CSEA INTERVIEW

of

STEPHEN A. MADARASZ

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THE INTERVIEWER: All right. We are

here today. I am Brian Keough, University at Albany Archives with Steve Madarasz, Director of Communications. We're at the CSEA Offices. It's December 16th, 2009 and we will start the interview today talking about CSEA's history, and so maybe we can first start about -- the first question could be what was the Association of State Civil Service Employees when it was founded, it's significance? Tell me about those early years.

MR. MADARAZ: We actually know that what was known as the Association of State Civil Service Employees was founded at the State Capitol, literally outside the Assembly Chamber on October the 24th, 1910. It's kind of an interesting context for the Association. That was, of course, the height of the progressive era in America where there was reform of many institutions taking place and it appears that this Association was really consistent with many other good government type groups that were out at that time and that were interested in using Civil Service -- the Civil Service System as a rational social science-based system for having competent people in public

employment roles as a counter to the spoils system, patronage, and simply putting cronies in to do the work, and so what we seem to know about the individuals who came together on October 10th -- or October 24th, 1910, is that they were career civil servants, really high-ranking public officials in

many cases who had worked in the State system and believed in the concept of the Civil Service system as a way for you to have competent people who would provide efficiency in government and would be effective in being able to do their jobs.

I don't think there's any question that these individuals also saw that this was a way of providing some job security for themselves as well; that they didn't want to simply be at the mercy of a spoils system and saw themselves as professionals doing a job.

THE INTERVIEWER: So first talk about the members of this -- of the early group. You know, what kind of jobs did they have and who were they and then maybe you could talk about who some of the leaders of the organization were.

MR. MADARAZ: Well, the leaders are the folks that we actually know about and we know

that there was a small group of them who really came together. It appears that they were, again, high-ranking State officials in different capacities, primarily administrative-type work, who had kind of worked their way up through what was the Civil Service System at that time in New York State.

You had seen the New York State Civil Service System come into existence in the 1880s and it's kind of an interesting sidelight to

note that it was proposed in the mid -19...
mid-1880's by then Assembly Member Theodore
Roosevelt and it was actually signed into law by
Governor Grover Cleveland, who then used his reform
of the New York State Civil Service System or the
creation of the New York State Civil Service System
as a springboard for his Presidential campaign and
then he did actually make some in-roads in terms of
establishing Civil Service standards for the
federal system, which was rife with cronyism and
patronage at that time.

But by 1910 a lot of what they had
actually done in the way of reform had kinda gone
by the boards to some extent. You had, you know,

Civil Service System existing side by side with the
traditional Tammany Hall patronage, in particular,
and New York State government at that time was
really a very, very chaotic enterprise.

You had multiple state-wide elected
officials, you had commissions, you had different
departments with overlapping responsibilities, you
had many departments accountable to different
groups such as the State Legislature, some
accountable to the Governor, some accountable to
other elected State officials, and it was really
quite a mess in many respects.

I think there were something like a
hundred and seventy-some different State agencies
and departments, again with lots of different

overlapping lines of responsibility and accountability, so that was kind of the environment in which the Association came together and the individuals that we know of might have been, you know, department heads in the State Comptroller's Office or, you know, in the case of William Thomas who was the founding president, he was the Chief Stenographer for the State Attorney General, so these were individuals who were very accomplished

in their own way and didn't like the patronage that they saw and again they were part of a larger movement in America at that time that was really seeking to reform a lot of the institutions and to make them better, make them more effective.

We do know that at that time there was also an organization called the Civil Service Association of New York State and it appears that the Association of State Civil Service Employees initially was affiliated with the Civil Service Association of New York State. I believe they referred to themselves, the Albany group, as the Capital City Chapter of the Civil Service Association. It appears within the next 10 to 20 years or so that they really kind of broke off from the Civil Service Association largely because they wanted to be much more focused on the specific needs of New York State employees and were less concerned with kind of a broader perspective as to

what other civil servants might have been facing at that time. They were very, very much focused on the importance of the State employee situation.

THE INTERVIEWER: So this early organization, how did they achieve, what were their

goals, what were some of their early accomplishments or what areas did they focus on in those 19...

MR. MADARAZ: The most significant early accomplishment for the Association was helping to establish the New York State Retirement System which they achieved in the first decade of their assistance. By 1918 William Thomas and John Merril, who was also another early founder of the Association, were involved and were appointed to the Commission -- there was a State Commission established to explore the creation of our State Retirement System.

The two of them were commissioners of that Commission and very much involved in helping to establish the pension system which was put into place in 1920, signed into law by then Governor Al Smith. That was a very, very significant tangible achievement for the Association that really resonates to this day. Within CSEA the pension system is something that really is looked upon as one of the most significant, not only early accomplishments, but something that has really carried through and has

benefited CSEA members throughout the entire existence and will do so well into the future for CSEA members, so that was a very, very significant early achievement.

It's also very clear that in the early days the Association was very public relations savvy and we've come across a number of articles that have been written by different members and leaders of the Association in what appears to have been almost like a State employees' magazine that was published at that time and there was obviously an understanding that there needed to be visibility for the Association, that it needed to be taking public positions and making not only other State employees aware of what they had to do but presenting a positive perspective to the general public as well. So, you know, even in those very early days that was an understanding that they were operating in the court of public opinion as well as simply in a political context.

THE INTERVIEWER: Are there other things in those first 10 or 12 years or --

MR. MADARAZ: Well, there are --

THE INTERVIEWER: -- when Al in his

reorganization of the --

MR. MADARAZ: Well, from the -- in the 1920s when Al Smith was the Governor of New York and I guess for some historical context, Smith was elected in 1918 initially, and his early career is kind of an interesting sidelight in terms of its connection to the history of the Association in that he was elected to the Assembly as a Tammany Hall representative from out of New York City from the lower East Side in 1910, the same year that the Association was founded.

Interestingly enough, there was a State Senator elected in that same year from Dutchess County by the name of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who would also play a very significant role in the history of the Association, and both of those two towering figures of the 20th Century in New York State and national political scene, both came -- began their rise to prominence the same year that the Association was founded.

Smith made an early reputation as a member of what was called the Factory Investigating Commission which was created in the wake of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, the tragic fire in New

York City in 1911 in which something like 144 people lost their lives working in sweatshop conditions. Most of them were young, immigrant women, and it created quite a, you know, national scandal, and as a result New York State established this Factory Investigating Commission with three

very interesting individuals involved with it: Al Smith, Frances Perkins who went on to become the first woman member of the U.S -- United States Cabinet under Franklin Roosevelt, and Robert Wagner, Sr., who became a U.S. Senator and very, very prominent figure in terms of an advocate for labor.

But the three of them were involved in the Factory Investigating Commission and as a result of the work that they did trying to change sweatshop conditions, trying to reform child labor laws, there was something like 30 laws that were adopted to provide some protection, so Smith kind of established this reputation early on as a reformer and really outgrew his Tammany Hall roots and in many ways was kind of symbolic of the change in the demographics in America at that time because he was largely a voice for immigrants and sort of

the disadvantaged in America.

He became Governor in 1918, but was actually voted out of office in 1920, re-elected in 1922 and at that point he had a good run as Governor, and one of the things that he did as Governor in the mid-1920s was to reform the New York State Government and to try to create a much more centralized way of doing business, centralized power within a strong executive, the Governor, and largely the structure of New York State Government

that we know today is a result of what he did in the mid-1920s in terms of overhauling the Executive Branch in particular and reigning in some of these other overlapping authorities with other public officials, so he was really kind of consolidating the power with the Governor and having much more consistency in the way that the State of New York could operate.

It's pretty clear that the Association was solidly behind those reforms that Al Smith was putting forward and he was certainly as part of his public campaign to get that passed because it did have to be approved by New York State voters as a change in the State

Constitution and he fought for that very strongly in a public way and he also on many occasions talked about the importance of State employees and talked about what they were doing and his intent for New York State to do a better job in meeting needs and using State employees to be able to achieve many of those objections, and so it was very consistent with what the Association stood for at that time.

But I think it's important to maintain some context too that State Government, you know, in and of itself, was a relatively small enterprise despite the fact that you had all of those different agencies and overlapping responsibilities before the reform, but still was a

fairly small entity and there were not all that many State employees. By the late 1920s this Association actually only had about 600 members, which probably a good percentage were career civil servants who were out there but, again, a very, very small number. That would rapidly begin to change due in part to a number of different factors as the Smith overhaul of State Government took effect and we also went into the Great Depression

simultaneously.

THE INTERVIEWER: That's a nice segue there.

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: So let's talk about some of the changes that were brought on by the Depression and who were some of these leaders that were leading the organization in the 30s.

MR. MADARAZ: There certainly seems to have been a change in the Association in the late 1920s, early 1930s, and some significant growth that took place, and it probably is due to a number of factors. One is the fact that Al Smith had overhauled State Government and so it began to play a more prominent role in the lives of New Yorkers and there was some growth and there was opportunity for the Association to more broadly deliver its message and reach out.

There was also -- clearly the onset

of the Great Depression was a catastrophic event that created all kinds of uncertainty, so much greater willingness on the part of public employees to want to form together to protect their rights and maintain what they had and advocate for their

needs.

It's also clear that in that time frame there was a very strong group of people who came together and formed the leadership of the Association. The leadership in the 1930s was really quite significant when you look at not only the accomplishment but sort of the forcefulness with which they delivered the message. It begins, I think, with William McDonough, who was basically a clerk but he had a very strong vision for where the Association should go, that it should be reaching out to the non-classified service, specifically to institutional workers in New York, and that they should be considered as part of the State work force, and there were great inroads that were made in terms of reaching out to those individuals.

He also believed in pushing for a lot of organizing and to go out and to create chapters across the state so that there wouldn't just simply be a like a Capital-centric organization but it would be a much more diverse and broad-reaching organization that had some presence in other parts of the State as well, so

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those were some very significant factors.

He was aided by Beulah Bailey, who in retrospect is a fascinating figure of the Association, the only woman to hold the presidency of the Association in the hundred year history. A very accomplished woman. She had graduated from Cornell University in 1912, obviously at a time when very few women were actually going to college. She had established herself as an expert on State tax policy. She worked for the State Department of Tax and Finance, I guess. I'm not sure if that's what it was actually called at that time, but the Tax Department, and she was instrumental in helping to cultivate a relationship with the Governor of New York at that time who was Franklin Roosevelt.

And we've come across a number of pieces of correspondence between her and Roosevelt where it was pretty clear she had had some interaction with him at some events and had conversations about tax policy and he had expressed interest in certain things and so she would be following up and sending him material for him to take a look at and consider and what have you.

But.as you read the exchange of

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letters it's very clear that there seemed to be a

very healthy respect that was growing between the Governor and the Association, so much so that in the early 1930s Roosevelt actually began coming to the Association's annual dinner and that in and of itself was very significant because it was at the very least a tacit recognition that this Association was a legitimate representative of State employees, and so it gave a great deal of credibility that obviously helped with the Association's union building as it went out and tried to build up the membership, the fact that they had this relationship with the Governor that was recognizing them and in some way was very helpful.

The Association at that time also began publishing its own magazine called The State Employee, and it was a very impressive magazine that had all kinds of good information, not only about the activities of the Association but the very strong feeling throughout the publication of empowerment; things that individuals could do to make themselves more qualified, to enhance their education, to make themselves more valuable in

their work, to get more satisfaction out of their work, and there was also a very strong strain through the publication about a loyalty to service.

That was very much what the Association was about; was that there was a dedication to public service and a sense that by

working together we could actually create more impact, not only for the taxpayers, but for the individual members of the Association as well, so very, very interesting. Many of the concepts that the Association still uses to this day, the roots of them can be found in those publications. Even the rhetoric that is used today is very much consistent at times with what was in those early publications and I think in many respects that's a part of the reason why the Association has been able to succeed.

Obviously in the course of a hundred years you have to change and adapt, and this Association certainly has, but at the core there was still kind of a -- there's still a commitment to many of the same ideals of the Association, so those were some of the things that happened in the 1930s and, again, the strong

leadership was a very big part of it and it's clear that they were very much interested in creating a community of interest, so we saw a lot of programs being developed in terms of benefits. But clearly an interest in the individual and working with the individual member to help them, you know, achieve some greater success.

THE INTERVIEWER: So still talking about that 1930s period, thinking about how the organization was different and how they achieved

their goals and, you know, working through the legislative process --

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- as you've been already --

MR. MADARAZ: Sure.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- bargaining through legislation, so I'm wondering if you could maybe talk about some of the tangible accomplishments that were achieved through legislation throughout that 1930s period.

MR. MADARAZ: Obviously in the 1930s there was no true collective bargaining for public employees in New York State, but what the

Association did was to work through the legislative process to create changes in Civil Service Law in particular that really was akin to establishing terms and conditions of employment.

As I had mentioned earlier there was a great deal of outrage to the institutional workers who were not actually part of the true Civil Service System at that time. They in many cases were working what amounted to little fiefdoms in the psychiatric institutions where you might have a warden who was the all powerful figure running that institution and people were hired and fired at his whim in that time and there were very, very limited rights for employees and they were basically there just simply, you know, as a result

of having been hired or fired without any real measurement of their qualification for the job.

And what the Association did was to reach out to those individuals and to try to advocate for greater rights on their behalf. One of the early achievements to that end was the elimination of the 72-hour work week. I mean if you think about it, it was really quite extraordinary that in these institutions people who

worked there literally were working 12 hours a day, 6 days a week in providing care, quite extraordinary.

The Association did succeed in limiting that in 1937 and it was seen as a very significant achievement and something that was tangible that they were able to present to the members as having been accomplished on their behalf.

But there were many other things that they did. I think one of the significant factors was that they hired the law firm of DeGraaf, Foy, Conway & Holt-Harris, which was a very well-established Albany lobbying firm at that time, or a law firm that was engaged in some lobbying activity, and interestingly enough that law firm would represent the Association for almost the next 40 years and help achieve many significant things on its behalf, but again we're seeing this

political savvyness to understand that if you wanted to get things done, you needed to have an effective advocate.

It seems that they had some tremendous guidance from that law firm in terms of

the way to structure the organization, to have some strategic objectives for what they wanted to accomplish and then also to be able to know the nuts and bolts of how to actually move legislation and actually get things accomplished.

As you read the publications from the 1930s there was a pretty cool understanding that we needed to educate the members about what legislation meant, what it was that you were fighting for, and to get them involved in the process of helping to press lawmakers back in the district and, again, kind of an early example of how politically sophisticated they were about what to do.

But there were two measures in particular that were quite significant for the Association in the late 1930s. One was called the Feld-Hamilton Act and this was really the establishment of a consistent salary schedule for State employees and establishing standards under which you would have classification and compensation under the Civil Service System for the jobs that were being performed so that there would be the ability to compare apples to apples in

different agencies and that there would be a consistent, rational basis under which you would assign the value for that work.

And again, it's very much like what gets done in contract negotiations today but they actually established this by statute through the Civil Service System and the forming of the Civil Service System through the Feld-Hamilton Law.

There was another very significant piece of legislation that resulted from something called the Fike Commission and the Fike Commission basically overhauled the Civil Service System statewide for local governments as well as for State employees. In many respects it was long overdue legislation to create greater consistency, establish standards and in particular have consistency between what was going on in localities and what was going on on a State basis.

Now Charles Brind, who was the president of the Association, was a member of the Fike Commission making the recommendations, as was John DeGraaf, Sr., the Counsel for the Association. They were both members of the Fike Commission and put forward these recommendations which were

ultimately signed into law.

They didn't really take hold until after World War II because by the time they actually were implemented, World War II kind of intervened and created something of an impediment to actually moving forward with some of these reforms, but in the post-war world they set the stage for tremendous growth for the Association because by having more consistent standards it opened the door for local government employees to have a greater community of interest with State employees that were working under the same set of standards.

As a result the Association changed its constitution, its structure and allowed for local government workers to join its ranks starting in 1947 and that opened up a whole range of new possibilities and we'll get into that in a moment, I think.

Another thing I think that's important for us to talk about in the 1930s was the establishment of CSEA's voluntary group insurance program, one of the great untold stories about CSEA. This program was basically established as a

way for members to access low cost life insurance and quickly expanded into some additional areas such as disability insurance and eventually hospitalization insurance, which was kind of the forerunner of today's health insurance.

But it was a very, very significant

thing for a number of different reasons. First, it provided a tangible benefit to members at a very reasonable cost. At that time dues for the Association were a dollar a year and it was well worth paying the dollar a year to be able to get the access to this insurance, so that helped spur the growth.

It also started to establish a relationship between the Association and an affinity between the Association and the individual members and at the same time provide a real, tangible benefit. That is a program that again began in the 1930s, continues in existence today in 2009, and has been a tremendous boon to the organization.

We'll talk when we get to some discussion of the 1960s about a particularly interesting aspect of how that program helped

strengthen CSEA in some affiliation fights, but again, you know, when you look at a 70-year history of this insurance program, it's something that really has been a constant for the Association and has helped to strengthen the relationship between the Association and the members throughout that entire time frame and, you know, in retrospect it's extraordinarily forward thinking for the Association to have recognized the benefit that a program like this could have and to have

implemented it so early on.

THE INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that --

MR. MADARAZ: I think -- another thing I think that's also important about the 1930s, as much as the relationship with Franklin Roosevelt who of course went on to become President was significant, and the fact that he kinda gave tacit recognition was remarkable.

His Lieutenant Governor was an individual by the name of Herbert Lehman, and there's no question that the Association cultivated the relationship with him as Lieutenant Governor and why we don't necessarily think too much about

Herbert Lehman today in terms of, you know, the significant Governors of New York State over the course of the 20th Century, Herbert Lehman was a very important figure in New York State politics. He had a very different personality from Roosevelt, but it is very clear that he had a strong working relationship with the Association and when you look at things like the Feld-Hamilton Act and the Fite Commission, the elimination of the 72-hour work week, all of those things were signed into law by Lehman and were a direct result of the strong affinity that he felt with his employees.

He came to the Association's dinner year after year and I know he was honored when he was leaving office by the Association. He actually

went on to become a U.S. Senator. That's why he left as Governor, to become a U.S. Senator for a while, but he talked about the -- you know, when he was honored in the early 1940s as he was leaving office, he talked about the growth that he had seen in the Association and literally said that he was so proud of everything that he had seen and how they had gone from the small parochial organization in the late 1920s into this very significant

statewide strong presence by the early 1940s and it was very clear that there was a special relationship between Herbert Lehman and the Association.

THE INTERVIEWER: So the only other thing that I would touch on, I think particularly, you addressed it directly -- there's a major growth in the membership --

MR. MADARAZ: Oh, yeah.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- during this period from, you know, 600 to over 8,000 members --

MR. MADARAZ: That was just early on, I think 600 to -- I think it was about 35,000 by the early 1940s.

THE INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. MADARAZ: You know, a span of maybe 15 years they had that kind of significant growth.

THE INTERVIEWER: And so this is

because they opened up membership to a larger class of employees?

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah, that was part of it. I mean they were certainly reaching out to a broader group. There was also a growth in State

government. It was the Great Depression when people felt very uneasy so they were more than willing to join, and again, there were very real, tangible benefits to joining. For a dollar a year you would be able to access this group insurance program that was at a much better price, a much greater value, than you could buy on the outside. It was a very significant benefit.

And, again, they were lobbying and doing tangible things year after year: Establishing a salary schedule; you know, setting parameters on the terms of employment and advocating for the State employees at the same time.

THE INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m. So then how with the onset of World War II, how has that changed the Association or does it change the Association?

MR. MADARAZ: Well, obviously World War II changed a lot of things for every institution out there. It was, you know, a time of tremendous upheaval. A significant number of State employees actually went off into the Armed Services, and so the Association was holding down

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the home front. There were more women in the workplace, so that actually probably was an interesting sidelight, that more women were part of the Association at that time.

You know, again I don't know that you can tell the story of any institutional organization in America without considering, you know, the significant upheaval that was created by World War II, but by and large the Association, you know, held things together during that time and did all the things that many other organizations did in supporting the war effort during that time frame: Pushing for war bonds, trying to encourage the scrap metal and tire drives and what have you; all the things that you read about, the battle of the home front in America in that time frame.

But they were also looking to protect the rights of servicemen who would be returning and they were certainly involved in that in the aftermath of World War II. But, again, what's most significant in the aftermath of World War II was the groundwork that had been laid by the Fite Commission to standardize the Civil Service System on a statewide basis for both localities and

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the State, and that created a greater affinity

between the local government employees and the State employees and a greater sense that they had common interests.

And so in 1947 the Association really undertook some significant change. They changed the structure and constitution of the Association to allow for local government employees to affiliate as chapters and they changed the name from the Association of State Civil Service Employees to CSEA, the Civil Service Employees Association. That was where the name actually came into play and they embarked on a period of just tremendous growth.

You know, there's quite an interesting sidelight that in the, you know, in connection with the change to CSEA, they also moved their offices. Interestingly enough the Association had rented -- I think initially they received it for free, but then kinda paid a nominal rent for Room 156 in the State Capitol and that was actually their office throughout the 1930s and into the mid-1940s. It was a very small, cramped space and as the Association began to grow they needed

greater space, so they actually purchased a building at 8 Elk Street in Albany in the late 1940s and established the headquarters. They called it the Civil Service Center and the description of it at the time was that it would be a shrine to the Civil Service, which was kind of

interesting.

They actually held fundraisers to raise the money for it, appropriated some money towards it, but actually went out and did a capital campaign with dinner dances and raffles and all kinds of things in order to raise the money that they'd be able to create this shrine to the Civil Service. And interestingly enough today that is where the New York State Bar Association is located and it looks like a row of brownstones. At that particular time it was really sort of an art deco office building and what is now there with the brownstones is actually a faux front.

It's -- I guess the City of Albany actually wanted to maintain some of the historic character of the neighborhood and when the Bar Association moved in there they required them to build this faux front that created some impression

like the historical time, even though there is really a modern office building behind that, but that's actually the space. I kinda tell that story because people who look at it today wouldn't recognize it from the pictures that they might see from that period.

But that really created quite a significant impact for the Association. There was a whole new outlook. There was this new building, a new name, everything was kind of moving forward,

and what we saw from the late 1940s into the early 1960s in many respects really parallels the growth of America.

We saw the growth of suburbia. We saw, you know, lots of changes in the mindset. We were the victors out of the war and so anything was possible in America in that era and while you look through the accomplishments of the 1950s what you see is not something dramatic, but you see the steady growth year by year. New benefits, new accomplishments, new achievements, new growth,and just enormous increase in the membership.

The Association literally went from fewer than 50,000 members in the late 1940s to more

than 100,000 members by the early 1960s, and it's almost entirely the result of local government chapters joining up in the Association and literally being organized locality by locality and as you look through the publications of that period, every week they seemed to be adding new groups that would kind of come together and in large measure it was because with the growth of suburbia you had localities being created.

You had the need for roads, you had the new for sewers, you had the need for garbage disposal, you had municipal governments being established which had administrative responsibilities, school districts growing, and in each of these places the employees would come

together and form, in many cases, their own employee association which then would affiliate with CSEA.

And again, you know, it's kind of an interesting time frame because you don't see any one thing that jumps out at you and says, oh, my gosh, this was, you know, a tremendous accomplishment, but it's really the cumulative effect of what you see over the span of that decade

that really is almost overwhelming in terms of doubling the size of the Association.

And again, they did have successes year after year. They established a hospitalization plan, the forerunner of today's health insurance coverage on a statewide basis for State employees and it was expanded to be created for local government employees a year later. You know, increases in wages, increases in -- or improvement in working conditions, and they were doing this locality by locality as well as on a statewide basis for the State employees.

Not with collective bargaining but by lobbying legislators, by labor/management conferences, working to improve the conditions, so it's kind of an interesting period.

(End of Side 1, Tape 1.)

THE INTERVIEWER: And so during that post-war era, were there other unions or

organizations that were -- I won't say in competition, but maybe competition --

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- but that were also targeting either local or --

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah, it's --

THE INTERVIEWER: -- State employees?

MR. MADARAZ: Well, it's sort of -- it's an interesting sideline and in some ways sort of a dirty little secret about the Association that -- it's very clear. I don't know that you can necessarily say with certainty how all the members of the Association felt, but it was pretty clear from the editorial stance of the publications even starting in the 1930s, late 1930s, that there was significant fear of real unions and that the people who were running the Association did not look upon themselves truly as a union but as a professional association representing the interests of career civil servants and they were very skeptical and in some cases fearful.

And obviously at that time there were Communist influences in some unions in America at that time and there was a great deal of anti-communism that was expressed by the leadership of the Association as a way to be concerned about and a reason for being concerned about unions.

There were also mainline unions that

saw this as a fertile organizing ground in public employment and they certainly did create a rivalry for the Association and one of the things that the Association was very clear, there was a lot of inoculation that was going on against these mainline unions in the publications telling about why it was better to stay with the Association, and a lot of the argument that was very often made was, you know, the bird in-hand-versus-two-in-the-bush argument that these outside agitators would come in and make promises but, you know, you had an existing organization that had a track record, that had accomplished things on your behalf.

Oh, and by the way, look at the dues structure. It's quite significant. You know, these -- you're paying this much dues and these outside unions want to have you pay that much more and you don't know what you're going to get for that, so that was part of the argument that was made and obviously, you know, arguments can be made both ways about the way that actually worked in reality.

But actually the Association clearly did not view itself as a traditional union, as we

might think of it today, in those early years, and

there was concern, particularly as you began to see other entities -- AFSCME in particular with its success in New York City with District Council 37 and the growth of the municipal unions in places like that, you know, you saw some competition that was starting to take place on a lot of different levels.

To a great extent, probably the rise of AFSCME in New York City through DC 37 in the fifties in particular was a big reason why the Association of CSEA did not really have a strong presence in New York City. It represented State employees in New York City and didn't make a lot of inroads with municipal workers in New York City, but there was clearly fertile ground everywhere else in the State and that's where they began to organize, and interestingly enough, AFSCME was concentrated in the big cities and not really going out into suburbia.

THE INTERVIEWER: That's very interesting. In any event, you touched on a few of the national or regional developments that are going on that sort of -- the Association other than

it didn't want to be called a union were doing a lot of things (inaudible) plans, pension, retirement system, you know, maximum hours of work per week --

MR. MADARAZ: Sure.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- that, you know,

could be attributed to a union, but --

MR. MADARAZ: Right.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- in any event, you know, it's interesting that you bring up New York City because there were some things going on, particularly with transit workers in --

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- the early fifties and Mayor Wagner signing an executive order that allowed City workers, municipal workers, to --

MR. MADARAZ: Sure.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- to collectively bargain and to unionize, and so maybe you can touch on how some of these developments are influencing and a little bit later in the sixties the Taylor Law, so we're getting into this --

MR. MADARAZ: Sure.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- late fifties

and sixties and there's a lot of legislative changes, a lot of things going on with public employees that are, I guess, in some ways affecting the --

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah. There's no question that as the landscape was changing the Association was understanding that they had to change and grow and adapt. Obviously they knew that they -- when they had competition they had to do a good job representing their existing members.

And again, when you went locality by locality there really was a kind of a strong grass roots connection. I mean there was a loose federation on a statewide basis of all of these localities but they were running their own show in the local area and representing their employees and in many ways we sort of have the vestiges of that today in that we negotiate more than 1100 separate contracts and it would be very difficult to in many cases find the common threads between all of them because they historically have a long history of individual negotiation.

And some of that is geographic nuance, some of those nuance related to the

personalities of the leaders in these places, but they certainly did do a good job of representing in many cases the employees in those places and without the true authority of collective bargaining.

They were using the legislative process, they were using political action, they understood the significance of creating pressure and using the court of public opinion in many cases to make their case to do it, but certainly the Association was cognizant of the fact that the landscape was changing and particularly as you reference in New York City where the limited form of collective bargaining had been created and then in the early to mid-1960s a lot of labor upheaval

that took place in New York City in particular that created the environment under which the Taylor Law was ultimately adapted which adopted and -- actually first was adapted and then adopted, but a number of interesting stories that are related to that that involved the Association.

THE INTERVIEWER: And also there was the Public Employees Fair Employment Act as well.

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: Maybe you could talk about that.

MR. MADARAZ: Well, that is the Taylor Law. It's the Public Employees Fair Employment Act and it is kind of an interesting story. Again, many of the individuals who we've actually interviewed for the CSEA 100 Project have talked about the origins of the Taylor Law, so there's a lot of that in the CSEA archives in terms of firsthand stories in terms of people who went through it, but I guess it kind of outlined a lot of upheaval in the sanitation strike, transit strike in New York City.

Governor Nelson Rockefeller became very concerned about upheaval in public services as a result of labor actions and at that time there was a very restrictive law called the Condon-Wadlin Act which had been put in place in the late 1940s, ironically by Thomas Dewey, Republican Governor of

New York, who was a staunch anti-Communist, and a lot of what was in the Condon-Wadlin Act mirrored the Taft-Hartley Act on a federal basis and was largely intended to block Communist agitation in labor organizations.

Dewey, interestingly enough, had a very good relationship with the Association and did a number of very good things for State employees and believed in the importance and the integrity of a good Civil Service System, and so he had a very strong relationship but then, nonetheless, had this Condon-Wadlin Act which had a number of very restrictive provisions with regard to collective bargaining, and in particular it prohibited public employees from going on strike. It made that an illegal act and had some severe penalties associated with it, so that was the law that was in effect in the mid-1960s.

Labor agitation began pushing the envelope and it was pretty clear that there was a need for some modification in public employment law in the State. Rockefeller actually reached out to a young attorney in the State Labor Department by the name of Jerry Lefkowitz, who would play a very significant role in CSEA's history for the next 40 years on both sides of the fence.

Jerry actually drafted a piece of legislation for the Governor to consider that would, you know, create some parameters for limited

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collective bargaining for public employees. The way Jerry tells the story, Rockefeller was very interested in what Jerry had drafted, but didn't feel simply something that had come from an attorney in the State Labor Department was gonna fly in the way of legislation.

And Rockefeller always loved to do things in a big way and had national aspirations, so he convened a group called the Taylor Commission headed by George Taylor, who was a very well-known labor academic and arbitrator, I believe, out of the University of Pennsylvania out of the Wharton School and he brought together a number of very well-known experts who created this Taylor Commission, and very quickly they took a lot of what Jerry Lefkowitz had originally drafted and then expanded upon it and developed it and drew a set of recommendations that eventually became the Public Employees Fair Employment Act.

Approved by the Legislature, signed into law in 1967 it allowed for public employees to be recognized as legitimate collective bargaining agents. I know there's some nuance to the law that some folks often raise about whether it provided

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true collective bargaining ability or just the

right to recognize the representatives, so kind of an interesting sideline in some of that.

This was kind of a new day for labor in New York. Interestingly enough, CSEA was on the fence initially about this law but in the end supported it because there was much to be gained. They were already representing so many employees and there was, some believe, a tacit understanding that once it went into effect Rockefeller would just recognize CSEA as the representative of something like 300,000 employees all across the state.

The mainline AFL-CIO unions were opposed to the Taylor Law because it did include in it a prohibition on striking by public employees. Again, CSEA rationalized it that you take half the loaf and then you can always go back and, you know, get the other half, but the important thing was to be recognized and to begin, which is certainly a pragmatic strain that appears to have been part of their thinking in going with it, but it was much more of an ideological point of view on the part of the mainline unions at that time and they opposed

it.

As soon as it was actually approved and Rockefeller tried to recognize CSEA, all of the mainline unions jumped in and filed objections to CSEA being recognized and started pounding this newly-created Public Relations Board with

petitions, looking for unit clarifications, so to speak, to break down bargaining units and, you know, kind of a wide range of petitions that came in and it was apparently a pretty wild time with, you know, almost like job title by job title.

Some of the unions were claiming you needed to have different communities of interest but interestingly enough Jerry Lefkowitz then became the hearing officer on these claims and in the end he ruled that -- I think there were like -- I think he ruled for six State bargaining units. They didn't even get into the localities yet, but for six State bargaining units broken down by different areas of interest, such as administrative services, institutional services, there was a law enforcement bargaining unit, but basically six units, and ruling that there had to be elections to be held.

So there was uproar on all sides, a very nasty and contentious period of representation fight where elections were actually held. In the end CSEA won five of the six units. AFSCME won the prison guards unit which, at that time, I believe became Council 82 and still exists today but doesn't actually represent the prison guards any longer, but that big, big fight entailed CSEA and AFSCME were very much going head to head and by all accounts, at least in many of the places, it was a

very, very nasty and contentious fight that took place but CSEA was very successful in the end with that fight.

THE INTERVIEWER: Good place for a break?

MR. MADARAZ: Take a break? Okay. Good. Actually that was exactly where we thought we'd go with this part.

THE INTERVIEWER: Yes. It's going pretty well.

(End of Side 2, Tape 1 of Madarasz interview.)

THE INTERVIEWER: We ended with the CSEA/AFSCME (inaudible) resulted from the Taylor Law, so maybe you could talk about -- pick up from that period --

MR. MADARAZ: Sure.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- where the bargaining units were questioned and then --

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- because that seems as that it's a watershed period of, you know, are they calling themselves a union now or, you know, when there was so much resistance to that, it's part, as you said, part of the, quote, the landscape --

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- and how it changes.

MR. MADARAZ: M-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- and being called a Communist in 1970. What was it like being called a Communist in 1950 --

MR. MADARAZ: Right.

THE INTERVIEWER: And then give --

MR. MADARAZ: You know, sort of -- I

think it's probably unfair to say that CSEA was not a union in the early days because they really were doing collective bargaining by legislation and advocating for the employees, although clearly the mindset of the leadership was quite different, but with the advent of the Taylor Law and true collective bargaining, the union began to change and truly become more of what we would think of today as a union, and there was certainly a lot more agitation that took place, particularly in the early years of the Taylor Law.

CSEA became recognized as the representative of close to 100,000 State employees as a result of the fight, the representation fight, in the late 1960s, and immediately negotiated a State contract which was very significant because it established some true credibility for the organization that helped significantly with its representation rights with localities.

For the most part those representation rights went forward as kind of a pro forma thing where they simply went out and signed everybody up or requested recognition and were recognized because they were already there and

representing the employees. But in many localities they did have fights with other unions coming in and trying to pick them off and you have to understand at that particular time CSEA was not part of the AFL-CIO so it was not viewed as a mainline union by the labor movement.

It was an independent entity that was out there, but it was a very, very big and influential independent entity that was there but, you know, again it was significant that once they locked down the State contract, it really kinda let a lot of things fall into place with localities, that the credibility was there, that CSEA could do the job.

However, CSEA had also not actually ever really negotiated contracts before, so there was a lot of gearing up and change in the organization and a lot of things that had to happen to make it an effective statewide organization.

They began staffing up significantly and hiring young -- a lot of young folks especially, who were, you know, aggressive and prepared to go out and take on these fights and what have you, and I know as we've done some

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interviews with some of the folks from that era, you know, they get a bemused look on their face and they say:

We had no idea what we were doing. Everything was new and the rules weren't really clear. We were just kinda makin' it up as we went along and went out and did it but, you know, they did, you know, begin to establish case law. They began to -- under the Taylor Law they began to establish precedents, they began to lock in contracts that then became the standards for what would follow and what have you, so it was just a very, very exciting period as you hear it being described by these folks because they really were establishing a whole new order.

There were a lot of new activists who were coming into the ranks, who were getting engaged and energized on the basis that they truly had the ability to go out and influence their future by negotiating contracts.

Those early years of the Taylor Law also were very interesting because there was a no-strike provision and early on you saw a lot of strikes that actually took place largely because

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these groups were pushing the envelope. They were

trying to test the parameters of the law and see what would happen.

You know, the description of it from people that we've interviewed has been interesting because over the course of a few years, strikes got fewer and fewer and it was largely because the folks began to discover that strikes were costly, strikes took an emotional toll, strikes could, you know, be effective but there might be other ways that you could achieve the same objectives short of actually having to strike.

There was a recognition that if you used political action and created pressure and you created pressure in the court of public opinion that you could also be successful in your negotiations and they began to become a lot more savvy about how they did that.

I don't think it's insignificant that by the late 1970s CSEA had established a statewide political action committee that created a much more formal way for the union to begin to exert some influence in the political sphere and that that was very much related to the bargaining

process as well and an understanding that that connection took place.

But, you know, some of the other things that the organization did at that time, too, was that they created a set of region offices across New York and a recognition that you needed

to have something of a region structure as well that would kinda bring the folks in a geographic area together and that they could work towards a common cause.

But certainly the 1970s were a period of a whole lot of change and growth in the organization and it was a very heady time for the organization.

THE INTERVIEWER: And do you see people coming in to CSEA with -- were they lawyers, a law background, and did you see more people with that sort of background to, you know --

MR. MADARAZ: There were people who were hired for our -- for collective bargaining skill and ability. The DeGraaf Law Firm still represented the Association on a legal basis, but certainly there had to be some legal skills that were involved among the individuals who were hired

to deal with some of the collective bargaining activities, but they were actually specialists in the collective bargaining area who were brought in.

THE INTERVIEWER: So how did we get from this early Taylor Law era to then affiliating with AFSCME? Why did that -- how did that happen?

MR. MADARAZ: Well, a number of things happened along the way of the seventies. On the one hand AFSCME and CSEA began to sort of recognize some of the strengths and weaknesses of

one another, I guess you could put it. The organization was obviously a significant statewide player in the politics of New York, but District Council 37 in particular in New York City was a significant public employee player in the politics of New York, too, and so there was sort of a, you know, a mutual respect that began to grow and there began to be a lot of interaction between the two groups working on common cause on public employee issues in the State, and they worked together.

There was also something that was created in the mid-1970s called the Public Employee Conference, and it was a -- basically bringing all of the public employee representatives together to

work together at the State Capital, largely because they were for the most part marginalized at best. Even the mainline unions were marginalized by the AFL-CIO at that time.

The public employees were kind of looked upon as second class citizens by many of the mainline unions in the AFL-CIO and so the Public Employee Conference was born to better reflect the ability of the public employee unions to work together in common cause and to kind of tweak the AFL-CIO a little bit.

Interestingly enough, CSEA and AFSCME both became major players in that and so the relationship began to build and it was a recognition that they really had a community of

interest.

What ultimately precipitated the affiliation of CSEA with AFSCME was the decertification fight that took place in the mid-1970s by the Professional, Scientific and Technical Unit, what was known as the PS&T Unit, in State service, which today we know of as PEF, the Public Employees Federation.

The Public Employees Federation was

a -- I guess you'd call it a shotgun marriage of convenience between the Service Employees International Union and the American Federation of Teachers that came together; two separate, disparate unions that came together and worked in common cause to pick off this unit from CSEA because they detected that there was dissatisfaction with CSEA's representation of the Professional, Scientific and Technical workers and I believe we had three attempts to decert CSEA, and with the third one they just kinda eroded away enough support that they were able to take that group away.

You know, it's -- in retrospect CSEA probably could have done a whole lot of things to have kept that group, but didn't adequately do them but, again, it was a very contentious fight and took place over -- well, it took a period of a couple of years and just kept gnawing away and

finally broke that group off with this school, but again some of this comes from the fact that CSEA was not part of the AFL-CIO so it was prime pickings for AFL-CIO unions.

There's a provision in the AFL-CIO

constitution that prevents AFL-CIO unions from picking off other units from other AFL-CIO groups, but because CSEA was unaffiliated, it was fair game for any AFL-CIO union to try to pick off CSEA units and the PS&T Unit was a very large group. It was more than 50,000 State employees, so in one fell swoop CSEA lost 50,000 members in one day and as a result of that there was, if not panic in the organization, just a whole lot of concern about what do we do now.

(Inaudible) Bill McGowan, who we'll talk a little bit about in more depth, but he was the president of CSEA at that time, and literally the day after the PS&T vote, he went -- he flew down to Washington, D.C. and met with Jerry Wirth, the president of AFSCME at that time, and hammered out an affiliation agreement.

Now part of the method to the madness in doing this was because AFSCME was an AFL-CIO union. By affiliating them we would gain the protection of being part of the AFL-CIO but the speed with which they did it was part of a more nefarious plan. They were going to try to make the argument that the affiliation had been in the works

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already and that because we were already affiliated with an AFL-CIO union that this whole PEF decertification should be negated. It should be wiped away because they were already in talks with an AFL-CIO union.

That didn't end up holding any water as it actually turned out but it did, you know, create a situation where CSEA became a part of AFSCME. McGowan literally called the CSEA delegates together for a special meeting to ratify the -- a trial affiliation and I believe it took place in the Palace Theater in Albany, and the story is that he locked the doors and told them you're not leaving here until you approve this affiliation agreement, and ultimately they did.

But there was a lot of (inaudible) and again they did it on a trial basis for three years to see how it would work, but at the end of the three years it was made permanent and it was kind of an interesting time by all accounts, both sides having to grow and change and certainly CSEA, over the course of the last thirty-plus years has changed AFSCME in some significant ways, but AFSCME has also changed CSEA in some significant ways.

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And I think clearly the AFSCME

affiliation brought CSEA more fully into the house of labor and certainly was another step along the way in truly becoming a union and CSEA -- I mean obviously it was already beginning to happen but there was much more of a union sensibility in AFSCME that began to rub off on the Association and it began to change.

THE INTERVIEWER: Well, it's 25 after 12 --

MR. MADARAZ: Okay.

THE INTERVIEWER: If you would stop there --

MR. MADARAZ: Okay.

THE INTERVIEWER: If you would stop with the AFSCME, that's a good stopping point. I didn't actually know too much about the PEF --

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah, m-m h-m-m.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- how PEF was -- well, I knew they were created in the late seventies, but not --

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah.

THE INTERVIEWER: -- CSEA.

MR. MADARAZ: Yeah. I'm just

thinking if there were some other things we should bring up about it, but probably we could just leave that.

THE INTERVIEWER: (Inaudible) has to leave in five minutes so this would probably be a good place to stop.

MR. MADARAZ: Good. Well, let's just talk a little bit about McGowan.

THE INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah. That's -- yeah.

MR. MADARAZ: Let's talk a little bit about Bill McGowan because he --

THE INTERVIEWER: He was elected --

MR. MADARAZ: He was actually elected in 1977 as the president. He succeeded Theodore Wenzel. Theodore Wenzel was really an old guard leader in CSEA. He had been involved, you know, going back, I think, to the 1940s. He was an older gentleman at the time he was president, and I believe he was even a retiree. He was actually retired from State service, but at that time there was no distinction between active or retired members and so he was the -- he was elected as the president.

He became president just as the Taylor Law was taking effect. Never done an interview with anyone where you mentioned Ted Wenzel's name and the smile doesn't break out upon their face because he was certainly a very colorful character. There's no doubt about that. Wenzel was again, you know, a very charismatic figure in his own way. He certainly had a very significant fight, you know, in helping to establish the Association under the auspices of the Taylor Law

and to bring it into a new era and change some of the structural things, create the regions and what have you.

He also got into a very large fight with Hugh Carey, Governor Hugh Carey, in 1975. When Hugh Carey came in, New York City was going bankrupt and it was a fiscal crisis that Carey had to resolve and did it to some extent by robbing Peter to pay Paul, taking away from some State services.

There were certainly a number of things that were done in terms of holding the line on State employee contracts that in the end were not actually applied in the same way to New York

City employees, and that created quite a flap and a lot of displeasure within CSEA, so Carey got off to a rocky start.

There was a huge demonstration in, I believe it was March 18th of 1975, possibly the largest demonstration in the history of CSEA. Something like 30,000 employees came to the steps of the State Capitol to protest what Hugh Carey was doing with the State budget in terms of, in particular, undermining State employees. You know, I think there were clearly some thoughts that because CSEA was not an AFL-CIO union and Hugh Carey had very good ties to the AFL-CIO that some of this was pushing the envelope to see what kind of push-back they would get from CSEA.

I know as I talked to some people about that some have said that really wasn't quite the case, but I think there's always been some lingering suspicion about that within CSEA. Certainly there wasn't a real strong relationship between Hugh Carey and CSEA before he became Governor, so some of this was just sort of measuring the opponent a little bit.

But, you know, nobody takes any

issue with the fact that Hugh Carey had some significant fiscal problems that he was trying to solve when he took office but, again, Ted Wenzel led the fight against Hugh Carey and it was kind of an interesting time and a sorting out of the relationship.

But Wenzel was actually voted out of office in 1977 with McGowan elected as CSEA president by a 38 vote margin in what was a highly contentious election and Ted Wenzel did not go from CSEA leadership willingly. He literally was kicking and screaming as he left and interestingly enough never had another interaction with the Association once he was gone.

And we reached out to him. He died I think about ten years ago in his nineties and we had reached out to him for a number of years and had tried to invite him to convention and what have you, but he didn't want to have anything to do with

CSEA so he was very bitter about being voted out by McGowan by a 38-vote margin in what is still a somewhat controversial election.

McGowan, though, was a very, very different personality. He was really the first

true blue-collar President of CSEA and a very, very colorful figure known for mangling the English language, but just had a tremendous ability with people and had, you know, a real ability to work with people and very politically savvy, and he really in many respects was the right man for the organization at that particular time.

And I think, you know, as you look at McGowan's legacy, the AFSCME affiliation in particular, he really brought CSEA into the mainstream of the American labor movement and just significant achievement after significant achievement throughout his term in office. You know, new and better contracts, groundbreaking labor agreements, a much more progressive line of thought, new benefits that would be added all the time, expanding the union's reach.

The first most significant thing that he and AFSCME did together was the enactment of the Public Employee Safety and Health Act, which took effect in 1980, but that was really kind of the first evidence of the newly-formed CSEA and AFSCME and District Council 37 working together to pass a groundbreaking piece of legislation that

applied safety and health standards to public employees for the first time in New York.

Certainly something that when we look at the history of the organization was among the all-time significant achievements and McGowan was instrumental in helping to make that happen and really transformed CSEA in so many ways, and particularly with the loss of the PS&T Unit which had actually been the place that a lot of the leaders of the organization had come from throughout the history.

Losing that unit really kind of had to change the way the CSEA would look to groom and recruit its leaders over the next years ahead and certainly as a result it made it much more of a diverse and egalitarian organization.

THE INTERVIEWER: Okay. We'll stop there?

MR. MADARAZ: Yes, that's as good a place as any to stop.

(The interview of Stephen Madarasz was concluded.)