

CSEA HISTORY PROJECT

MIKE MORAN INTERVIEW

7/9/03

INTERVIEWER: What did you do for CSEA?

MR. MORAN: My name is Michael Moran and I was twice CSEA's Director of Communications, the first time during Bill McGowan's term as president and then the second time during Joe McDermott's term as president.

INTERVIEWER: We'll cover each of those. First I want to know what's your first -- very first recollection of CSEA. When did you first hear about CSEA?

MR. MORAN: My very first recollection of CSEA was when I was still a reporter down in Binghamton, New York and at that time CSEA was making a very big push for the Public Employee Safety & Health Act, and I remember Nels Carlson was traveling the state and going to CSEA locals and talking about how much more at risk public employees were to be injured or harmed than employees in the private sector and it was a major effort by CSEA.

Also at that time the Broome County local was very active and there was a lot of strife between the county and the local over --

over the contract and so I remember covering both the local county leaders and the CSEA staff that came down from Albany. I recall they used to have what they called the White Whale. They had this big RV that they used to place outside of stuff and their places and work as a mobile office.

And fortunately that year it never came to a strike, but it was a very tense contract settlement and CSEA played a very important role.

INTERVIEWER: M-m-m. So you got to know about CSEA before any job openings came up.

MR. MORAN: That's true.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get here? How did you get to CSEA then after that, I mean from Binghamton to here?

MR. MORAN: Well, I came to Albany as a reporter and I worked in Albany as a reporter. I was a political reporter here and again I came much across CSEA's trail during the 1982 Mario Cuomo gubernatorial campaign and I got to know a lot of the CSEA political action people. I got to know Gary Fryer, who had been my predecessor

as Director of Communications, and I also got to know Bill McGowan fairly well.

After that election when Gary Fryer joined the Cuomo Administration, they went through a search process and I applied for the job and was hired.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m. Can you give me a little like profile of Fryer and then we'll talk about McGowan in great -- in greater detail.

MR. MORAN: Sure.

INTERVIEWER: Portraits of these people.

MR. MORAN: Gary Fryer was a very bright, very capable guy who was a reporter, I believe, out in Central New York somewhere, Amsterdam or Utica area, and came to CSEA and became Director of Communications. I don't recall. I don't believe that was the first position he held, but he certainly played -- he was very close to Bill McGowan. He was a very bright guy and not only a good communications guy but an astute political sense, and he played a key role in helping to bring CSEA to the

forefront.

And also in that campaign of Mario Cuomo which we can talk about in more degree but I don't -- in retrospect there were a lot of very difficult times for CSEA and Mario Cuomo, but what people tend to forget is that the opponent in that primary election was Ed Koch, and Ed Koch had made as his main issue for many years before that the destruction of the Civil Service System.

He had come to Albany and lobbied for bills that would have done away with the entire Merit & Fitness System and so Mario Cuomo's opposition to him in the Democratic Primary which everyone but CSEA thought was kind of ludicrous when it started was very important.

And then in the general election the Republican nominee was Lou Lehrman who was a Ronald Reagan clone and certainly while people may have problems with what Mario Cuomo did or didn't do as Governor, I think either of those two alternatives would have been worse.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m. And yet I'm sure, now that I -- yeah. You refreshed my

memory about that, too. I'd forgotten. Wasn't Koch calling us "dressed in gingham" up here and --

MR. MORAN: Koch was calling Upstaters dressed in gingham, but he was also -- his view of his main problems as mayor of New York City was that he had to deal with the Merit & Fitness System and he came up quite frequently to lobby before committees in the State Legislature asking that the whole Civil Service testing system and the Rule of Three and just basically the entire Merit & Fitness System be done away with.

Had he had his way, the entire Public Employment System in New York State would have been a patronage pool.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, in that sense it's good Mario was --

MR. MORAN: That's right. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So now you're -- you're getting to know McGowan.

MR. MORAN: Bill McGowan, one of the most colorful characters, I think, in the

history of New York State politics and labor. A guy who was to many almost a caricature of an old-time labor leader with the cigar and the "dems" and "dose" but also an incredibly bright guy and an incredibly perceptive guy who I think positioned CSEA very well to move into the future. I think was a key leader in the affiliation with AFSCME because he saw the need for a bigger affiliation with the labor movement as a whole.

I think he took over CSEA at a very, very difficult time. New York was going through a lot of budget crisis at that point in the mid-seventies and he managed to lead it through a very difficult time and build it into a very powerful force in New York.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Now, let's see now. AFSCME, it's coming up on the 25th anniversary of the affiliation between CSEA and AFSCME --

MR. MORAN: M-m h-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: -- so they want -- you know, we want some -- a picture of that too, what it was like. Were you here when that

started, when that came together, or did you just see the results of it from -- I can't -- I don't know the time frame.

MR. MORAN: Right. I came in just shortly after the affiliation had happened, and I recall there was still a lot of skepticism among some of the elected leadership and among the staff, as some of the staff back then told me. And what I was familiar with as a reporter is that CSEA had fought AFSCME in a lot of certification/decertification elections as an independent, and felt that they had won and that they could continue to do that.

I think McGowan saw that this was a waste of money and a waste of time to keep trying to fight over people who were already organized, and also I think Bill McGowan did have a vision of being part of a larger labor movement and thought that was important for CSEA, so while there was some skepticism at that point in the early eighties, this was 1983, among some staff and among some elected leaders, I think McGowan was very committed to moving that relationship forward and making the

affiliation work.

INTERVIEWER: Any stories that illustrate personality, and remember, this is only for CSEA use.

MR. MORAN: M-m h-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: This isn't going to any -- nobody's going to see it outside this organization.

MR. MORAN: I guess -- the one story I remember the most is that when I first came to work for him I wrote a Labor Day speech for him. There was a big Labor Day rally in Albany and I wrote the speech and I was cognizant of the fact that he didn't read speeches word for word, but I gave it to him and thought that he just blew it off and was paying no attention to it.

And then Labor Day came and I was at the event and he did it in his own words, and he was very compelling, but he hit all the high points. All the important points that were in the speech came out almost verbatim to the way they'd been written, and wrapped around that was a lot of Bill McGowanisms that worked with the crowd and that worked for him, so it was an

impressive thing for me.

INTERVIEWER: That's good. That's good.

All right. Now, so now how long were you here the first time with Bill McGowan.

MR. MORAN: About two years. About two years.

INTERVIEWER: There must be other people, places, things that you remember that help illustrate CSEA's -- CSEA at that time.

MR. MORAN: H-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: No?

MR. MORAN: M-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: No? Any issues that you -- that you worked on?

MR. MORAN: The issues at the time that were difficult were, even after having supported Mario Cuomo coming into a very difficult budget situation and trying to minimize the impact of budget cuts and the laying off of folks, and while there was some pain in that era, I think CSEA did a very good job of minimizing it as much as was possible in a very difficult budget time.

INTERVIEWER: M-m-m.

MR. MORAN: So we worked on that a lot. We worked on the public employees. Where would you be without the media campaign to try and up the general presence and view of public employees and CSEA played a leading role in that as well.

INTERVIEWER: Sounds pretty much the beginning of a marketing campaign. At least that's how I got involved with CSEA in the first place was, where would you be without the campaign. That's pretty much the beginning.

MR. MORAN: That's right. CSEA had done a very targeted campaign before that on the whole dumping issue of the mentally ill, and coming out of that specific campaign it was fairly successful, and I believe during the Gary Fryer era there was a feeling on the board, of the delegates, that public employees didn't get the respect they deserved and CSEA should play a role in trying to do a positive image campaign for public employees, and that started under Gary Fryer, continued under myself, and then we added to that -- while that was the overview of

a positive public campaign that public employees provided a great service, we would target specific issue areas, whether it was in a local government unit or state unit, to try and make the case that services were vital and shouldn't be cut and put some political pressure on through the media as well as through the traditional lobbying mechanisms.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So two years and you go to -- did you go into a local news station?

MR. MORAN: I went back to a local news station, right, and was again covering politics and government and the state house. Then I came back to CSEA shortly after Joe McDermott was elected.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So now we're gonna profile Joe.

MR. MORAN: Joe was another interesting fella, and it's interesting having worked for both Joe and Bill McGowan, 'cause Bill was a colorful visionary sort of fellow. Joe was more of a professional bureaucrat. He -- he was not nearly as charismatic at an

individual level, but he had a much more greater commitment to detail and trying to put in professional management structures, I think.

And while there was some turmoil in doing that, I think overall it served CSEA well. I think he put it on a good footing to move forward. And again, I think one thing he and Bill shared was their commitment to the AFSCME affiliation. I think Joe viewed that as a very important thing and tried to move both the staff and leaders that may have still had some doubts about it forward and to make it work for both the benefit of the International and the benefit of CSEA.

By that time when I came back, and this was three or four years later, the whole thing, the whole affiliation had started to work better. I mean people -- a lot of younger staff had moved up and were much more comfortable with it. A lot of the leadership that was involved saw the benefits now because they had been involved with it for a few years.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, we had sort of a trial marriage at first.

MR. MORAN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And then it -- then I guess it jelled and familiarized --

MR. MORAN: And I think a big part of that, and it's hard for me to judge because I came in a little too late, but I know while Jerry Wirf was kind of a legendary fellow, I think when I came in Jerry McEntee had become president of AFSCME and I think Jerry's charisma and his commitment to CSEA and his ability to work with the CSEA leadership really helped forge that relationship much better than it may have been initially.

INTERVIEWER: M-m-m. Any stories to illustrate these gentlemen?

MR. MORAN: The story I remember with McDermott was in the 1992 presidential campaign. It was clear that CSEA and AFSCME were dying to elect a democrat President, and while many in Washington at the International were enamored of Mario Cuomo, CSEA's membership was having a very tough time with Mario Cuomo at that time. He had raided the Pension Fund. He had raided their salaries to a lag pay and there was no

tenor among the membership to support Mario Cuomo.

So through McEntee and McDermott working together, it was agreed that McDermott personally, and as a result CSEA with him as a leader, would endorse Bill Clinton early and try to get delegates to run in the New York State primary for Bill Clinton, and so we came out very publicly.

In fact, we had leaked the story that CSEA was going to support Bill Clinton on the day that Mario Cuomo was keeping the world in doubt about whether he was or wasn't going to run, and so we had the world's media here in Albany. They were -- there was a front page story in the Albany Times Union that everybody else picked up on from Los Angeles to London and at the end of the day Mario Cuomo came out and said he wasn't running, so that suddenly made CSEA a player with Bill Clinton.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

MR. MORAN: And then about a few weeks after that, I don't remember the exact date, the Jennifer Flowers story broke and McDermott said

to myself and a few of the other senior staffers who'd advised the strategy, you better get up to New Hampshire and make sure he stays alive, so we were up trudging through the snows of New Hampshire going door to door trying to help the campaign be viable.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's what unions do.

MR. MORAN: M-m h-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So you were there.

MR. MORAN: We were there. We were in New Hampshire.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Now what about McEntee? Do you remember anything about -- I don't know if you had anything to do with him. I mean I'm sure you went --

MR. MORAN: Yeah. I mean it's -- again, I think my memories of Jerry McEntee the first time I went to Washington to an AFSCME board meeting with Bill McGowan and he was just a very charismatic guy. He was a very friendly guy. He was clearly committed to making the relationship work. He clearly directed his

senior staff to work with CSEA senior staff to make things work together.

INTERVIEWER: M-m-m.

MR. MORAN: I know the other thing I remember about him is that whenever CSEA had a convention in Lake Placid he hated it, because he just hated flying in on those little planes through the mountains into -- into Lake Placid Airport, but -- but he always came and gave a great speech.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah. That's great. Well, we covered a lot in a very short time. I remember a story.

MR. MORAN: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: At the -- at the convention where Clinton was speaking in New York?

MR. MORAN: M-m h-m-m. I remember that.

INTERVIEWER: We were all in the back. We had a cameraman. We were going to cover the whole thing?

MR. MORAN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And I remember somebody

-- you were -- you were back there with your, I don't know, cell phone or walkie talkie --

MR. MORAN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Whatever it was back then, and somebody said where's -- you know, we're waiting for him. Where's Clinton? He's up with Mario.

MR. MORAN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: In a room -- in the hotel with Mario. Mario can come down with him, somebody said, and you said --

MR. MORAN: No.

INTERVIEWER: You said if Mario comes down with him they will boo him.

MR. MORAN: Right. That's right. I did say that.

INTERVIEWER: You kept Mario in his room.

MR. MORAN: I said -- I told him --

INTERVIEWER: I mean you, CSEA.

MR. MORAN: CSEA, yes. What had happened was -- again, it was a very, very difficult time with Mario Cuomo. We had invited Bill Clinton and not Mario Cuomo to that

convention.

(Laughter.)

MR. MORAN: The -- Bill Clinton had come in to do a fund raiser with some folks also in the hotel and Cuomo was at the fund raiser and the two of them were together and some of the Cuomo staff and the Clinton advance people said, well, they'll come down together, and coming from McDermott straight through me we said, no. He'll be booed. We don't want that to happen.

As it was, he was about an hour and a half late and the Secret Service had closed the room, so you had an entire delegate body in the room with really nothing to do. We had run a film. Danny Dono...the music was playing. Danny Donohue was leading union songs and this went on for like an hour and a half while we were waiting for him.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. MORAN: However, when he finally came the room went wild. He was like a rock star, I mean the most charismatic Presidential candidate I've ever seen, and the room loved

him. That was an interesting time at that convention.

INTERVIEWER: And that's when I knew the power of CSEA.

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: Getting personal right then and there. I'm standing there. No, the Governor can't come down. Okay.

MR. MORAN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: That was great. That was my introduction to CSEA.

MR. MORAN: I remember that now.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that was cool. That was cool.

Anything else you've got you want to add to all this? I mean you're so good. You did it all so fast.

MR. MORAN: The only other story that's come to my mind in the recollection was two of the sort of clever media things we did back then. I remember at one point we were trying to stop some Mental Health policy of basically dumping again, but we didn't have as much money available at the time to do a huge

media campaign, so we did this direct mail piece to the public but we targeted ZIP Codes all around and election districts all around members of the Legislature's house, so we probably only sent out a couple thousand pieces statewide but like 10 or 12 key members of the Legislature thought we'd inundated the whole state.

The other selective thing, and this may even have been your idea, I don't recall. It was somebody's idea -- was we were trying to stop the single -- the use of single drivers on snow plows that had been designed for a driver and a wingman, but again finances were kind of limited, so we decided we would sponsor school closing notices with this grim message that the State was risking the public safety by trying to jerry-rig these old snow plows into one-man crews.

To our good fortune, the first snow day of the year also happened to be the day of the State of the State Address, so everybody who was driving into Albany or coming in to Albany on the day of the State of the State heard this dire message of how the public safety was being

risked by Governor Cuomo and it had a lot more impact than I think we could have had for a lot more money.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. No, that wasn't me. That must have been my predecessor, Donna and (inaudible) Potter.

MR. MORAN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. The thing I did was the privatization stuff.

MR. MORAN: Right. That's right. The pirate stuff --

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: The privateer stuff.

MR. MORAN: The privateer stuff, that's right. That was another good one.

INTERVIEWER: That was an inspiration that came from your sailing experience and the cassette you gave us, you know, the DOT --

MR. MORAN: Right. And that's right. We turned the whole notion of people who were trying to privatize public service into the fact that they were pirates trying to profit at the public till and we were also very successful there being able to run a statewide campaign on

a general theme but then target all the graphics and other things to specific local issues in specific areas, and I think we were very successful in that.

I think we fought off a lot of big companies that had a lot invested --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. MORAN: -- in trying to steal public employees' jobs.

INTERVIEWER: I think so, until the board of directors got tired of it and we had to do something else.

(Laughter.)

MR. MORAN: We had to (inaudible).

INTERVIEWER: But that's life.

MR. MORAN: That's life.

INTERVIEWER: I know you had to deal with the board of directors twice, right?

MR. MORAN: Twice, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Big board...I mean there were a lot of them, weren't there?

MR. MORAN: M-m h-m-m. That was a very big board of directors. It's a very big -- I guess that's one of the real surprises that I

had coming to CSEA because I had grown up -- my father was an operating engineer, so I thought -- and I had worked as a casual laborer in college in summers under a Teamsters' contract, so I thought all unions operated the way the operating engineers in the Teamsters do. I was amazed at the first CSEA board meeting that you had 150 people in a room vigorously debating the future of the Union and what they were going to do and what the money allocated was gonna be and it was very democratic.

And then when I went to my first convention and saw a couple thousand people in a room doing the same sort of lively debate, so it was -- that was eye-opening.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Did you have to present to the board of directors things like the ad campaign, marketing ideas, or how did that work then?

MR. MORAN: We put presentations together and we usually presented it to the regional officers and the statewide officers, the ten officers, and then usually one of the officers would make a presentation and we would

simply fill in if it was needed.

INTERVIEWER: Right. I think it still works that way.

Well, I'm -- we've covered everything for me.

MR. MORAN: I think that's about it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That's great. Wow. Talk about packing it in. We had a woman here this morning who stretched it out for us and she would go roam around and come back (laughter) and we'd get a little nugget every once in a while.

INTERVIEWER: No, we're back on.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Good.

MR. MORAN: One of the really, I think most successful things to come out of the affiliation were the campaigns early on in Joe McDermott's tenure both in Nassau County and in Westchester County where local officers decided to break away from CSEA and try to start their own independent union, and both the CSEA staff and the AFSCME staff worked very closely.

We worked on media advertising with the folks in Washington in AFSCME's media shop.

We worked with the organizers. AFSCME staff came in. Our staff came in. In both cases, both the funding and the unified effort that CSEA was able to put together to keep those two locals, which are two of the biggest in the state, was a pure result of the work between AFSCME and CSEA.

INTERVIEWER: Beautiful. We'll use that in the convention.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That may get used in the convention if it's all right with you.

MR. MORAN: That's fine. Use it any way you want.

INTERVIEWER: But it ain't goin' -- nothin's goin' outside.

MR. MORAN: That's fine.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't say anything that was not --

(Whereupon, the interview of Mike Moran was concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JEANNE M. CARPENTIER, do hereby
certify that the preceding is a true and accurate
transcription of the taped proceedings held in the
above-entitled matter to the best of my knowledge
and belief.

Sworn to before me this

_____ day of _____

My commission expires
