

Interview Date: January 25, 2006

Subject: Mario Cuomo: Counsel, Willkie Farr and Gallagher LLP, 1995-present; New York State Governor, 1983-1995; New York State Lieutenant Governor, 1979-1983; New York Secretary of State, 1975-1979; Lawyer, Corner, Weisbrod, Froeb, and Charles, 1958-1975; New York Court of Appeals clerk, 1956-1958.

Mario Cuomo's experiences as a politician began in 1974 as Secretary of State under Governor Hugh Carey and then as Lieutenant Governor in Carey's next term. After losing to Ed Koch in the 1977 Democratic Primary for the New York City mayoral race, Cuomo was successful in defeating Koch in his first campaign for Governor, and held office for three consecutive terms.

In his interview, Cuomo discussed his interactions with the State's unions and civil service workers while in office with Governor Carey, and then as Governor himself. He credited CSEA as being the "most responsible group" for his '82 campaign victory, pointing out he had no campaign money, but did have CSEA, who held an "old-fashioned" campaign for him by doing mail drops and going out and "pumping hands" with voters. Cuomo also shared the differences of campaigning, and then governing those who had helped to get him elected. He mentioned having to face AIDS, crack, and homelessness in his first term and compared the extremes of working with unions when the State did and did not have money, claiming he could have accomplished much more for state and public employees if he had the "kind of money Pataki and Guiliani had."

Cuomo stated his loss of popularity with the unions was due to the "Reagan Years," where he faced difficult fiscal times and cutbacks in State government, which led to the reduction of programs that CSEA and AFSCME had wanted. He remembered being sued most of any Governor, mentioning lawsuits brought against him by CSEA (for a projected unit credit in the pension system) and another by Sal Wachtler, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, whom he had appointed. Cuomo also recalled a CSEA demonstration in the early '90's when 20,000 state employees showed up at the capital to rally for more programs, however he stated he "did what he could" in terms of fringe programs and by turning down his own \$30K/year raise for ten years.

Even though Cuomo had no intentions of running for President of the United States, he described how rumors of his candidacy had come about and spoke of the two Supreme Court Justice nominations he was offered by President Clinton, but turned

down. He mentioned the MTA negotiations in '06, calling them disgraceful, and pointed out the middle class is in "terrible shape," stating unions are the only ones fighting for them. He also expressed the need for more health care and education reform.

**Key Words**

AFSCME

Contracts/Negotiations

Death Penalty

Developmental Disabilities

Early Retirement

HIV/AIDS

Lieutenant Governor

Medicaid funding

MTA negotiations

NYC Mayoral Election

NYS Legislature

Ombudsmen Office

Pensions

Presidential Race

Projected Unit Credit (PUC)

U.S. Supreme Court

Reagan Administration

Secretary of State

State and Local Government

The Grateful Dead

Willowbrook Lawsuit

**Key People**

Vincent Albanese

Ronald Brown

Senator Joseph Bruno

Judy Burgess

Hugh Carey

President Bill Clinton

Elizabeth Connelly

Erastus Corning

Danny Donohue

James Fetherstonhaugh

Meyer "Sandy" Frucher

Gary Fryer

Bill Gates

Rudolph Guiliani

Ed Koch

Ralph Marino

Joseph McDermott

Gerald McEntee

William McGowan

Pataki Administration

Ned Regan

Nelson Rockefeller

Bernie Ryan

Sal Wachtler

CSEA HISTORY PROJECT

MARIO CUOMO INTERVIEW

January 25, 2006

INTERVIEWER: I've been told that when I start these out it always sounds like a deposition because I usually try to say who we're speaking with and the date, but today is the 25th of January 2006 and we're in New York City with Governor Mario Cuomo --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: M-m h-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: Governor, thank you very much for agreeing to do this. We really appreciate it very much.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Thank you very much for coming, and -- and I hope you don't ever use this in a courtroom.

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: Governor, let me begin by asking you when you first became aware of an organization called CSEA.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: I'd have to guess the precise moment, but it would have to have been somewhere around 1974 because that was my first political effort, first significant political effort, in the campaign for Governor with Hugh Carey, and so that introduced me basically to politics and to public employees in the state of

New York. After -- before that I was in private life and didn't have much occasion to think about -- unions I had run into, but not -- not the public employee unions so much, so I would say about 1974.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when you were Secretary of State --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Yeah --

INTERVIEWER: -- did you have relationship with the CSEA, with the employees who were working for you in that office?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Oh, yes, indeed, and a lot of them, I -- I remember the first night of my political career, which was January 1, 1975, midnight or a minute after midnight, the day before, and I was swearing in the whole new Carey Cabinet as Secretary of State and some people who had worked on the conversion from the Republican era to a new and hopefully better Democratic era who were making the transition came to me and said:

Look, you're going to be the Secretary of State now. You're the first appointee of Governor Carey. You haven't been in public life

before. There are three workers who were Republican, who had been working for the Republican Administration for years. They helped us in the transition. Nobody else would help us. They've all cold-shouldered us and we hope -- they're Civil Service workers, but we hope that you'll give them a chance in your Administration to earn -- and I -- I was shocked at the question, you know. What are you implying, maybe because I was new to politics.

Well, I said: Of course. I don't care that they were Republicans. I don't -- I'm not interested in that. I'm not -- and they can be Republicans now. They're gonna have to do their job and if they do their job they'll do well.

Well, those three workers, Civil Service workers, stayed with me for four years as Secretary of State, and then for four years as Lieutenant Governor, when they had to give up their Civil Service status for some -- for some reason in the Lieutenant Governor's Office. Don't ask me why, but I think it was the Lieutenant Governor was thought of almost as a

-- as a Senate member, but anyway they had to give up their standing somehow in the Civil Service System. They stayed anyway, and then 12 years as Governor, so those three workers that I met -- and I was always close -- tried to be close to the working people because that's where I came from so, yeah, I got to know the union.

The presidents, of course, all the tough Irish guys who ran the place and over the years and -- but also the workers. I was more inclined to deal with the workers than the politicians, to be honest with you.

INTERVIEWER: Now early in the Carey Administration there were some very difficult choices for New York and he did not have the best of relations initially with the State employees. What do you remember of that period?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, of course, as Secretary of State I was -- I was involved with it and I was traveling all over the State for him. The Governor -- Carey had asked me about being Counsel because he knew me mostly as a lawyer from law school. He was older than I was but -- but we were -- he had been in the service



and I had not and so the gap wasn't that large.

I told him I didn't want to be a counsel to him. Of course, I didn't want that intimate relationship with him. He was kind of mercurial, et cetera, and so was I occasionally and so I said find a place for me where I can -- I can be a lawyer when you want a lawyer or be something else and so they constructed a special Secretary of State's Office that did more than (inaudible) et cetera, and expanded the jurisdiction, created an Ombudsman's Office and a Planning Office, Coastal Zone Management, et cetera.

And also the Ombudsman's Office took me all around the Upstate and Long Island, everything but New York City. New York City we felt didn't need us as much as the rest of the State did because we wanted to have an impact on them, and so dealing with that part of the State you dealt with the unions in the prisons, in the State University, et cetera, and I got to know that well, that situation.

Now, what is the relationship with the unions? It's always the same. It was for Carey

what it was for me and I assume for Pataki. When you had money and you could do what you wanted to do for the unions, like my first couple of contracts, even the third one belatedly, you know, you give them 5, 5.5, 6, you know, three years, increases, you think up new initiatives that they can have with labor, you expand their -- their own education and children's programs. You can afford to do that for the workers and they always deserve it, but only sometimes can you afford it, and when you can afford it if you have any civility about you and you're reasonably friendly with them, then you're gonna have an excellent relationship and I did.

What happened was to -- not to Carey so much but to me -- were the Reagan years. Carey's last contract was a very rich one (laughter), but then he knew I was gonna have to pay for it because I was -- I was coming in after him and I know the guy who -- who negotiated it. His name was Sandy Frucia and Sandy Frucia's now the chairman and CEO of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange and he's my client

and I've never let him forget that he gave you guys a big contract knowing I was gonna have to pay for it.

And so that -- that's what it was with the relationship. You -- you had the extremes. The CSEA was more responsible for me being Governor than any other group. There were other unions that joined in after them but specially with what you did Upstate and on Long Island, you made me the Governor by beating Ed Koch in '82.

INTERVIEWER: Well, talk a little bit more about that in some depth. How did the genesis of your campaign get underway in 1982 and what was the, you know, the back-and-forth of the relationship? Who approached who?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: The -- first of all there was a big question about whether Hugh Carey would run again and it was very clear to me, although some people were guessing to the contrary, it was very clear to me that if Hugh Carey ran again I would not run against him. He brought me into public life. I lost the primary in 1974, the primary race for Lieutenant

Governor. That notwithstanding he made me his first appointee after he beat Howard Samuels in the primary and so I owed everything to Carey.

Beside which, he was a great Governor. He saved the City and therefore the State fiscally in those horrible years: '75, '76, '77, et cetera, so -- and in my diary that I wrote about the campaign of '82 I said that I would never have run against him.

But Corning, the great Erastus Corning, the Mayor of Albany, came to me early on in that year and said: If Carey doesn't run, I'm going to back you and I'm going to go to the CSEA and a lot of other people I know and -- and you can win this thing, if Carey did not run. Erastus Corning intervened, spoke to some people at the CSEA, other people stepped forward. Jimmy Featherstonhaugh who was a lobbyist and a lawyer for a long time and heavy with the CSEA, introduced me to Bernie Ryan and -- and that was it. That was the beginning.

You came very early. Bill McGowan, I guess, tough Bill McGowan. He must have been the president then. Let's see. It was McGowan,

then McDermott --

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: -- and then Donohue.

It was like St. Patrick's Day. I mean the -- the, you know, and they were terrific. They were different kinds of guys but they all had skills, so that was it. I mean -- it was Corning, this opening to run for Governor, and -- and Corning, Bernie Ryan and then, of course, my relationships developed after that.

INTERVIEWER: We have a photograph that I find one of the more fascinating photographs as I've gone through our archives, and I believe it's from the fall of 1981 and it's you as Lieutenant Governor to become President and Jerry McEntee, who at that time was Pennsylvania AFSCME leader --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Very smart guy.

INTERVIEWER: -- who went on to become president of AFSCME and it was, I think, kind of an interesting moment in time that all of you were on the verge of moving to bigger and better things.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, that's

interesting. McNamee was a terrific -- McEntee was a terrific leader and he was very good to me with AFSCME; of course, it was AFSCME and CSEA. That changed when we got to the nineties, the early nineties, and he went with Clinton, et cetera, because in that period the union was very unhappy because we had to do a lot of tough things and I lost McEntee's support then and never got it back.

I lost the CSEA's support, too, but McEntee was a great leader here, in Washington, and he was very good to me initially and I never forgot that, nor did I forget the CSEA. I mean I understood why they wouldn't support me in 1994, but I also remember that if they hadn't supported me in 1982 I never would have been Governor.

INTERVIEWER: True. Talk about the '82 campaign in terms of some of the nuts and bolts. I mean what did CSEA do? Did they bring you around to speak to different groups, introduce you, provide coverage in the newspaper? What was some of the things that they actually did?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Governors' races in 1982 were much different than they have been in recent years or are today or will be now in this coming cycle. People are more -- were more important, much more important. Bodies were much more important then than they are now. Now the big thing is money and television. If you're gonna run a statewide campaign -- I'm not talking about local campaigns but a statewide campaign in a great state like this one, or most of the states, it's money and television.

Now there are other things. Of course you need people, but in '82 I had no money. I mean the other side had the money. We were outspent in the primary by Ed Koch, I guess, two-to-one pretty much, and then in the general election we really got slaughtered by Lou Lehrman who spent something like \$13 million. We didn't spend anything like that.

But what we had were people like the CSEA, especially Upstate, especially on Long Island, where the public facilities were what they worked in. You know, that's where their jobs were and that's where they lived for the

most part, and they did everything.

They were out pumping peoples' hands. They were -- they were out talking to other people about voting for me. They -- they did mail drops for me. They had old-fashioned -- we had an old-fashioned campaign. We brought some of them in from the suburbs, frankly, to New York City for the big parades and they would come in and they would help us make placards and march up and down Fifth Avenue or wherever the parade was.

So they -- it was an old-fashioned parade where -- old-fashioned campaign where bodies made the difference and they made the difference. Plus they had access to the population in those places and some of them, you know, the institutions, the facilities, were extremely important to the neighborhoods, and so stuff radiated out from the facility. They did everything and if they had done it in 1994 I'd probably still be Governor.

INTERVIEWER: What was the importance of CSEA coming into your campaign early on and how did that help it to build some momentum?



GOVERNOR CUOMO: In 1982 when I ran against Koch in the primary it was called by one paper for a man as well-educated and apparently reasonable as he is, this is one of the most stupid political decisions ever made, and my son who is brilliant politically -- he was even as a young guy and he's even better now -- he said there's no way we win this thing.

The New York Times, Reuben Murdock and his mighty New York Post which can batter Democrats into submission almost always, they -- they were running Koch's campaign basically, or the Post was and we were 38 points behind in the polls with no money.

So they -- what they -- what they -- what the unions gave me early on was some degree of credibility. At least the guy has union support and the unions are bodies and bodies are important and they'll even chip in a few pennies but he's not gonna be dead broke and he's not gonna be without significant supporters from the very beginning, so they gave me a little bit of credibility early on and that was very important because there were only two people in this race.

Everybody had been chased out of it by Koch and Koch made that point. He called me up before -- before the campaign actually started and said: Look, everybody's quit because they know I'm gonna be unbeatable in the primary and you're a valuable guy. You've never won a big race yourself. Be nice. You'll work with us in the campaign, you'll have a future.

And I said: Ed, I think I'm gonna beat you with two buttons, Koch for Mayor and Cuomo for Governor, because you're a great mayor and I'm gonna tell New York City not to lose you. But there are no Chinese restaurants in Albany. You won't like Albany. I love Albany and that's where I'm gonna campaign against you and that's the way the CSEA and I and the other unions campaigned.

INTERVIEWER: There's obviously a difference when you transitioned from running in a campaign and being a candidate to actually having to govern and having a group like CSEA which supports you but then represents the people who are going to work for you can create for something of a testy relationship.

How did you see that begin to change when you actually took office?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No. It -- it's a general thing. It's not just CSEA and unions. I mean the CSEA had specific requirements for their membership. You know, they wanted them to be paid fairly and at the highest possible level consistent with the best interests of the State.

They wanted programs. They wanted a lot of things and these things cost money. Not all of them. We were able to do a lot of things legislatively for unions generally and working people generally. You know, the conditions of their labor, ergonomics and stuff like that. We -- there was a lot we could do that didn't cost a lot of money but basically they needed money.

And when you didn't have money to supply people with the education they needed, with the health care they needed, with the infrastructure they needed, obviously they're gonna be -- they're gonna be disappointed.

The big difference between the campaign and governance, and I put it this way

once: You campaign in poetry, you govern in prose. In the -- the campaign is all about aspiration, especially a first campaign for an office, which is what '82 was. I didn't have a history as a Governor, did have history as a Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State and they kind of liked what I did then but I had no power, so in that first campaign you're all aspiration. You tell them what you want to do.

In the governance, you do and then they measure you by what you did against what you said you would do and in the early part of my 12 years we delivered. Of course, we had the money.

Then what intervened, and most of the public has forgotten, were the Reagan years. Carey didn't have Reagan years. Pataki had the richest years in our history. So did Giuliani in New York City. They had the Clinton years. They had the years when the money came rolling into the federal treasury, the state treasury and the city treasury.

And so until the very end, and what they did if you look at Governor Pataki who is a

good fellow and a good friend of mine, and Rudy Giuliani, even closer. He supported me against Pataki. They rode the wave of abundance in their early years like surfboard riders.

But when that wave went down near the end of their terms, then they were in the water and they found it difficult to swim, and so Pataki's popularity went way up when he was spending the Clinton money, if you want to call it that.

Now to me just the opposite happened. Reagan came in very popular, but any fair reading of the history will show you that the people he took care of best were not the workers. He was terrible for unions and it wasn't just the traffic controllers that -- he was terrible for unions, although he had been a union person himself and a union leader, but he was good for the wealthy people.

He gave big tax cuts at the top, so big that he starved some of the other programs. It was so big that the federal government wound up with a big deficit, a big debt, and what they had to do was reduce the programs that AFSCME

was most concerned about and reduce the money to the states for programs that CSEA was so concerned about and that all working people needed. You know, money for education, money for health care.

And so, you know, I never had that wave to ride for long. There were a few years that I had it and that's -- that's what happened, the Reagan years. And it's interesting. You take the last 20 years. Take the last 20 or so years. What you had was before that Carter malaise, the economy was terrible for whatever reasons, so you're way down and the workers are way down.

Then you have Reagan and you have high aspirations because of the contrast to the Carter years. Then Reagan comes in, gives big tax cuts and everybody's delighted, especially the rich people. But then the deficit and debt is so enormous that he gives tax increases, including an increase in Social Security taxes and the Reagan years prove to be terrible for workers.

And by the end of the Reagan years,

you know, although he was still popular because he was such a charmer and because the Wall had come down in Europe, et cetera, et cetera, by the end of the Reagan years he was still popular but the country was in terrible shape.

And then Bush followed and swore he wouldn't raise taxes, but things were so lousy with the deficit and debt he had to raise taxes on the wealthy people. And here's the irony: Eight years of Clinton, just the opposite happened. Eight years of Clinton, the middle class got stronger, the poor population shrunk. There were more millionaires and billionaires than ever too. Everybody did well. But that was only eight years.

He leaves, another Republican comes in, Bush, and we're back to where we started. Back to deficit, back to debt, no more surplus, middle class going down, unions and all. The unions aren't the only worker groups in the country, of course. Most people, unfortunately, are not part of an organization so the unions have benefits that the rest of the working population doesn't, but all the workers went

down, unionized or not, and the poor has grown.

Millionaires and billionaires, better than ever, but the rest of the population, which is -- look, only 1.5 percent of the people make \$300,000, so you're talking about way over 97 percent of the people who are really not doing that well.

INTERVIEWER: Let me go back to the first term and one of the controversial things that occurred in that term was a proposed layoff of a large number of State employees to deal with a deficit situation --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- and I think in the end very few people actually were laid off, but what was the perception that was created as a result of that, do you think?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, the union members were angry and, of course, they were angry. You know, some of them got laid off. We tried very hard to avoid that. I tried very hard -- I did give them two good -- reasonably good contracts and eventually in '92 we didn't give them a really good contract, but we gave



them some help later on, so we tried very hard and we gave them a voluntary retirement program that did make a difference.

And a lot of people wanted to retire and enjoyed it and it was costly but we did it, so we did try to help. And frankly, personally, and most people probably don't even know this -- you might not know it. I refused to take raises for myself for 11 years. I said the top exec... the top elected people like the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General and the Comptroller, I don't believe they should take raises. Not when we've been, you know, so hard on everybody else and we're laying them off.

We didn't come into this because of the money. I mean we spent millions of dollars to get these jobs and it wasn't because we wanted to make ourselves rich.

Now my wife has never forgotten that because by the time I finished as Governor I wound up owing \$200,000 and she said if you'd taken that raise -- you do 11 times 30 and then do the interest. It was \$30,000 a year that I

said no to.

Now, I'm not boasting of it. I'm simply saying that the decisions we made, we made very reluctantly. I mean we didn't start by saying let's get the unions. We said just the opposite. These are the guys and gals who made me Governor. Let's try to help them, but we were limited in what we could do. They were upset. They were angry. A lot of them didn't understand. A lot of them condemned me and I understand that perfectly.

And didn't like it, of course. I kept trying to make my case but I understood it, absolutely. If it was my family, and it was my father or brother or mother who was laid off from the job, it would have been hard to make me understand it either.

INTERVIEWER: Well, as you said, very few were actually laid off --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- and you did make -- and this was the last time that New York State actually did an across-the-board early retirement --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- incentive and --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Became a pattern.

INTERVIEWER: -- became something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand it helped to avert layoffs; on the other hand you had a whole lot of people leaving State service and that certainly must have created some operational difficulties.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Oh, yeah. No, no, it did and it created difficulties for the workers because, you know, they had to do more work. There were gaps. They needed help. They -- look, the workers work for money but they also, if they're -- and this is the big difference between the CSEA and most of the other non-government and AFSCME.

They're in government and most of them believe in government. They believe in the job they're doing in the institutions. They're taking care of sick people. They're taking care of people who can't take care of themselves, you know. They're trying to educate people. They're trying to service people.

Government is the coming together of people, says Lincoln, through the collectivity, to do things for people that they couldn't do for themselves, so when you reduce the work force or underpay them, you reduce their ability to do the good job and so there was a lot of -- a lot of unhappiness and I felt it -- I felt it too.

INTERVIEWER: You said in 1985 you settled your first contract with jobs. Do you remember that issue?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Vaguely. I know it was a -- I know it was a good thing and it was the union's idea. I don't think it was our idea. I think it came from the unions but I'm vague beyond that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. As you went along in the nineties, again as you referenced earlier, there were some difficult --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- fiscal times, kind of a squeeze. Some people look at it as kind of a -- the end result of trickle-down economics that the State was squeezed on that basis. As you

again had to make a number of tough decisions talk if you would about some of the issues involving the pension system because it had become a point of controversy between CSEA and your Administration over some of the changes that you wanted to make in the pension system and there were some lawsuits that resulted.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: The pension's still a problem. One of the biggest problems the country has now, one of the biggest problems private industry has now, one of the biggest problems local governments have now. How do you pay for the pensions?

Now, New York has done very well. Of course, politically a lot of people have kept saying you've gotta give raises, et cetera, et cetera. Annual increase, COLA, cost-of-living increases, et cetera, and that's -- that's good and it's fine and I have a pension; not as big as the Legislature pensions but I have a pension as a person who profited from that and that's natural.

But when you are in charge of the State and there is not the revenues coming in

and you're not doing the business as a state that you would like to do and you don't have enough money to pay for repairing the roads and bridges, for keeping the schools going, in an era when -- and people who work for a living understand this better than anybody.

In an era where your ability to make it as a worker depends very much on your skill level, you know, this is not like my father's era where if you were strong enough to handle a pick and shovel you'd make a living, that's not true.

First of all, giving part of the jobs to illegal aliens and others, but you need skills and you need skills that you don't learn in high school for the most part. You need four more years of education.

Well, in a society where you don't have enough money to give everybody a college education, which you should have for the same reason you made public schools in the first place to achieve a certain level of competence, you should have kept going up to a college level instead of stopping at a high school level.

And in a situation like that where you don't have the money you need for those essentials, it gets harder to say: Okay. Now on the pensions we're gonna continue to give you more and more money every year, you're gonna go up with inflation, et cetera, et cetera, and that notwithstanding what your own income might be apart from the pensions.

Now, you know, my pension goes up like everybody else's, but what they didn't calculate is that I'm making a lot more money now than I ever did as Governor because I'm here at this law firm and I make wealth, and I -- I always felt that there should be some kind of way of doing that, not to punish people who really need the money.

But let me say this now because I can afford to say controversial things now since I'm not running and my son has his own political positions, not mine. He's not responsible for what I say. I think one of the things we're doing wrong now at the State level and the federal level is we're not sensitive enough to who is paying the bills and who needs the help.

I think the system should be more sensitive to that. We need more health care. We have 46 million people without insurance. We need much more in education. It's a joke to say all you need is accountability and get tough. You need college education for people. You need skill training for people.

In a society like that you should not be giving to people like me all the Social Security that I'm entitled to. If I don't need it that should somehow be registered on the system and you should use means tests which people are ambivalent about.

If you can afford to pay for your health care you shouldn't be using the Medicare money. Let's be honest. If God has been good to you, and we don't want to punish you. We don't want to punish the struggling middle class people. But at least for that top population, you have given tax cuts in this country which over ten years about three-quarters of a trillion dollars, a trillion dollars, will go to the top two percent of the earners.

What? The top two percent. That's



millionaires and billionaires. What is the logic to that? What is that when you need that for the economy? Nonsense. That money is not going to go into the economy. That's investment money. It'll go into investments. If you want to get money into the economy, give it to the workers. Give it to the middle class. Give it to the working poor. Give it to the people who will spend it. Now give it to them and they're gonna buy a new car and they're gonna go to a college and they're gonna spend that money. Now it's in the economy.

So -- and I felt that way even in those days; that we should be means testing more of this. I'm -- I'm not against rich people. I was -- I always disappointed my mother because I didn't make a lot of money, even as a lawyer although I was a pretty good lawyer and I think I still am, but -- but I think, you know, everybody should be a millionaire. Great. If you can get to be a millionaire, that's wonderful.

But then you should pay accordingly because it's this country that gives you that

wealth. The Gates family. I gave a speech for Bill Gates' father and Bill Gates and his family were there. This was about a year ago, and in the beginning of that speech I said to Mr. Gates, I want to congratulate you and all those other billionaires and millionaires, 700 of them that you went before Congress with and said it is an outrage to suggest there should be no estate tax on my estate. We have billions of dollars in the Gates interests. We wouldn't have it except that the United States of America made it possible for us. It was their army that defended us, their roads and bridges we traveled on and got to their schools that we were educated by. It's a sin, he said, for us to think this is all our money and we shouldn't share it. \$79 billion will be lost totally if you wipe out the estate tax.

Now, nobody's talking about that. Nobody knows about that. CSEA members probably don't have any idea about that, but that mentality that allows a government to say we're gonna save this tiny percentage of billionaires and millionaires from spending -- you know, from

taxes when they die. That's wrong and we should be more intelligent about taking from the people who have without discouraging them from working.

Nobody -- if you gave Garnett the basketball player, who got \$100 million at 19 years of age for playing basketball for ten years, if you said: Listen, I'm sorry. It's only going to be 75 million, I don't think he'd switch to golf.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you this. When you encountered the difficult times of the late eighties in particular, did you consider fundamentally restructuring State government?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, I considered fundamentally restructuring State government all the time, but nobody else did. I mean to restructure State government, especially our State government, consider what you have to do. You have to go to people who have dominated the Senate for what, 76 years in a row, the Republicans. How many years in a row have they had it, 75, 76 years? And now the Democrats have dominated the Assembly since 1975, right? 75 and 25, that's 2000 plus 6, that's over 30

years. And they don't want to give up their power.

So it's not like Governors. Governors are there for four or eight or twelve, you know, but these guys are there forever. The election rate is maybe 98 percent. You don't lose, you know, unless you get drunk and make an ass of yourself the day before the election, so the -- the -- how do you change that system?

You have to go to the Legislature to change it, to restructure it. They don't want change. They don't want dramatic change. I'll give you one good example. We fight over the budget every year and it's always the same fight. The Governor says you're spending too much; the Assembly and the Senate say, oh, no. Our numbers show that we have more money than you say we have. You're just saving it up to come with a big surplus when you run again.

Okay. I came in as Governor having seen that for eight years with Hugh Carey. I said let me solve the problem for you and I went to Ned Regan and I said: Ned, you're the Comptroller and you're a Republican but I trust

you and I'm going to go to the people and say I will accept whatever numbers you certify as the revenues for the year. This way we'll stop all the games. I won't be tempted, or even if I'm tempted I won't be able to do anything about it, saying: Well, let me cheat and say I don't have money so I have a lot at the end and they won't be able to say: Well, let's pretend we have a lot of money and let the Governor get the heat when there's a deficit.

And we did that for a couple of years and then the Legislature went to Regan and beat him to a pulp and said he would never be Governor, he would never be -- and that was the end of it and no more certifying revenues and you went back to the old game.

So that's where you are now. There's a lot of talk about restructuring government. Everybody's going to reform government. The Democrats are gonna reform it. The Republicans have admitted they're gonna reform it. Joe Bruno, the Republican leader, will reform it. Let's see. I think the only way you can reform it, a Constitutional Convention.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think one of the things that we've seen in CSEA over the last 20 years is that as there have been cutbacks in State government. As the State government has had maybe a lesser role in certain areas, local governments have had to pick up the slack, so in our organization we've seen a shift from kind of having a dominance of State employees to having a dominance of local government employees.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: M-m h-m-m.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think a lot of the things that you did in that era were basically pushing some of the responsibility down to the local level that, you know, necessitated their stepping up and handling more area?

MALE VOICE: Excuse me.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Okay.

MALE VOICE: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: We were talking a little bit about kind of the shift in some responsibility from the State to local governments over the last 20 years.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: I'd have -- I'd have

to think a lot harder about that, but let's think about mental health and the institutions and the institutions for the developmentally disabled. That used to be done in huge buildings and where people were locked up basically. People that were called crazy, you know, mentally ill people, and the developmentally disabled people, and oftentimes that was not the best way to care for them. It was not the best way for them to live. They were capable of living much more comfortably and much more naturally than they had to live in those institutions.

Rockefeller, who was extremely liberal. He was the most liberal Governor we've had in modern history. There's no Democrat comes nearer in terms of liberality and, of course, when you've got all the money he has you can afford to be liberal, but he tried taking the people out of the institutions. You know, he inspired the notion of taking them out of institutions. He never got very far.

But that -- that continued and you wound up with deinstitutionalizing but you

didn't as a State make the investments and do the work that was necessary to see that when it was done on a smaller basis, at the local level, more intimately in small units, et cetera, and more intelligently that -- we never funded that properly or regulated that sufficiently and so it got to be local governments did get involved, you know, because we weren't doing enough there ourselves.

But the general idea of changing health care, et cetera, the biggest change came from science, when you went to drugs. Once you were able to normalize people's conduct with drugs, then you could take them out of the institution and give them the drugs and they would be normal for a while, many of them.

Unfortunately, that created a whole cyclical phenomenon. They would take the drugs, they'd be stabilized; they'd stop taking the drugs, they'd be destabilized. They'd go back to the institution. They'd be in the institution for a while and then there was a provision for them to make application to be released from the institution. They would take



drugs, the judge or the hear...you're stabilized. You'd let 'em out and it created that whole process.

So that -- that whole situation has not been handled well, I don't think, by the State governments. And the federal governments, they don't have a real role there, but I'm not proud of what the State has done in that area.

INTERVIEWER: But by contrast, certainly in the developmental disabilities area under your Administration --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, Staten Island and Willowbrook --

INTERVIEWER: -- the situation became a model for the nation.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, thanks to Hugh Carey, but Hugh Carey -- actually there was a lawsuit when Hugh Carey came and so all we had to do was sign off on the lawsuit, the Willowbrook lawsuit, and make that deal. Judge Judd was the -- Orin Judd, I think, was the judge who got involved there.

And then, of course, I followed up and we converted the Willowbrook into a great

institution out there on Staten Island and it's -- as a matter of fact, I still get calls about that because they -- they're always facing another challenge and now there's some question about taking land away from the facilities.

But, incidentally, that's a good example. Politics and politicians and government people are irrelevant, but the workers, the people who work in those places, they do some of the hardest work that there is to be done. It's very hard to manage some of that population because some of the population is not equipped to give you back evidences of their satisfaction with your service.

So, you know, it's not like you go out and you tend the environment and you see the trees grow and you see the grass grow. There you're trying to comfort these people, prevent them from hurting themselves, help them toward normalcy to the extent that you can, and you don't always get rewards in terms of expressions of satisfaction from them because they're not capable of making them.

It's very hard work and it takes

patience and sensitivity, et cetera, and in a lot of that institutional work you need special people handling it and you have a lot of them in CSEA.

INTERVIEWER: I think as CSEA looks at the issue of the developmental disabilities area, one of the reasons why it evolved into such a national model was that New York State really perfected the ability to maximize the Medicaid dollars out of the federal government to help with doing that, whereas the State has not been able to do that on the mental health side.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, yeah, and I guess the developmentally developed -- it -- the difference between the two is vast. The question really is why is it so vast. I think the number of developmentally disabled is small. The amount of help you get from the private sector is greater. I mean there are all kinds of interested groups that will work on this developmental disability or that one, so you get a lot more help in that area.

And I think generally the budgets --

our budgets for the developmentally disabled were very good and I'll tell you exactly why. Every budget year the same thing happened. The people who ran the Office of Developmental Disability would call just around Christmastime and they'd get me at the mansion and they would always say that they're the last thing to go in the budget and they would call and they'd make the same touching little speech every time.

They'd get on the phone and I'd get on the phone. How ya doin'? How's everything? How's the family? Things are great. Why don't you come by the mansion? Matilda's makin' eggnog. Just stop by.

No, no, Governor. We know, you know, you've got your privacy. We do have one request, though. In our department (laughter) and then they'd lay it on ya. Now it's Christmas and most of the work on the budget is done. You've locked it all up, but there's always that flexibility if you really want to call the budget director and give him what the Italians call "aceta," which is a sour stomach.

And every year, if you look, you'll

see that the budget director was pulling out whatever hairs were left on his head because he had just gotten a call from the Governor saying: Please, don't even discuss it with me. Just find more money for this.

Or Betty Connelly, may she live to be 120. Betty would call you up and, you know, gave that rapid-fire staccato argument about bi-duh, bi-duh, bi-duh, and it would come out swimming pool for this or -- but it was always a pleasure to do it. I mean that was one of the -- it wasn't a pleasure for the budget director but it was always kind of easy for me at Christmastime.

INTERVIEWER: Governor, you referenced earlier some of the leaders in CSEA. I wonder if you'd talk a little bit about them as individuals and your relationship. Certainly we could start with Bill McGowan.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, I suspect -- I suspect that I liked the three or so that I worked with more than they liked me. I -- see, I was always very loose about the idea of being Governor. I mean just the idea that I was there

astonished me, you know, when I thought about where I came from and my own background, and to say it was humble is too exaggerated. It's comfort level.

The -- so I -- it was just such a gift to me to be Governor that I -- I was very well-disposed toward the whole situation and I liked the leaders because invariably they were like the workers they were leading: McGowan with his cigar, you know, he worked in an institution, I guess, Upstate. I was -- it was health care, mental health.

And he's chompin' on his cigar and he's -- he's one of 'em. I mean he's a worker and he knows what it is and he knows how hard the work is and how low the pay is and how they need this and how they need that and I enjoyed -- I enjoyed that. I enjoyed watching it and seeing it and dealing with him.

I liked dealing with McGowan because he was just like the guys in my old neighborhood, exactly like the older guys I grew up with in my neighborhood. And we had a grocery store, small grocery store in a mixed

neighborhood with all kinds of Irish guys, and we had a Riley living next door, and Jewish and black and Lithuanian. We had -- all kinds of people.

And these were the regular people. There were most of America. These were the middle class people, people who worked for a living, not because some philosopher told them this is the way to fill the grim interval between birth and eternity, you gotta work, but because they had to work, and who were struggling all the time, and so that was McGowan.

McDermott was a little bit different and -- but the two of them were worker types, and I guess it was McDermott who was the smoother than the others, somewhat. I guess it was the level of the work he did. He was on the professional side, I think, and -- but a very intelligent guy and a very nice person. A little less jocular, a little bit less supple and friendly than the other guys. You know, they were guys you could go to a gin mill with and sit down and knock down a few beers and talk

about the football game or this silly thing that happened and that. McDermott was a little bit different.

I liked all of them. I mean I just -- I liked all three of them because I liked the people that they were leading. And again, I loved the idea that they were pleased with a couple of contracts. I was forever grateful that they helped me. Well, without them I wouldn't have been Governor and I was always grateful for that and I still am and that's why I'm talkin' to ya now.

And I was very disappointed that they didn't support me but I understood it perfectly and I understood why McEntee wouldn't support me and even when people talked about me being President. Let me tell you something about that.

When you talk about the good times and the bad times, and the good times are when you have money and you have money when the federal government has money and it comes into the State treasury too, especially from the finances in the State like New York, to finance industry.



After my first two terms I set two records for popularity. They still exist. The biggest wins a Governor's ever had. You know, Rockefeller, none of 'em, had a better record. I have the first and second record.

My son came to me and said: This third time, when everything fell apart, run for President and said, you know, you know what's gonna happen in the next four years because the economy is tanking. You're gonna have trouble with all the unions, you're not gonna be able to make a good contract.

And I said: Andy, that's true. I know it's gonna be lousy and it probably is a good time to get out politically, because now, you know, I've had the good life. Now let me quit because I (inaudible) take a shot at the Presidency. Because I didn't take a shot at the Presidency. But if I did that, then what am I saying.

I'm saying, well, I was glad to be Governor when everything was easy, because there was money. But now that I know there's not gonna be money and a lot of trouble,

notwithstanding that I've learned what the job is and I'll -- I can be useful, at least, in trying to patch up where I can -- where it's possible and I trust my own ability to make reasonable judgments about who gets hurt. Now you want me to leave because it's too hard.

I said I don't feel right about that, and so I ran that third time and that was the end of me because, you know, they got so unhappy in that period, that third term, that I -- without CSEA's help I wasn't able to win the fourth term, so that's what ended my career, really, was the judgment to run for a third term and I don't think I've ever told that story before but, then, we've never had this kind of conversation before.

INTERVIEWER: Again, you talked about Joe McDermott. You talked about some of the dissatisfaction in the ranks as you're --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- approaching that time period. Again, we referenced earlier that there was an issue with the pension system and McDermott was particularly strong about. He was

very much wrapped up in the issue of the -- I think it was called PUC, the projected unit credit, changing the formula in the pension system.

What do you remember about interaction with him on that subject and the lawsuit that ensued from it?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, I was used to being sued. I guess all Governors are, but I -- because I was there 12 years I -- somebody has added it all up. No Governor in the history of the State has been sued as much as I was. I was even sued by my Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, Sal Wachler, who I made Chief Judge, although he was a Republican, and he wound up saying "thank you" by suing me on the grounds I didn't give enough money to the judges so, you know, when the CSEA decided to sue me, I just prayed always that Matilda would never decide to sue me and there the law gives you a lot of comfort because, you know, as long as you stay married there's not much they can do to ya.

So McDermott did the right thing as a leader, you know, if he really thought that this

would help, that the law would support what he was saying, and he was right to go to court. I don't remember it specifically, but I'm certain that it wasn't the kind of thing that I would gnash my teeth over.

If somebody sues you, they have the perfect right to do that, go to court. If they're wrong, the court will tell them they're wrong and if they're right, then what's your complaint?

INTERVIEWER: And beyond that --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Incidentally, I did that a lot myself to government before I became a politician. The way I got known and was encouraged to become a politician is I sued the City of New York for seven years in Corona. I sued the State of New York. I went to Governor Rockefeller and got commutations for two death penalty -- people who were sent or ordered to be executed and we got that changed. I sued politicians for years and did in the courts what I could not get done politically, saving a hundred families in Corona and solving some other problems, so the idea of a labor union

leader or anybody else using the courts, go right to it. That's what the courts are for.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the CSEA and many other of the State unions used the Court of Public Opinion as contract negotiations lagged in the early nineties and there was a demonstration in Albany --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Twenty, about forty-thou...how many people did you have there?

INTERVIEWER: We had 20,000 --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No, it looked like a million actually.

INTERVIEWER: There were a lot. There were a lot.

(Laughter.)

GOVERNOR CUOMO: If you were the guy they were throwin' tomatoes at, it looked like a million.

INTERVIEWER: Well, where were you on that day? What do you remember of that and --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: I -- you know, I saw it. I mean I was there. I didn't -- I didn't leave Albany. I knew it was coming. Everybody knew what was happening and -- but I was there.

I don't know exactly where, but I saw it. I never left Albany. I loved Albany.

The -- who came, some rock-and-roll group -- no, the Grateful Dead came to Albany. The Grateful Dead came to Albany and set up right near the Governor's Mansion and I was dying to see the Grateful Dead but there was no chance of getting away from my security, so I went over the back wall of the mansion. This is the literal truth, you know. Put on glasses, dark glasses and kept my jogging clothes on, put a baseball cap on, went over the wall. They didn't catch me from the booth. They weren't watching. Walked over to the Grateful Dead. Walked past the pot smokers, you know, they were all out there on the -- great people, the people who followed the Grateful Dead -- and spent a very interesting afternoon.

The Superintendent of Police didn't think so and talked to me about it but, no, I was not put off by those rallies, et cetera, and let me tell you something about it. I wish it were true today, or even then, that when 20,000 working people stand up and say, "We're not

being dealt with fairly," that the rest of the community would say, "That's a shame."

That is not true today and that is a regrettable thing that we should all think about. Right now -- and here's -- in talking to union people now and I'm a great believer in the union movement, great believer in the union movement. I know the people who didn't get what they wanted from me would, you know, make a face when they hear that, but I still am.

Before the union movement in this country you had people abused, you had children abused, you had people who would work every day of their life like animals and die poor, you had people dying young because of the accidents. There was nothing in the Constitution, nothing in the federal statues, that helped workers. They could work 80 hours a week. Imagine fighting for 72 hours a -- I mean, my God, what changed it?

Some heroic leaders who got killed, some of them who got locked up, who got beaten up, who got nowhere but started the activity and then other leaders and then finally a population

that began to understand that it wasn't enough to be declared free in the Constitution. Sometimes you needed help as workers.

Right now, the middle class is in terrible shape and the middle class is most of America, most of American people who work. Even if you make \$110,000 a year, which used to sound like a lot of money, if you live in Manhattan now and you got three kids (I had five), forget about it, \$110,000.

So the working population is in trouble. They're not getting raises the way they used to. They're sliding downward. The poor is getting larger, literally larger, and that's over 95 percent of the American people. And who speaks for them? Only the unions.

And what the unions -- I wish what the unions would do is to say: Look. We're lucky. We're CSEA. We are organized and our members do have the benefits of our intelligence and our experience and our money and our organization, and we're fighting for them.

But in fighting for them, when we ask you for a minimum wage, when we ask you for



decent working conditions, when you ask to protect our pensions, we're talking for all those others, the vast majority of workers, who are not organized. We're talking for the middle class, so we talk for ourselves but we talk for them too.

See, I think there is no voice for the middle class now. None of the politicians are gonna run for President by saying, "I'm here for the middle class." You know -- and they certainly won't say, "I'm here for the poor."

And I think the last opportunity to give the mass of American people real voice is the union movement, such as it is now. It is not as strong as it used to be, but if you just got together and all agreed the argument we're gonna make is an argument that every -- every worker will understand and we're gonna concentrate on those issues. We're not gonna give up our specific issues. We have specific issues, but we're gonna concentrate on those that every worker in America will appreciate.

(End of Side A of tape.)

INTERVIEWER: (Continuing) Back to the

rally in Albany, because obviously that's a big event, at least as a showpiece, so to speak. How does that affect the dynamics of the relationship either positive or negatively?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, it's -- if the Governor is thin-skinned and if the politicians you're aiming at are thin-skinned or if they believe in vendetta, "vendecatoci." That's the Italian word for it. Avenge yourself. Vendetta, the Italian word. Get even. The death penalty is vendecatoci. Avenge yourself. It's nothing else. The death penalty doesn't deter anybody. You do it to get even, you know.

And if that's the kind of a Governor you have, believes in that, get even, then it hurts the workers to do that because he will be insensitive, et cetera. In this day and age I don't think he's gonna say, "Well, the mass of voters are gonna be impressed by this." He might even say, "The mass of voters are gonna be angry at these guys because they're tryin' to take care of themselves."

That's a regrettable truth at the moment so I think you have to be careful about,

you know, how you use that ability because politics is different than it used to be. It is an intelligent or she's an intelligent person and an open-minded person and I tried very hard to be that, even if I failed. Then you listen and you say, look, they're unhappy. I mean are they crazy? Are they asking for too much? And you listen to them.

And if the whole population were intelligent they would all listen to them and they would say, okay. Now they're rallying. The MTA is being accused of this and that. Well, let's see what the facts are. Let's look at the facts. There are all these people. Let's be objective about it. That's what you hope happens and that's what you should be asking for. Just take a look at this. Here's what we say.

The MTA had a billion dollars in the pot, or whatever it was surplus, the day before the negotiations started and then they took a rake. They took all the money off the table and said, okay, you can't play with that money. That's ours. We spent it. What would that --

what would you say if you were in that kind of negotiation with them? See, but nobody made that point.

So you asked me what effect would it have? It could have a very good effect if the population you're talking to is intelligent and you approach them that way. Could have a bad effect nowadays, nowadays, because workers and unions are just not popular.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let me ask you --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: And that's disgraceful but that's the truth.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you about when CSEA endorsed Bill Clinton because, again, it was kind of a moment where contract negotiations were in a difficult time. There was a lot of speculation that you might go and declare your candidacy for the Presidency and here's CSEA, the largest State employee union, the people who work for you as the Governor, coming out and endorsing Bill Clinton.

How did that affect your relationship?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: I never, never, never got anywhere near running for President. And

all this talk, and there's a picture up here somewhere of Clinton and I, and I talked to Clinton about it when he offered me a shot at the Supreme Court, which he did twice. And he asked me once, he said: Gee, would you ever run for President?

I said I wasn't -- I wasn't really -- I got close near the end and told Ralph Marino, may he rest in peace, the leader of the Senate, that having seen the field, you know, and everything including Clinton, I said, Look, Ralph. If you will sit down with me and make a budget, and we were only about 2- or \$300 million apart -- I said that we can do in five minutes, \$300 million easy.

You make a budget, a 15-month budget, because this was November. You guys make a budget, I'll be out of here. I'll go to New Hampshire; I'll give it a shot. I never wanted to, but there's a lot of pressure. I'm first in the polls, et cetera. I will give it a shot and I told Ron Brown, a former student of mine who was then chairman of the Democratic Party, and he went to Washington, talked to some people,

came back. He says I can't do it. We're not gonna make a budget until the last primary is over.

I said what? Why? I said I'm easy for these guys, right? An Italian from the northeast. They can use Mafia, they can use whatever they want. Why would -- he says I -- he says some day we'll have a discussion. We never did. We went out to dinner a couple of times after that. We never talked about it. Then he died. I didn't expect him to and he died so quickly and so suddenly, so I never --

People thought that I was planning on this, planning on that. I never was and the answer I gave the media was always the same. I have no plans to run and I have no plans to make plans and they said, oh, that's just cute.

I said no and Mark (inaudible) asked me once, from the Associated Press, Why don't you just say I'm not gonna run? I said because if I say I'm not gonna run you're gonna say why. Why aren't you gonna run? I mean you're first in the polls. And if I say to you, Well, because I'm not sure I'm the best person

available, you won't believe that. You would be, oh, that's a play for humility, so I can't win if I say no I'm not gonna run.

The truth was I didn't feel that I was the best. I couldn't imagine -- it was hard for me to imagine I was the best person to be Governor except when I saw it was Koch and I, I decided I'm better than he is for Governor, not for mayor, because he beat me in that race, but for Governor.

And so to say -- and I said this once. An editor of the New York Times at a big meeting he said, I don't think you have the fire in the belly. I said, Listen, don't confuse fire in the belly with guts because, you know, it took a lot of guts to run against Koch. It took a lot of guts to do a lot of the things that I've done. Some of 'em I don't even want to explain to you because they -- they would be too colorful, so it's not -- what you're talking about is ego.

You're talking about that feeling that says I must be President, I must be President, my whole life is committed to being President.

That's the last person I would make President. I want somebody who understands that this is the greatest responsibility the world offers a politician. That when you're President of the United States you're not only taking care of 300 million people here. The whole world -- you could start a damn world war with your incompetence. And for me to say to myself, Gee, there's nobody out there who could do it as well as I, very, very tough.

Now with the Governorship there was nobody. They had all quit. There was just me and Koch and that was easy. With the mayor's race before, I told Hugh Carey, I shouldn't be running in this race. Koch is better than I am. I've told two papers he should be mayor and I was right, and then he actually became mayor.

So in 1991, until the very end, and incidentally nobody believed it when I got up and explained that, no, I hadn't put the plane on the tarmac. That, no, it's not a game. Yes, I'm gonna stay here because now I can't make a budget and if I do take off, what'll happen is the New York Times will write a headline says



"Cuomo can't get his own people to make a budget. The State's in lousy shape and he's gonna tell the United States how to run the economy," and that would be the end of the campaign anyway. Nobody believed that so they did stories about the Mafia, they did stories about colon cancer, they did stories about everything other than he's got a 28-year-old blond girlfriend, and that really ticks you off (laughter) because --

INTERVIEWER: When CSEA came out for Clinton though, I mean, were you angry --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No.

INTERVIEWER: -- surprised?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No, no, no. Did anybody ever say they saw any indication that I was?

INTERVIEWER: Not that I know of.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No. McEntee would have. I mean AFSCME would have known. No, there was nothing -- see, if I had been planning to run, you know, all along, but I wasn't. I was pushed into even the thing that I did do, and I'll tell you exactly when it happened. It

happened, I don't know, September or October of the year.

Now the year, you know, the deadline, the beginning of the campaign was months away and we were at a small fund raiser and one of my people in a New York City hotel, Vincent Albanese from Queens, an old friend, said, Mario -- there were only maybe 30, 40, 50 people in the room. Matilda and I were there. He says, Mario, you know, once a year you have a big fund raiser and I've been with you and a lot of your friends are Republicans.

You know, they've known you a long time, they've given you money, and you've never once talked about the Presidency. You twice have led in the polls in '88 and now and we've never heard you say a word about it.

I said, Vincent, I've never said a word about it at home either and Matilda's sitting right here and you all respect her more than you respect me. You know she's gonna tell you the truth. Just ask her.

And Vincent said to Matilda -- he loved Matilda. They were very close, and he

said, Matilda, and she said, That's absolutely right. We've never had a discussion about it. And he says, Why? And I said, Vincent, because I'm doing the job of Governor and I don't think of myself as, you know, the country needs me to be President. I just never thought of myself like that. I know what I can do. I can do this Governor's job. I know that. I know what I can do in a courtroom. I know what I can do on a basketball court, but I -- you know, you say to me that --

He says, Well, a lot of people disagree with you. A lot of people think -- I said, Well, okay. He said, Look, instead of thinking about your own judgment, why don't you think about ours? We're telling you we think you should give it a shot. You owe it to us.

That really hurt because, you know, that made sense and I said, on the spot, I said, Vincent, I will talk to Matilda and I'll tell you in a couple of days. And as a matter of fact I'll go further. I'm gonna ask John Marino, who was then Democratic Party -- to call around the country and before we got out of that

room, before -- which was about 40 or 45 minutes later, there were press outside the door. Somebody in the room, went to a phone, dropped a dime and the press were there.

I was meeting with Bill Cosby in the same hotel. They stopped me and they said, We understand you're gonna be looking at the Presidency. I said, Well, I have had -- and that's the way it came about. That's how casually it came about and that's exactly the way it occurred.

I think the only time I've ever told that story before was on the Phil Donohue Show and that was it and then he came back a couple of months later, Marino. He says you won't believe it, how much money there is, and the polls here are good and here. I mean it really looked very good and that's when I went to Ralph Marino and that's when he said, No. And incidentally, if you look at the history, they didn't make the damn budget until they were sure that I was out of it.

INTERVIEWER: Let me --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: It's an interesting

story, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Let me move forward to '94 with your last campaign. Danny Donohue is running in the spring of '94 for President -- or President of CSEA and he makes a number of comments that basically say, Well, the Governor shouldn't take CSEA's endorsement for granted.

The story that we have heard in the organization is that after Danny was elected in June it took a substantial amount of time before you were available to meet with him to talk.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No.

INTERVIEWER: How do you recall this?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: I don't recall that at all. You'd have -- how would that make any sense? How would that make any sense?

INTERVIEWER: The story's been handed down through the organization that it took a while before you met --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No. I'll tell you the one guy who could -- who could tell you in a

flash. He would know better than I. Feathers. I mean the natural thing would have been for them to ask everybody who knew me. Geez, we want to meet with him, you know, and Feathers would have -- in an instant he would have called up and said, Governor, you're gonna meet with these guys. I guess he was still representing them, wasn't he?

INTERVIEWER: Not at that time, actually.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, anyway, I don't even remember it's coming up. And what possible reason would you have not to meet with them? It wouldn't -- how would it make any sense? Where were we on the contract then?

INTERVIEWER: It was settled --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Settled.

INTERVIEWER: -- at that point.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Well, then -- no, I don't -- I don't know what Danny would tell you but you oughta tell him to give me a ring and explain it to me sometime.

INTERVIEWER: I mean do you recall any interaction with CSEA in that campaign and seeking out --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: No.

INTERVIEWER: -- their support?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Right. No, I really don't. I mean I didn't -- I didn't do campaigns myself. I mean I just -- I went wherever they went.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: But it would make no sense, especially knowing how weak I was at that time and how much I needed help and how the other guys were gonna outspend me, which they did by a very large amount, it would have just made no sense at all not to talk with CSEA.

Now if we were in the middle of a contract that would have been something else, but since the contract was settled, it just doesn't make any sense.

INTERVIEWER: Now --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Now I can be dumb about some things but I don't think I was that dumb.

(Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you about --

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- Danny Donohue. Do you remember meeting Danny back in the '82 campaign when he was the Long Island region president at that time?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: You know, probably. I don't have any -- I mean I remember him but, you know, now -- McGowan was the principal -- mostly I dealt with -- there's a great name that just comes to mind and brings a flash of sadness to my heart, Gary Fryer, but the -- it was McGowan and Feathers. Feathers was the guy who, you know, we talked to most of the time. I mean he was always talking to us about CSEA and then Gary Fryer, who was doing press for you then, I talked a lot to him and I was very impressed with him.

And, of course, you know the story with Gary. He eventually became my press person and then I got him -- I spoke to Yale and he went to Yale and became vice president, had the triplets and died. Terrible.



And Judy --

INTERVIEWER: Judy Burgess.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Judy Burgess, sure, has now created a new problem for me by getting my wife involved in mental health in Albany, just what I needed.

INTERVIEWER: I'm actually working with her on that project.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Are you?

(Laughter.)

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Oh, really? Oh --

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Thanks a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

Governor, let me -- as we kind of wrap up, let me ask you, what do you see as some of the important accomplishments during your term as Governor in terms of the State employees and the public employees of New York State.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Not nearly what I -- what they would have been if I had the kind of money Pataki and Giuliani had when they were around for their governments. If we had had good years like the first years, if we gave 5,

5.5, 6, you know, who knows what we could have given in the years that followed that.

I did what I could do and knowing we didn't have money we did as much as we could in, you know, fringes like programs, et cetera, et cetera, and even symbolically by not taking the raise. Now I didn't have any money. It's not like, you know, I was rich as Governor. I wasn't, and when I left we were poor. We didn't have a house, we didn't have a plus in our bank account, so by not taking the \$30,000 a year for whatever it was, ten years or whatever, that was a way of saying, you know, in the later years when I really needed the money, that was a way of saying, look, I'm living well. The people who work for me are not, the people who worked for the State, and so I didn't take it.

But big things for them? You know, we did a lot of little things. We did those two good contracts and I always said good things about 'em. I don't think anybody ever heard me disparage the workers. And if I found a little something here -- here's something nobody ever noticed that was very important to me.

Maybe the worst thing that happened in all of my Governorship to the State was the triple play that occurred right after the election: AIDS, crack and homelessness. And all of those things came at once. Nobody talked about them in the campaign and then that winter they developed overnight, especially AIDS.

And Corrections called me once because they had an AIDS victim, early AIDS Victim, and they had him locked up in this hospital. You had to pass through one room and then another room, a glass wall, and then he's alone in this one room, this patient, and they said, would you come and see the patient and say "hello" to him and be in the room with him?

Now this was early on and if you can stretch your mind all the way back to then, you'll remember that if people saw somebody that looked to them like a gay person, they would assume that that gay person might have HIV and they wouldn't let a child or themselves go to a dentist who had worked on a gay person because it might have been HIV. And they thought if you were in the room with somebody who had HIV you

could breathe it in and we couldn't get nurses until the Cardinal -- he was then the Archbishop, I guess. Maybe he was the Cardinal -- gave us St. Clare's Church. We didn't have beds for AIDS patients.

And so I said, look, I went to David Axelrod, the doctor genius. He didn't know anything about AIDS either. None of us did. And I said I don't believe -- I said I want to go and I want to go into the room and I don't want to make a big thing of it, but I want them to know two things.

Number one, that he works for us and that's the way I feel about it. And number two, it's safe to go in. We're not gonna get HIV because I go in a room with somebody who's dying from it and I went into the room. Now the corrections officers knew it, but even they didn't understand it, you know, and some of them thought it was loony and some of them thought it was just, you know, a play for attention, God forbid. But when little things like that happened, you know, I tried to do what I could.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think CSEA

has been able to survive and thrive for close to a hundred years?

GOVERNOR CUOMO: Because you've always had a job, you've always had government. Your jobs don't close down and move to Japan, although we're gettin' close, or jobs to China.

(Laughter.)

GOVERNOR CUOMO: I mean, now that's a quick thought, but it's a pretty good one when you think about it.

The -- if you work for Xerox, you're gone. You work for Kodak, you're gone. You work for Grumman, you're gone. I spent a fortune on Grumman trying to help them. I spent a fortune on all of them trying to keep them around. They're gone, but the institutions aren't gone. The government isn't gone, so your job is intact and that's good.

You've had good leadership. You've had good people and good workers. If the workers weren't doing their job reasonably well and better, you know, you wouldn't. There'd be all kinds of heat. People would be saying, The damn union, they protect these people, they're

incompetent, get rid of the union. That's never happened. I've never heard that anywhere.

And so you've done your job well and you always have had jobs, an opportunity to work, even if some of you got laid off and some of you were forced into retirement, the job was still there. You still needed the Civil Service and it's -- especially now when you have a middle class that's troubled, really troubled, a Civil Service job is a very valuable thing because it does have protections and there is that benefit at the end and there is more predictability in it than in most other jobs now. So there are a lot of reasons. You're gonna be valuable and important for a long, long time.

INTERVIEWER: Governor Cuomo, it's been a great honor to speak with you and we really appreciate your taking the time out of your schedule to talk with us about your experiences with our organization.

GOVERNOR CUOMO: My pleasure. My pleasure. Thank you.

(Conclusion of interview of Governor Mario Cuomo.)

