political forces in this state. Without being in the union you can't be part of that group. You would not have direct access to that group.

I would say that what you want to do is your business. Our job is not to tell you what to do. It is to give you support and we give you support both in terms of technical help and in terms of political power.

EM: Just to stress the fact that there is a great deal of local control, no question about that is there?

AS: It is totally local. Well, look. Let's put it this way. Suppose I came in here and told you, here is what you must ask for. Or suppose I came in and said I order you to go out on strike. Does anyone seriously believe that the faculty members here would go out on strike because Al Shanker came to Wisconsin and told them to go out on strike. Now, I know that is the image that some would like to create but it is a good laugh. I laugh at it. I never thought I had that power and I am sure that nobody else thinks so.

EM: Let's turn to another side of education, that is, education of the very young and the older, non-traditional. I understand that you are interested in what is called Educare. What is that?

AS: Educare is modeled on the ideas of Medicare. Medicare has the notion that one should be concerned with the health of the person from the cradle to the grave. Well, if you are concerned with their physical health and expanding that to psychology and psychiatry and to emotional well-being as well, why not expand that same notion to their well-being in terms of their knowledge and skills and their being able to cope with a world that is changing so rapidly now? Most of the democratic nations of the world have child care facilities from practically the time of birth. They include health and dental care and they also include child care facilities and they include early childhood education. There is a good deal of evidence that shows that more than half of the intellectual development of a human being is determined by the age of six. If the child has strong family support during that period of time, fine; but if he does not, then there may very well be permanent damage. Therefore we favor very strongly an emphasis on child and family services. Such legislation was sponsored by Senator Mondale. It was vetoed by Nixon in 1971. There have been efforts since to revive it and I am sure that in the next few years we will have it.

But, we also believe that many people make a terrible mistake later on in life. They may drop out of high school or they may finish high school and decide not to go on to college or they may go to college for a year and then drop out. This country has had some experience with this: The GI bill of rights. We gave an opportunity to GIs who had served us during W. W. II. Later this was extended but the main experiment was with W. W. II veterans. They were people who hadn't finished high school or

who had finished and not gone on to college. We said to them, "Look, we are going to give you the opportunity to get an education." Not only did they get one, but it was a great thing for both the country and for them. They were able to achieve things which they never could have without the help that was given to them. It was a great thing for the country. Where would the United States of America have been in the 1950's and 60's without the teachers, the doctors, the lawyers, the matematicians, the engineers, the chemists, the phisistists? Without this tremendous number of people who became educated and skilled because of the opportunity that was given to them by the government?

We think that what was good for the GI's ought to be good for people today. Suppose somebody leaves high school and becomes a garage mechanic and 10 years later decides that that was a mistake. He has been a garage mechanic and now he would like to go to college. Why is it that we give criminals a second chance? We give almost everyone a second chance in our society except for the person who stops his education. You leave high school and you don't go to college. You go out and go to work. You never get a second chance. Well, why not?

Why not have something like sabbaticals for workers? Why, instead of having 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 million unemployed out there collecting unemployment insurance, suppose that instead of making them feel unwanted and miserable, we said, "All right. Several million people a year can have sabbaticals and return to school for their own benefit in terms of their own cultural and esthetic activities or in terms of job improvement. There is no reason why our society shouldn't be able to afford that.

We are fighting very hard for the notion that people in this country should have access to education from the cradle to the grave and that this ought to become one of the benefits which our society confers. It is ridiculous to say that you have education from kindergarten until end of high school or college if you choose to go immediately, but that if you don't do that, you are finished. You have got to be a pretty wealthy guy to be able to manage a higher education in your later years. We favor opening higher education wide to people of all ages.

EM: Won't that be a very expensive program?

AS: Well, how much do we pay now to keep someone on unemployment insurance, on welfare or something else? When you consider unemployment insurance, food stamps, welfare benefits, housing subsidies, and everything else, instead of having people sit home and feel miserable, we could practically be providing educational benefits for the same amount. You have to remember that the cost is the difference between what we are now spending and what we would have to spend except that right now what we get for our money is absolutely nothing. People are sitting at home feeling miserable. Whereas, when you get people an education, over a period of time there certainly is an economic and a productivity payoff for the entire society aside for what it does in terms of the enhancement of the ability to appreciate life on the part of the individual. I think there is no question that it is worth it and that the additional cost would be very small.

EM: You come out of New York City which has a lot of problems, many of which are blamed on public employees, on their high salaries,

on their and other benefits that have been earned through collective bargaining. What is your answer to the assertion that New York's problems are caused by its public employees?

AS: I don't think that it is true at all. As a matter of fact, I think that one can show that the major problems come from elsewhere. Let me give a number of examples. In New York City a few years ago one used to be able to engage in short term borrowing. Now you know that all school districts and states and governments engage in short term borrowing because you open schools in September but state aid to education doesn't come in until November. Federal aid doesn't come in until December so that you borrow against the money that you are going to receive from the state and federal government and the taxes that are going to come in at various times. We used to be able to borrow at 4% interest only five years ago because these are tax exempt bonds. Now New York has to go out and pay 11%. That represents hundreds of millions of dollars.

Take a look at fuel costs and what has happened there. We have 950 school buildings, we have fire departments, fire trucks, and police stations and city hospitals, hundreds of millions of dollars in that particular realm.

The biggest problem that New York City faces along with other major industrial states in this country is massive unemployment. We have 700,000 people in New York City who have lost their jobs. That is 700,000 people who would ordinarily be paying taxes but instead of paying taxes now, they are receiving unemployment insurance, food stamps, welfare payments, and that costs the

City a huge sum of money.

Now when you add to that problems of welfare, that people have come from Mississippi and Alabama, those states do not treat their poor very well, and they have come to Illinois and Michigan and to California and New York. New York City spends 1 billion dollars a year on welfare and the state spends another 2 billion dollars on welfare. These are national problems. There is no reason why the taxpayers of New York City should have to pick up the taxes that the taxpayers of Mississippi and Alabama refuse to pay.

These are the problems. If one were to reduce employee pensions and benefits a little bit, maybe you could save \$500,000, Maybe you could save a billion dollars, but that sounds like a lot of money, and it is a lot of money, but when I tell you it costs the City of New York over 2 billion dollars a year in interest and one billion dollars on welfare, it isn't the most significant aspect. This last year, for instance, public employees have been under a wage freeze, and they have been forced to give up some of their benefits, but this hasn't solved the problem for the City.

EM: We have now joined AFT and have been in the AFT since January 1 of this year. Nineteen of us attended the national convention and we look forward to a bigger role for higher education in the AFT. I wonder what avenues might be open to our Association in that regard?

AS: We started by establishing a special commission for higher education within the AFT. We recognize that as an interim step.

EM: Jerry Culver is on that.

AS: Yes. He is. That is the first step. As more and more higher education units organize, gain collective bargaining and come into the AFT, it may very well be necessary to develop a structure that is more permanent within the AFT to deal specifically with questions of higher education and we will certainly welcome that.

EM: We certainly intend to influence the AFT in that direction. TAUWF hopes that it will have the ability to do that.

AS: You probably will. I find that TAUWF has a lot of know-how, a lot of experience, a lot of political sense, a good organization and the AFT benefits from your being in. Other groups in higher education will have a lot to learn from you and your operation and, of course, we are very strongly committed to seeing to it that you do not remain the only group of public employees in the State of Wisconsin who are denied the basic rights of collective bargaining. I was glad to be in this state to speak to the state AFL-CIO convention and especially to appeal to them to correct this inequity. I am looking forward to the one thing that I hope we can help you with which is to gain collective bargaining status and then I am looking forward to what you will be doing to help other people in higher education in this country to put together a really strong operation and to improve the quality of education.