

Cindy Cole
Interviewed by Ann Froines
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Seattle, Washington

I'm interviewing Cindy Cole. She is office manager of Local 925 here in Seattle. It is May 11, 2005. Cindy, tell me the story of how you first entered and started working for 925.

I was a housewife at that time, and I had a little daughter who was 2 and ½. I was needing some outside activity besides just being a homemaker—the way I said that to myself was that I was going a little stir-crazy just being at home all the time. My sister was working for the University of Washington, and she was in District 925, and said, “Oh, you know, the union has a place for just part-time office help. Cindy, why don't you try it out.” So I said, “Oh, ok!” So I applied, and Pam MacEwan was the regional director at that time, and she hired me. What was kind of funny about it was, she asked me what I had done in the past and I'd said I'd worked for a small church as their secretary. And she said, “Oh, that'll be perfect!” (laughs) “We're really like a religious organization.” So I got the job and started out at 20 hours a week, and then as they needed more time and I needed more time, we gradually increased my hours til I was working full time.

What kind of work were you doing at the beginning?

At the beginning there was no computer. And I remember doing dues checkoff by literally getting the list from the University of Washington and checking by hand on a checkoff list that they had paid their dues. So I did that; I did some correspondence, mainly tracking members—when we would get their card I would enter a sheet for them, so they would have a dues checkoff sheet, and then I would take their card, staple it onto a 3 by 5 card, and then file it in our file. It was all hand done.

And were you included, as one of the office staff, in some of the meetings about the future of the union, strategizing--?

What I really appreciated was that—and I didn't actually realize this, because I'd never worked for a union before—was, I was included in all the staff meetings. So I knew what was going on; I was able to take notes and say, “Ok, this is what's coming up, and this is what I need to do in order to fix it.” So I was always involved in it. And probably I'd been working for the union about—oh, maybe even 5, 10 years, and someone said, who was here for the organizing campaign that we did for our Fair Share organizing, and she said, “Our office workers never attend our staff meetings. We just tell them what to do.” She says, “I really like this idea,” that I was there. And there were times where it would get rather boring for me, when they were going over field information. But yes, I always felt part of what was going. That was really good.

Describe some of your own experiences as an office worker, then. You said you worked for a small church, and then next here. But here they are organizing office workers, but you in fact are an office worker too.

Right. Right. Hm. My own—ah, ok—I can—

Sort of [give] the value that you attach to the work you were doing, whatever your views of office work were...

Sure. Right. Again, I feel like I was really fortunate that I worked for a union that was trying to organize office workers. I will say sometimes I did get the feeling, however brief it was, that my work was less. Like it was—like the organizers, and they were the ones really doing the work, and that really my work was secondary. But it didn't ever last very long. It didn't stay with me. And I also don't think it was conscious on their part at all, when I did get that feeling. But it did occur occasionally. But not very often. And then the other thing about it is that I answered the phones for years and years. I was the only office person. And dealing with other office workers, I could relate to what they were going through. Their equipment is working right, or their—mostly, supervisor problems, or whatever.

In some unions, staff in the office are actually unionized. Is that true here at 925?

Yes. Yes. We here in the staff belong to the union of union representatives. It's a wall-to-wall for all non-managerial staff. The office staff has always been part of that. What's also very interesting, maybe I can talk about as far as that staff union, is that—I'm trying to remember—it would be mid-80's when the union of union representatives was formed. And I was on I believe the second bargaining team. And again, it was a nice feeling, because they said, "You know, we need all of the job classifications represented." So they wanted an office person there at the table. And I realized that, being there as an office worker, I got more for us office workers working for international SEIU at that particular time, than would have happened before. And it's not because field staff purposely would not want us to get better wages or better hours, because they wouldn't think of it.

They couldn't represent the issues as well as you did.

Right. So it's been a real policy even in our staff union that we always have an office person at the table for bargaining.

How did you feel about the women's movement? Because at the time you were becoming employed here [it] was also a time of real activity in the women's movement. Had you participated at all in any women's organizations? Did you consider yourself a feminist?

I have not participated in any other women's organizations. And I would not consider myself a radical feminist. But one of the main programs when I actually came into the

union was comparable worth: equal pay for equal work. And that made sense to me. So I guess you would say that I am an advocate for women's rights and—

Equality?

--and equality. Equality of work. I also have two daughters. I think that part of what I taught them are to work hard, but also to go for what they want, and believe me, neither one of them is ever walked on. They just won't be.

Growing up did you have any knowledge or opinions about labor struggles, or union organizing?

Growing up, my father was a machinist at Boeing. And we would get the union newspaper, the machinists' union newspaper would come to our house. But my father was really not very active in the union at all. So I didn't have much of a concept, when I started working for the union, about what unions did. It was a real education for me, coming in.

And what about your mother—did she work outside the home?

My mother did not work outside the home until I was probably 14 or 15. And again, I don't know. She was never in a position to be in a union—oh! That's actually not true. When she worked for the University of Washington in the early 70's, the Classified Staff Association, which later affiliated with SEIU District 925—my mother was one of the—she wasn't a founder? But she was an activist member. And did go down to Olympia and lobby the legislature. Several times there actually was a picture of her, that she had, that I saw of her. So she was active in that. She said, "You know, nobody else is going to represent us, we gotta do it ourselves." But again, then she moved into a management position, out of the union, so it was only for a brief period of time. But when she was there... And it was before the Classified Staff Association affiliated with District 925. But in the early beginnings, yes, she was part of that.

It was a little foretelling of your future.

Yes, isn't that interesting, yeah, I just remembered that.

So, describe in some detail the campaigns that you remember best here while you were working. You want particularly to talk about that Fair Share campaign. Was there anything before that that you participated in, by virtue of your work here in the office?

Right. There were actually two campaigns, I think one in the 80s, that was attempting to get a union shop, it was called the union shop campaign. And I remember that campaign very clearly, because there were ten extra people in the office, and I had to make sure that they all had a desk, and they all had—you know.

You mean, coming from the International.

Coming from the International, and other unions. When we are on a campaign, my workload goes up tremendously. And I remember also, during that campaign, we had just gotten a database and a computer. So that would have been probably in '84, '85. And it was a little bit too little, too late. It would have been nice if we'd been able to build it before. But--we weren't able to use it as well. The next time, we were going to be prepared at least with computers, etc.

And I remember also the devastation when we lost that election. It was really a very hard time for our members, who were out in the field who had kind of stuck out their neck; and it was also hard of course for the staff to have worked so hard.

Which people were you trying to unionize in that campaign?

It was the University of Washington was the main campaign, and it was to get the union shop. In other words, that everyone would have to pay dues.

Oh, so the first time around it was lost. Because I know eventually it was won.

Right. Yes, it was won. The first time around it was lost.

Nobody else has mentioned that.

Oh really. They don't like to (laughs)

I may not have asked the right question.

It was really difficult time, a very difficult time.

What did you find yourself doing, particularly—do you remember? I know it was 20 years ago.

Right, it was 20 years ago. I'm trying to remember what I was doing. I believe what I was doing is I was trying to process all the contacts that they got in; run lists for folks, so they could find folks; and again, it wasn't adequate, because we were so late in getting it set up—the database wasn't fully set up. I did the best I could, but.

Were you still the only office staff?

I was the only office staff, right.

Until what year were you the only office staff—do you remember that?

[sighs] Man.

You did everything: phones, data...

Right. It would have been...maybe '96, probably. I was the only office staff person. Yes. I answered the phones. Sometimes it was crazy. Because—you answer the phones, you can't get any other work done. It's insanity.

And when you're doing campaigns, the phone's ringing all the time.

The phone's ringing all the time. Yeah. It's just your central focus.

So there was that campaign. We had some other smaller campaigns around grievances when we were trying to build membership. When you have an open shop and you're constantly losing members because they decide they can't pay their dues, or... it's just really hard. There were some other—the English-only language grievance that we had—that was a really big grievance that we did activities around. I remember going down, helping out with that.

Oh, another thing that was fun in the early days is that when we went down to Olympia or there were rallies and they needed bodies, I was always included. So I was always down in Olympia every year, and also when we had rallies, I would have participated in those at the University of Washington. Again, to be another warm body.

The second big campaign was in '93-'94, when we had the Fair Share shop. Kim Cook and we had help from the International working with the legislature. We were able to get to a point where we could go under the PERC (Public Employees Relations Commission) system, which is different than the HEPB (Higher Education Personnel Board) and therefore we did not have to have a supermajority whenever there was a vote for Fair Share. So then we were able to get it. In part it was the legislative, and also we had a huge campaign. And I remember that campaign—I remember saying at one time, "If you can get the assessment, I can enter them in the database." And again, I was the only office staff person.

Do you mean, employee assessments?

Employee assessments. So that when they went out into the field, because we didn't have very many computers at that time—we probably had 3 computers? And in the final blitzes we did, there were 10 or 15 people working in the field. And at first I was going, "So I'm going to do all this, right?" And then I went, "Well I guess if you guys can bring 'em in (laughs), I can enter 'em."

What is an employee assessment, exactly?

Assessment assessed usually 1 to 5—

In terms of their support of the union—

Support of the union. 1 being that they're a card signer, yes, absolutely; 2—next; 3—right. And so I remember entering—and then I would run reports, so that people would know then, the next day, ok this person's kind of leaning, who do we want to give absentee ballots to—that's one of the things that we really—getting out the vote is what makes it happen. So that was all for getting out the vote. It was pretty intense.

So that Fair Share campaign involved getting the legislature to pass some new legislation—

Correct.

--and also an election of sorts on the campus as well?

Yes. And then we had to have an election.

What were they voting on?

They were voting on a contract, but the contract had been negotiated with the University of Washington, and we had been able to, again with the help of the International—Bob Muscat came up and helped to kind of move the main guy—Tallman Trask was his name—to approve of a Fair Share article that said that everyone would have to sign a card, and that they could choose to be a member or just pay an agency fee. So we were able to get that in the contract, and then the campaign was to get that contract ratified. ... Normally, you just limit contract ratification votes to members. But in this particular case because of that provision, we had to do the entire bargaining unit.

That wasn't successful?

That was successful. Yes. We were successful in two of the units, and then we re-ran the election in two other units. But the big unit, the one with most of our people in, it was voted through overwhelmingly.

You had mentioned to me yesterday that you had some special role in this campaign—is that what you described to me just a minute ago?

What we decided, probably a year, year and a half before we knew that the vote would be coming up, was that—when you have a lot of grievances, and servicing, the tendency is to—you're pulled to people who need help right away. So we set up a steward system, and worked very hard—the field staff did that. And then, we turned off the phones. In other words, people when they would call in they would get a message. What I would do is then I would follow up with anyone with a grievance, and refer them directly to the steward. I would sometimes check with the rep if I couldn't find a steward, but I did all of the steward referral, or as much of it as I could. And then the rep then did not have any part in it at all. Except that they would talk with stewards, to see if there was a problem. So very, very seldom were they ever speaking directly to the grievant. And that was a big change.

Why did you think the union tried to do that?

We tried to do that again to free up field staff so they could organize for a fair share election. So that they were out in the field talking to people, organizing people, instead of in grievance meetings—

Sort of maintenance, service work—

The maintenance [and] service work. That shifted more of that onto the stewards. And then my job was essentially shielding the reps as much as I could.

And you were essentially the communication link.

Right. I was the communication link for a lot of that.

Was that doable? Given that you were also the office manager for all other—?

Well, I did it. (laughs) All I can tell you is, I did it. It was crazy. It was lucky I was younger than I am now. (laughs) Because I don't know if I could do it now. I'm in my late '50's now. That was what—'94 is when it passed. 11 years ago.

Obviously, would you say you see this work as a calling in the same way as---

Oh yeah, it becomes a cause.

If you stay with it, it becomes a cause.

It does. It's a cause; it isn't just work. I believe in the labor movement. And I believe that it's sorely needed for working people. And that working people need to balance the power of the employers.

Are you a salaried or an hourly employee? How does that work here?

I'm paid by the hour.

And that's true of the office staff in general?

The office staff, right. Even though my title is office manager, I'm considered a lead, and therefore I'm still non-management. I cannot hire and fire. But I lead the office staff.

What have you noticed is different about 925's approach to union organizing? How would you characterize that, now that you've been around the labor movement for this amount of time. Is there something distinctive?

I don't know if I can really answer that.

Is it, this is the one kind you know.

This is the one kind I know. I know that we're considered scrappy. We are not afraid to take employers on if we need to. I believe that a lot of the ideas come from staff as to how to get that done. But I also know that we also believe you have to have the members, or at least a certain percentage of members that are on the program, or it doesn't work. The other thing that we do really well, and I know that Kim has worked hard at developing this and also Michael, is that as much as possible, we use good leaders, and we develop leaders. So that a lot of the staff are former members, that have just kind of graduated up. It's really grass roots in a lot of sense, I think. I'm not sure about how other unions go about it, but I think that's a really good thing. And yet sometimes, we work at this 8 hours, 9 hours, 10 hours a day, and so a lot of the ideas come from the top. But there is certainly a lot of input from the rank and file also.

Did you receive any kinds of trainings for your work along the way, or did you basically—on the job training.

I did mostly on the job training.

Getting up to speed with whatever new technology came in.

Right. I had to do that. What I did at first, because I didn't know anything about databases at all, and we had a little program called the Smart database—what I did is that I joined a Smart Database users' group. And I just did this on my own. They met once a month, and that's how I was able to really learn the database really well—that particular database, really well. Once you know one particular database, then you can—so yeah, I think it was more like on the job training. Now that I've been here a little longer, I've had some supervisory training—that was just recently; bargaining training, I did on the job, because I just was on the bargaining team and I learned how to do it, or what was needed.

Are you still, from time to time, bargaining in your [union]?

I haven't done it for a few years. I was on three bargaining teams, and then I just kind of told people, I said, "You new guys"—younger people can do more of that now." (laughs) And there was other people who wanted to do it, so that was fine. So I haven't done it for a few years.

So how many people in your team do you lead, now, in this office? It's a big staff.

Yes, it's a large staff. Right now I specifically lead 3 people. Becky Cowan who is the bookkeeper reports more directly to Irene Eldridge, who's the secretary-treasurer. But I also lead her a little bit. I check in with her. We have two other outlying offices. Office people there also—for any policies or procedures that come out of our office, I meet with them and talk with them; also if they have needs of any software, they come to me. But

for the most part, because they're remote, I can't say that I really lead them in the same way that I lead the other folks.

Have you ever had any contact with your counterpart in other locals in SEIU? Office managers?

Right. Office manager. I know that when we were considering the merger, and the merger was going to happen, I dealt with the office manager at Local 6, in getting things together. But other than that, not on a real informal basis. I talk to other office managers when other things come up, or—

With other unions.

With other unions, yes, right.

And does SEIU, Local 925, do a lot of collaborative work with other unions, since they are—they do this lobbying down in Olympia.

Right. The SEIU Joint Council, we work together with the other SEIU locals. There are times that we have done some collaborative things with the Washington Federation of State Employees, but that's not on an ongoing basis. And there's a little contention between our union and their union. But on occasion we do things together.

I know from the history of 925 and from what Kim was saying that you've been talking about the issue of diversity, both in your staff hiring, and in developing the leadership in the union. Have you been part of those discussions? What do you observe from your central point here as office manager about how 925 tries to promote diversity.

I have been part of discussions like at staff meetings. I know that there have been some diversity workshops. I was not part of those. They were given for—the one that I remember was given mainly for members, at that particular time. But my observation with 925 and diversity is that we in staffing always have that in mind. It's always part of the mindset that you look for minorities; and of course women, we were a women's organization, so that was part of it. It's been very important in our hiring practices and things.

This new campaign that they're starting here, the family daycare organizing, are you providing some support for that particular campaign, and what is it?

Actually I am more peripheral on that. The organizing office that's doing that has Rena MacKenzie, who is the administrative support person for that.

That's right, there's a sort of separation between organizing and—

There's a little bit. Yes. There's some separation there. So Rena takes care of most of what they need. If they need some special things, then I will do it. And I also have to make sure that of course—

END of SIDE A, Tape 1.

START of SIDE B, Tape 1.

So, who do you work with most, on a day-to-day basis. Which individuals in the office structure?

I would say that the people that I work with most are the three office staff that I most directly deal with: Martha, Miriam, who's the receptionist, and Mamie who's now temporary for Lori. I also do, if Kim needs certain lists that have to do with the executive council, I will take care of those. I also deal a lot with Irene Eldridge who is my supervisor, and working with her as far as contract openers, to make sure that we get our opening letters, so that contracts are negotiated on time, and so I try to keep track of that. Also, if there are special things, I take care of anyone who has a religious objection, to sending those kind of form letters and tracking those kind of folks.

That's one basis on which people don't have to pay dues?

Correct. We have our formulations. I also do—if people are having trouble with the database at all, whether they be the office staff who need a certain query, or other field staff, I train on the database, and things like that. And then I deal with the ven—not really on staff but I deal with all the vendors: getting copiers, getting computers, consultants, all that kind of thing.

Keep everything running.

Keep everything running, yes. That's what I try to do.

Do you consider 925 a family-friendly organization for the employees that work here? In terms of policies, when you need—[that/to] deal with families.

Right, to deal with family issues. I've always been able to deal with all my family issues that I've needed to deal with. I know that people put in long hours, and sometimes I do, also, but when I've needed to have time for my family because of emergencies or anything, there's no question. And also, planning vacation leaves, people pick up. If you can't make it, people pick up and work around it or whatever.

In those early years when you're children were younger, did you just bring them to the office when you had to?

Sometimes I had to bring them. Yes. Sometimes I had to bring her in. (laughs) Because as a little one, the other kids could manage by themselves, but. Yes. I always felt that it was understood. Our kids and our families are really important. I've never felt any real

hassle from anyone for needing to take time for my kids. Or other things, such as funerals for your aunt, or when my Dad died. It was no problem at all.

Of course I'm asking this question here in Seattle in the past tense, because we're doing this history of the legacy of 925. You still are a Local 925 and there's still organizing here. Were the aims of 925 realized, do you think, District 925, as you understood them, and what's your—

Right.

[] when the end happened, and the merger and so forth—what was your assessment of what was going on, what it all meant.

I think that the original idea of an office worker's union, and primarily a women's organization, and having a national local, that that became unfeasible, and people were willing to recognize it. So I think maybe the original goal didn't happen. But I think, certainly, at the University of Washington, office workers, secretaries—now we've branched out and we're going into child care, and we have medical techs and things like that. Computer programmers. I think that our goal there, of organizing the office workers, giving dignity and respect to office workers, is true, and we were able to accomplish that. And now we're just going on, and seeing where more to expand. So I think it was necessary to change and grow just like the members voted to do when we merged. I think that we were fortunate here in Seattle, because we were able to continue as Local 925, and it seemed to us that other unions merged with us. Back in Ohio and Boston, they had to merge in with other unions, and lose their 925 identity, whereas we've been able to keep ours going, so it was probably a harder adjustment, I would suspect, back East.

Yes, and I think there's all these staff, yourself included, who are still here, so [there was] continuity.

Right. There is continuity.

Has there been anything disappointing to you about your experience working with 925, would you say. Everybody gets this question.

Disappointing...

Or difficult, maybe.

Well you know, there's always the ups and downs.

With any work?

And you just kind of go with it. Yeah, with any work. And so I think for the most part my work here has been very satisfying. I've had my moments--laughs]—"Why am I doing this?" You know. But for the most part.

Are you the most long-term employee here?

I believe I am. I think I've been here longer than Kim. She was here for a time and then she was gone for a time and then came back, but I think I'm the longest employee.

And how long do you think you will continue—do you have a plan in those directions?

I do have plans to retire, and I'm hoping to be able to do that in two years or so, when I'm 59. We'll see if that's possible.

Do you have a good retirement plan here?

I think the retirement plan isn't too bad because it's the SEIU—it's the same one that the International uses. And it's not too bad. It's a pretty good one.

What impact do you think 925 had on SEIU, [that you know], nationally?

Hmm. Nationally. I think our impact on SEIU nationally was—I've always felt, or had the idea, that we were always out front, you know, in our organizing model; it's like we were going to die in the early 90's, unless we got fair share shop. It was just like, we weren't going to go anywhere. So in a way, we were forced to become an organizing local. And I really feel that 925—we became that, out of necessity. We also didn't have an old boys network. We didn't have old—we were fairly new, beginning in the 80's, early 80's, that there wasn't these old traditions, maybe, to get over. I also believe that we had extremely idealist leaders. You look at Karen Nussbaum and you look at Debbie Schneider, and Anne Hill, and Kim. Extremely idealistic. Willing to sacrifice a lot: pay, certain parts of their lives—willing to compromise. I think that we were an example—we were always held out as an example to other unions, even within SEIU, as a certain model. So I think that's what we gave to SEIU.

How would you characterize the experience working with SEIU in your life--what meaning has it in your life—what has it meant to you?

It's real interesting to me in my life. I've thought about this. When I was in high school, I was part of a Camp Fire group. We were 16 of us, from all over the city of Seattle, because I was born and raised; and we were like on top of it. And so all through high school, my high school years, which is many times when people drop out of Camp Fire and things like that, I had extremely close girlfriends in a really wonderful setting. We did service projects; we had poetry circles together. So women, I realized, have always been real important to me. And I've always been close to women. They've been my best friends. And then later after I had my children I was in La Leche League. I grouped

with women, and supportive women. The first church I was in, that was a little off the wall church, was run by women, primarily women were the ministers, were the people that serviced the congregants. So 925, that I just happened—"Oh, Cindy, they've got a place at the union, it's part-time, probably perfect for you"—I was here in an organization that was primarily run by women! And so I think for me personally, having worked in an organization—it fit me. It really fit me.

And I also feel that I've learned so much about labor movement, I've learned so much about people, I've learned about progressive movements—

In any organized way, or just picking it up as you go—

Just picking it up as I've been working. Just understanding that working people need to unite together to move anything. It's been part of it for me, my whole life. That we get together, and as a group we can make more impact. As I said before, I really believe in the labor movement. I think that I will continue to have connections with the labor movement even after I retire.

Does 925 provide some social and educational activities for the people who work here in this office now, in any organized way—I don't know what they'd be—monthly potlucks, or—

Right. Well, our staff meetings are monthly potlucks. (laughs)

You're together all the time—you don't need to get more together.

We're together all the time. We have Christmas get togethers or holiday get togethers on occasion. I think all of us are really busy, so I know we individually sometimes do things together, outside the office.

Based on friendship.

Just based on friendships and things like that. I can't think of anything real organized. There's been Sea to Ski in the past, where a group did that, and—

What is that?

Sea to Ski, where it's like a huge marathon up on Mt. Baker, and there were 5 or 6 of the staff here that did that, and someone canoed, and someone skied, and someone ran, and someone bicycled, and someone kayaked. We came in last, I think, or were disqualified, I don't know. Things like that. I think on an individual basis.

So 925 isn't really like you're—you all have friendship groups way beyond this office.

Sure. Way beyond. At least I do. My husband and I are real involved in the antiwar movement, in the peace movement, and in West Seattle we have a small group of people there that we have friendships with.

Oh, tell me about that. I guess I didn't ask you about your other activism.

Oh, ok.

So tell me about your other activism a little bit. That's part of the picture.

Oh, it is. Ok.

I'm also involved in the antiwar movement.

Oh, are you? My husband and I, through the Fellowship of Reconciliation, of which we are a part, became very active before the Iraq war, in particular with Sound Non-violent Opponents of War, which is—Sound, for Puget Sound. We live in West Seattle. We formed a small West Seattle Neighbors for Peace and Justice group. And we are still doing ongoing activities with them. Every week.

Were you part of that big United for Peace and Justice Coalition in New York?

SNOW, yes. SNOW is. Our umbrella organization group is.

And what kind of work, specific organizing have you been doing recently around Iraq.

Around Iraq mainly we did a lot of organizing before the war. There's a farmer's market in West Seattle—we had a table up there every week. Which has continued last summer and this summer it's going to happen, and it's staffed by different people. We also have a Function in the Junction, which we call it, and that is where we have signs—"U.S. Out of Iraq," etc. And we've been doing that every Saturday.

Like a vigil.

A vigil. Right. And we call it the Function in the Junction because there's a place in West Seattle where there's an all-walk, and so we can walk all the crosswalks at one time, and the cars stop. So we do that. And we've been doing that for the last few years. We stopped a little bit last winter, but we went all through this winter, actually. We've also put on forums. Last year, forums about Iraq—we'd have panels of different people who would come. We also did an Israeli-Palestinian, and then we did a forum on non-violent direct action. This year we've been doing movies—Meaningful Matinees on Sundays at the public library in West Seattle. We did 3 movies, one of which is Johnny Got His Gun, an antiwar movie from 1972—it's very powerful; and the Yes Men, which was about globalization, if you've heard about that. And the first movie was about conscious objectors. And we also have a small group that is working with a high school peace

group at West Seattle High, working with counter recruiting, and trying to get the recruiters out of the school. We haven't succeeded yet in getting them out, but at least we have some counter recruiting happening.

You're getting some equal time.

Right. Yes.

Yeah, the way the No Child Left Behind Act was formed, they have to be [in there, all the] people.

Isn't that am—ohhh. These little things that they just stick in there. Outrageous.

So had you over the years been involved in things related to peace and justice, or is just the Iraq war invasion just [tipped/took] you into this recently.

Well, that took us into SNOW. I've been singing in the Seattle Labor Chorus for years. So we did that. And then once this peace movement started, I said, I can only do so much. And my husband is involved. I said, I'll just go to the peace movement part.

What's the Seattle Labor Chorus? Is that a Seattle group that performs at progressive functions?

Yes! It's actually very fun. Seattle Labor Chorus was started, oh, probably about seven years ago. And when it was started, Pete Seeger actually came out and sang with us at Folk Life, which is a big celebration down in the Seattle center. And then the Labor Chorus continued to sing after that. We sang at different labor functions, we would go to picket lines, that kind of thing, have concerts, and it's still quite a vibrant group—they're still doing a lot. So very fun.

Any other things you'd like to add about your progressive political activities?

What else do I do?

You'll have plenty to pursue, obviously, if you retire.

I will. I have no doubt I'll have plenty to do, so I'm not worried about it, actually, at all. That's about it.

Do you feel optimistic about the organizing work 925 is doing now?

The family child care providers?

I guess whatever—

Yeah, I do. Yeah. It's of course very, very needed. And we certainly know how to organize. I can say that we do. My one concern with it is, is of course money. Because with the Iraq war, with the whole taxing climate, people and jobs, it worries me that we can do all this organizing, but then there won't be the money on the state level, or on the community level, to really make a difference. And that's what we need. Somehow—that's why progressive, like we're saying, progressive politics is so important, in that, somehow we have to turn the priorities of the nation toward education, towards our children. They always say, oh, the children come first, but it's not first.

The unborn children do, but not the living ones.

Yeah. No. But not the living ones.

What kind of faith, inner strength, whatever, keeps you going, as somebody who's part of this organizing organization?

What inner strength?

Or what keeps you going? You're not technically an organizer but you're part of an organization that exists to organize, so I consider you an organizer. What keeps you going?

What keeps me going? I think what keeps me going is that—well, as I've said to you before, I believe in what I'm doing. I believe that my contribution, even as an office manager, has been necessary and has really helped over the years. I feel like what I've done has helped this organization grow the way it has. So I guess that belief system. I also feel that I'm a very religious person in a certain way, not necessarily with any particular religion, but I do meditation—not every day like I should—that would help me more—but you know what I mean? So I draw on inner strength. And I have a faith in people, that even though we run into the tough ones, and it can get really discouraging at times, I try to look on the positive side. I think that's what keeps me going.

And it seems like you've put yourself in your life in position to be working with some really good people around good causes.

I do, yes. Yes, I am. And the people I work with are wonderful people.

In your work here as well as in other places.

Yes.

Anything else you'd like to add, that you think should be in the story that I wouldn't have even asked about, that you can think of?

No, I think I'm done.

Thank you.

Ok, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.