

Interview Date: June 22, 2006

Subject: Marty Langer: Local Representative and first Vice President, Rockland State Hospital Chapter of CSEA, 1967-1971; President, Rockland State Hospital Chapter of CSEA, 1971-1974; Chairman, Statewide Political Action Committee, 1974-1980; Director of Joint NYS/CSEA Labor Management Committees, 1980-1981; Consultant for CSEA Mental Hygiene Issues, 1983-2005; Executive Assistant to CSEA President, Danny Donohue, 1994-1995.

In a second interview for the CSEA history project, Marty Langer, a long-time political activist with CSEA shared his perspective while working with the organization, focusing on experiences from his background in the mental hygiene and mental retardation field. He spoke in depth of former CSEA President, Bill McGowan's instincts and strong leadership abilities, stating McGowan represented change for the organization, and demonstrated aggressiveness during CSEA's transition from a social organization to a "major labor leader and player."

In his interview, Langer, who managed Bill McGowan's campaign for CSEA President, explained how McGowan was different than any other leader in CSEA history. Langer stated McGowan had spent a lot of time at the local level and learned what life was like in the State's institutions, where he recognized his leadership was desperately needed to bring about change to the State's Mental Health employees and patients.

Langer spoke of the poor conditions that patients and employees withstood at the State's institutions, specifically mentioning Willowbrook and West Seneca. Langer detailed the "Easter Sunday Strike" over state contract negotiations, taken on by "Mental Hygiene folks," even though it was a violation of Taylor Law. He also discussed deinstitutionalization of many of the State's patients, calling the transition from ward service to community care better for taxpayers, employees, and residents. Langer briefly mentioned the Morgado Memorandum and the Willowbrook Consent Decree as well as what he called, "The Palace Theatre Fiasco."

In addition, Langer detailed the decertification of the PS&T unit from CSEA to PEF, discussing possible reasons for the loss, but also explaining how it led to CSEA's affiliation with AFSCME. He also mentioned CSEA's decision not to support Hugh Carey in his 1978 campaign for Governor.

Key Words

AFSCME

Closures

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Craig Developmental Center

Deinstitutionalization

Due check-off loss

Easter Sunday Strike

Intermediate Care Facility for Mental Retardation (ICFMR)

Medicaid

Mental Hygiene/Retardation Issues

Morgado Memorandum

Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD)

Palace Theatre

Percentage Raises

Public Employees Federation (PEF)

Public Employee Relations Board (PERB)

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (PS&T)

Rockland State Hospital Chapter

Taylor Law

West Seneca?

Willowbrook

Willowbrook Consent Decree

Key People

Judy Burgess

Kathy Button

Hugh Carey Campaign

Eric Flamingbaum

Robert Giled?

Eva Katz

Felton King

Robert Lattimer

William McGowan

Geraldo Rivera

Arthur Webb

Dr. Ted Wenzel

Jerry Wirth

CSEA HISTORY PROJECT

MARTY LANGER INTERVIEW

June 22, 2006

INTERVIEWER: Okay. This is Thursday, June the 22nd of 2006. We are in Albany. We are with Marty Langer, a long-time activist with CSEA and probably the unofficial historian of the organization. Marty has interviewed for the CSEA 100 Project previously about four years ago, believe it or -- four or five years ago. I think it might --

MR. LANGER: Wow.

INTERVIEWER: -- even be closer to five years ago if I remember, but we certainly are appreciative of you coming back again because we have some other areas that we'd like to cover and certainly your perspective is very valuable to this project.

Marty, talk to begin with about Bill McGowan, and certainly you were very close to Bill McGowan. You managed his campaign for president of CSEA and it was a very close election. I know you've talked a little bit about this before but I wonder if you'd recap it a little bit and maybe tell us about what you see as the significance of his victory.

MR. LANGER: The significance of Bill

McGowan's victory is his victory was a watershed moment for CSEA. Ted Wenzel was probably the right guy at the time, but the time was a long time ago when CSEA was in its infancy in terms of its role as a major labor leader and player in the state of New York.

I know when I first personally got involved at the local level, you know, my Rockland State Hospital Chapter of CSEA where I was just learning what CSEA might have been all about and what my role was as an employee and as a future activist, I saw CSEA as being where people got together once every month to sort of discuss things and I remember talking to the local leadership and their conversations were along the line of:

Well, you know, you really have to placate people. We can't really make change. We can't make a lot of noise, so when people come to you with problems, you know, you should listen as much as you can but let them know that there's not really much that we can do unless it's truly egregious, but even then what we could do would be limited.

And I said to myself, I don't know if this is exactly what I wanted to do in terms of my role as an activist, so I had to give some thought to it, but it occurred to me that CSEA's power came from an Albany level and worked its way down to a local level. The stronger Albany was, the more aggressive Albany was, the most possible it was to do things at the local level, but I saw the inverse of that.

I saw -- because in the earliest years CSEA was kind of more of a social organization in many, many ways, which served its purpose at the time but that time was, you know, something that should have faded away and, to my recollection, the president of CSEA, Dr. Wenzel at the time, was a good man who really should have turned the reigns over to someone who could become more aggressive because the time was approaching when the need for that aggressiveness was there.

Bill McGowan represented change. He represented, you know, not just a growing force within the State division of CSEA. CSEA was at the time divided as it still is with the State

and County. Now it's added more to that with other local sectors but the State Division was the larger division and within the State Division the Mental Hygiene group was becoming the most vocal and probably because of its numbers alone the strongest, and so it was not unusual for somebody within that division to rise to a point where they could at least challenge a very strong incumbency because there were many people in CSEA who were very comfortable.

The rank and file to which I care to the extent from my perspective was very comfortable with having an organization that didn't make too many waves, but there was a growing number of people who wanted the waves. They wanted more power to come from Albany and they knew that it would filter down.

Bill McGowan came from the world of OMRDD. He became a people kind of a guy. You know, within the MR ranks Bill was the kind of guy who rose to a local level of leadership in West Seneca. He looked like a labor leader. He had this shock of white hair. He had this

constant cigar in his mouth and he always had his famous "youse guys," and he was a man of the people.

There was no one around who could not relate to Bill in an extremely positive way and he had an interest. He was a real human being with compassion and empathy and that became very clear to a lot of people and while he may not in some academic sense be the -- have been the most articulate guy in town, everyone knew that his gut told him where he should be on every issue and his gut was pretty much on the mark.

So at the local level that became clear and he was a rising star out in the western part of the state and he became someone who could be a potential challenger.

My role had been -- I was an activist in those earlier days. I had been appointed by Dr. Wenzel. I had been the political action chair early on. I got to see what CSEA was kind of all about within the organization. I got to see what it could do externally and internally, and I could see that we were in a transition period.

Times had changed. There was -- I'm trying to think of the Palace Theater fiasco where my recollection was that I was the one who initiated the strike vote that particular year and I saw everything else unfold thereafter.

I saw how there was a need to change counsel and that became a huge issue and there was a real need to change leadership, and you could see, you know, as you stared at the stage that day in the Palace Theater that the time for change was at hand, so I saw in Bill personally the kind of qualities that I felt would be beneficial to this organization. I thought he could become a leader, far greater than he even was to that point and I did work with Judy Burgess as the -- one of the two people who worked on his campaign because Bill was gonna be that change angel.

CSEA needed to grow at that point. CSEA needed to no longer be a social organization. It had to stand up to the State of New York. This was not a time when anyone was willing to sit back and just simply take whatever was offered. People understood that

only strong leadership and only a strong organization could produce the kind of results they wanted.

MR and MH I think were great places to start because, you know, having personally grown up in those worlds I can tell you that it was not the most comfortable place for an employee to work. It was not the best place for a patient or a resident of a developmental center to have been institutionalized and change needed to occur.

And frankly, because CSEA changed and became much more potent in that area, a lot of things happened in the State of New York that benefited not just the work force but in the end a lot of folks in great need in the forms -- in the form of patients.

INTERVIEWER: Well, talk a little bit about that whole period in the Mental Hygiene world because certainly that was the era when there was a lot of deinstitutionalization taking place, use of drug therapy for treating patients in the Mental Health area and certainly a lot of transition from the institutional care into

other forms of care. That I would assume have a lot of upheaval for the employees working in those institutions and probably led to some of their greater involvement in union activism.

MR. LANGER: Yeah. Well, as I said before, there are two parts, the MR world and the MH world. In the Mental Health world for the mentally ill there was a doctor named Nathan Kline, for whom a research facility is now named, who was instrumental in developing the initial psychotropic medications that when taken properly could actually calm a lot of folks down who were institutionalized to the point where they could live outside of an institution.

And the State of New York, starting under Rockefeller in the late sixties, started to realize that, wait a minute, we have too many people locked up. We have 90,000 people in the Mental Health world locked up now. Maybe we have an answer in the form of psychotropic meds, and with the advent of the use of those meds the institutions started to dwindle down and they started to reduce those populations rather quickly and the process was called

"deinstitutionalization."

They moved them out through a variety of means. They used what's called level-of-care surveys, and one by one they moved out huge enclaves of people. What that meant was that the more difficult folks were left behind, so the numbers were still high. There were still 40- or 50,000 left in the Mental Health facilities and the kinds of folks who were left to be served were by far more difficult.

The staffing levels were not good. In fact, early on, even when Rockefeller left office, I think New York State was down in the -- somewhere in the forties, you know, out of the 50 states, I think New York was 43rd or even worse in terms of the staffing levels, so there was not a lot of good care given in terms of the ability to provide it. There was not a lot of safety working on those wards for either the patients or the staff.

But I can tell you that, you know, from a personal standpoint, that I grew up on those wards. Even as far as the mid-sixties I would be the supervisor of a night shift and

have responsibility for two wards of 77 people because there was only one on each one to begin with and two called in that night, and that was not an unusual circumstance.

And that was not acceptable, and a lot of people who grew up with me in those years realized that those were not the best conditions for people to have, so that was how the MH world started to evolve.

The MR world really changed tremendously with the, you know, the unveiling of Willowbrook by Geraldo Rivera and a lot of people took an interest in what developmental centers and State schools as they might have been called looked like and they were not happy.

And while they didn't have psychotropic medications that were really designed for that population, at least the Court had the good sense to say big institutions are not good institutions, so they started to change things pretty much in many ways for the better for that entire organization.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you when you bring up that kind of media Willowbrook expose

in the early seventies, what do you remember that -- about that from CSEA's perspective? What do you remember about the discussion and reaction to that whole expose?

MR. LANGER: Well, CSEA was involved tangentially. I mean we were not part of the parents' groups that got involved. There were lots of folks who were friends of the Court in those days, but CSEA was actively involved in terms of saying: Well, we have interests to protect here. You know, we need to know what's going on, but they were not directly involved. We were not part of the lawsuit. We were not a friend of the Court in that regard.

But we surely had an interest in saying: Well, wait a minute. As you phase down the institutions -- see, MR took a different approach. MR was told by Court Order that they must deinstitutionalize and build up their staffing levels and what they did was they built up their staffing levels by deinstitutionalizing their population to other quarters.

They didn't hire a lot of staff which was something that might have been required, you

would have thought, but they instead reinvested their existing staff by taking the resident population down and moving them to the voluntary agencies, so you saw a tremendous growth in the ARCs, you saw a tremendous growth in UCP, and a variety of mom-and-pop agencies that sprung up anywhere they could successfully place people into what OMR and the Courts considered to be something other than an institutional-size operation.

And they started the advent of what they call ICFMRs, which started out to be (inaudible). There were 24-bed programs. Then they realized that was too large and they brought 'em down to 12-bed programs and 16-bed. Today they have something considerably smaller. Now most of their operations are four-bed programs, but anything was better than an institution and that's how they decided to move.

CSEA's interest early on was concerned about, well, where the residents were going. It was not gonna sit back and quietly lose residents unless there was a guarantee that the staff was secure and that the facilities were

gonna remain, so CSEA's interest was in making sure that the reinvestment of staff truly occurred and that there was an improvement in the staffing ratios and that the level of existence for the people who worked and lived in the institutions was good.

There were some very strong voices in CSEA in those days in the MR world. There was a gentleman in New York named Felton King who was extremely loud and very good at pointing out that we're losing folks. We need guarantees. We want to be as sure of our future as the residents in the Willowbrook Consent Decree may be of theirs.

And that sort of forced CSEA into taking positions that had to be much stronger, and that's where you started to see the emergency of people like Bill McGowan who represented a voice for that particular population because what happened at Willowbrook didn't just happen at Willowbrook. It happened at West Seneca as well, so when things started to move that was a major watershed moment, those years for the organization.

You know, it represented a time of tremendous change. You know, the status quo was disturbed in a major way and we needed folks around here who could move with that tide, because the tide was moving.

INTERVIEWER: Good. How did the Mental Hygiene constituency begin to coalesce and build strength for the organization? What were some of the things they did?

MR. LANGER: They started to meet as a group. A gentleman who's now gone, Bob Giled (phonetic), was the contract director for CSEA for the institutional services unit, he was the CBS, and he started to, you know, he had a nice way about him in terms of being a tough guy who knew his business, who could negotiate and think like the institutional services people because he came from one of those facilities. I think he was a rec worker, I think, in those days, early on.

And he started to have little confabs where the MH and MR people did get together and I can think of -- I'm trying to think of the hotel in the Catskills. Can't think of it at

the moment but there were any number of meetings where just the Mental Hygiene people got together and that voice became stronger and stronger and much more unified.

And I was one of those local presidents at the time and I enjoyed the fact that there was a group of people who came together with a common bond because in the MH world, to be sure, they were losing numbers. The staffing ratios were so abysmally low in MH that nobody gave a lot of thought in those days to the fact that the population was dramatically being reduced because staff was not being lost, because the staffing levels really had so much more to grow that it would really take years before that population loss would actually result in a loss of staff.

And MR felt a little comfortable about it too because they thought since they had to reach an even higher level of ratio that they were even safer, but we all started to realize that there's inevitability here; that if this process keeps going, that these institutions which had been around since the beginning of

time were gonna be gone.

I don't think anyone realized just how quickly that was about to occur, but I think by getting together with a group of other folks from the MR and MH world this common bond started to give us a common voice and since we were the largest group within the State division and the State division was the more prominent in terms of numbers, that the MH world started to really grow in terms of its voice within the entire organization.

INTERVIEWER: There is probably an interesting sidelight to this and that is what is referred to in CSEA history as the Easter Sunday Strike which was a strike over the State contract negotiations but it was almost exclusively taken on by the Mental Hygiene folks because it was conducted over a weekend when they were really the only people working.

I wonder if you'd talk about that whole experience.

MR. LANGER: Yeah, well, it was -- it was sort of a -- I can't say happy/sad. It was just -- it was a, you know, I guess the timing

of the contract was the contract ran out at midnight on a -- whatever night of the week it was, but it was a weekend and, you're right. I mean you don't find office workers going to work at midnight and you don't find professionals in most cases going to work at midnight, so who was really left? The people who actually, you know, worked the wards who were told: Guess what? We're lockin' some of you in.

The CSEA, you know, to its credit, and I would like to think I was part of that, never wanted to leave patients unattended, so we -- you know, as local officers, we kind of told people: Listen. If the strike is called at midnight, you're not leavin' your wards. On the other hand, the rest of you, the vast number of you, you're not goin' in to report for duty.

So as it turned out, skeletal crews of staff were left to take care of people so that no one would have to worry that patients were neglected 'cause no one ever wanted to see that. But at the other side of the coin, we wanted to make sure that the State was very clear and that -- to the extent that there were no people gonna

be leavin' and that there was no one gonna show up on Monday morning and so it all began when the shift changed at midnight, and that's when people would not cross picket lines, and that's when CSEA had its evening strike.

By the next day, I guess, some sort of accord was reached with the State, not a particularly good one as I recall, but at least there was enough to make us content that we had done something that was not in vain, but the only people who paid for that strike were really the people in CSEA and, you know, those who worked in the institutions who were not able to report for work that night.

Yeah, so I do remember the night real well. I was personally hoping it wasn't gonna happen, but --

INTERVIEWER: Where were you when it was happening?

MR. LANGER: -- most people -- I was the local president at Rockland Psych and I was outside the gate at the facility at midnight making sure that the strike was gonna take place. I remember it was an unusual feeling

'cause, you know, CSEA had not been such a militant organization, and even though I thought I was a pretty good local president I never thought about fighting the Taylor Law.

And I remember we had meetings with the State Police talking about the possibility of picketing and so on, but then what changed was suddenly bail money was sent down because the State Police made it clear that if this was gonna happen, that I was about to be wandering off to a jail cell, just to make it clear that a contempt citation was gonna be hanging out there and I said: That's interesting. I guess I'm prepared to do what I have to do, and I was.

Fortunately that didn't happen. The strike didn't last that long and nothing like that was really called for, but that's where I was, you know, prepared as other people were around the State, to pay whatever price had to be paid. Unfortunately there were a lot of folks who suffered the Taylor Law consequences anyway that day.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know did CSEA suffer dues checkoff loss out of that event?

MR. LANGER: Umm, I'm not sure. I remember -- it's very difficult to recall at this point 'cause that was, I guess, 30 years ago or more than 30 years ago now. I do remember individual hearings, many of them for people who were told that they were -- had violated the Taylor Law and I suspect that CSEA was at least in contempt for having gone out on strike that night, but I really don't recall at this moment what --

INTERVIEWER: Was there a --

MR. LANGER: -- happened with checkoff loss.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a -- was there an issue internally between the Mental Hygiene folks and the others because of the fact that they were the ones who really went out on the strike?

MR. LANGER: If it was it was silent. They understood that this strike was gonna be called when the old contract was no longer in effect and they knew that, you know, like anything else things run out at midnight.

The institutional workers, I think,

maybe by their nature are prepared to take the brunt of some of the dirty work. They knew that this was a role that they had played; that they knew that this was in their best interest in the end to better their working conditions, and it fell to them because it's -- you know, the stroke of midnight was when the strike was to begin. Then this was something they had to do.

And there were really very few people who were not prepared to not cross those picket lines, so they understood that they were not gonna go over there. The State of New York was closed on April 1st. I think that was the way the bumper stickers read, that's the way the signs read and that's the way they felt about it, so they were prepared.

INTERVIEWER: How does all of this play into the emergence of Bill McGowan as a stronger leader in CSEA?

MR. LANGER: Well, it's -- a lot of it, you know, fell into the reality of -- the largest division was the State, the largest group within that was the Mental Hygiene group and the Mental Hygiene group was under attack,

so they needed to have their own leadership maybe in charge of the organization and just the numbers alone would have said, well, maybe this is the group and maybe this is the guy and Bill emerged as someone who could speak the labor language.

As I said before, his instincts were always good. He looked like leader -- a labor leader, he acted like one and the State of New York was about to be told that we no longer had anyone in charge who in any way at all gave the impression that they were gonna accede or acquiesce easily.

Bill McGowan was not gonna roll over. He knew what positions he needed to take. He knew the needs of the people he talked to because he spent a tremendous amount of time at the local level learning what life was like in the institutions. He knew that that was a group that needed leadership. He had no feelings of concern for himself personally.

It wasn't as if he had a fear of doing any of this. You know, for him it was more of a mission. He enjoyed what he did. He loved

representing people. He was a decent human being, he truly was, who cared for people and he thought that, you know, this was a group that needed to have a voice to be heard and he was very happy to become that voice and the people knew it.

When he walked into an institution and shook their hands and he wrote down a name or he had an issue, he remembered that name, he remembered that issue, and he addressed that issue. In -- for as long as I knew him, he did that. That was his personal trademark and that was his claim to fame. He could take on personal things and address them for individuals and then go on to the larger picture and address the larger picture very well.

He was well-advised. He had good people around him and he was a good guy for the time, so he was the right guy to emerge from that particular group.

INTERVIEWER: I think as you look at the chain of leadership in CSEA from 1910 to 19...or to the mid-1970s when Bill McGowan was elected, Bill McGowan doesn't fit the mold of

any of the previous presidents of the organization. They tended all to be much higher level employees, certainly very educated, not blue-collar folks by any stretch. McGowan comes along and he's just a very different kind of individual.

Was that an issue at the time when he was running? Did that come into play?

MR. LANGER: That may have been there in the background in the minds of some people, but I think -- I can say this because I came from the ranks of PS&T, the professional group -- that anyone who thought about it knew that the bulk of the good that came out of the organization was on the backs of the institutional services people.

They knew when a percentage raise came along that the people in the laundries needed a pretty good percentage raise to make it a contract worth having. The professionals knew that left to their own devices that they would never have gotten percentage raises. They would have gotten some relatively small across-the-board raise that wouldn't have served their

purpose, and so they knew that they really needed to latch on to a group of people for whom, you know -- or that could get the job done and the institutional group really was the bulk of the organization, more than any other part of it.

Bill represented that so well. The PS&T group was here. It's always been around, at least up until the time of PEF -- was around but was kinda happy to take a back seat at some point and I think, you know, the -- Ted Wenzel was probably representative of the change that needed to occur.

Bill was -- Ted was a gentleman and he dealt with the State in a gentleman-like way. Bill didn't want to act like a gentleman. He wanted to act like a labor leader and that was a whole different approach and I think people were very happy to see that approach.

I don't think they cared that he didn't have a bachelor's degree or any other major credentials other than the fact that his instincts were strong and that he was gonna be unshakeable in his approach. That's what his

claim to fame was, in addition to the fact that he took care of individual situations. And I think the PS&T people were very happy to join in and back him and they were, and it worked.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. But shortly after he became (inaudible) as the PS&T unit decertified and became PEF, did that play into it at all, winning that election?

MR. LANGER: Did Bill's election factor into PS&T's loss? Well, there may have been -- and this is only a surmise on my part. There may have been some faction within the organization that believed that CSEA didn't have the ability to represent every one of the -- I don't know, I think there were 2600 titles in PS&T?

And I can recall that each one would have been very happy it had its own contract, so instead of the PS&T group they wanted 2600 individual contracts. That would have made the map. And when PEF came in, to be honest at the time, because I was involved in dialogue, I was involved in debates with some of the people who came around.

I think -- well, not mentioning the names, but basically I would sit back at these hearings or these debates and say, no, it's not true. That what you're hearing, folks, is not ever gonna happen; that PERB is the one that sort of breaks you down into bargaining units. It's a global bargaining unit and even though you're now being told you're gonna get 2600 contracts, it ain't happening. So believe what you will, but it's just not gonna be.

But a lot of folks in the PS&T unit I think were kinda misled at the time, from my own recollection, and I don't think they ever fully understood the ramifications of what they were about to do if they decertified CSEA. But nonetheless I don't know if it was because of Bill McGowan's existence; I think it was their own individual need to have their own individual recognition as a specific title and recognition as a professional that they didn't think they were getting, you know, by being part of a global bargaining unit.

So I think the sell for PEF at the time was something that was really not an

entirely true scenario in terms of their ability to have individual titles.

INTERVIEWER: What was the tone of those decertification -- I think there were actually two campaigns. Wasn't there one -- first that was beaten back and then the second one was successful in decertifying?

What was the tone?

MR. LANGER: Well, it was -- it was subtle. Because I think a lot of people within the State division were kinda happy. I mean a lot of -- those who really gave thought to it realized that the strength of the organization came from more the other bargaining units than PS&T and those within PS&T kinda thought that it was a dangerous move. But there were some folks who were very noisy who got to be heard and said, let's try it.

I don't remember the mood being so angry. I mean I -- there was, you know, the -- you know, I can think if one -- I guess there were some folks who were defectors within CSEA who wanted to make some noise in some other way and they thought that having another

organization represent them was an ability for them to be heard, you know, in a fashion that they weren't comfortable with within the organization.

There was -- you know, I guess there was always some folks who were around who were not always particularly happy with the leadership. That probably goes on today as it ever did then. In those days they were happy to decertify and, you know, try to get their recognition through some other organization.

INTERVIEWER: Well, there was also a time when, you know, at the time of this PS&T decertification, CSEA was not part of the AFL-CIO. Did that play into the campaign?

MR. LANGER: No, that -- that I recall it did not become an issue. I think CSEA had for years prided itself on being an independent and, in fact, it used to say on -- somewhere on documentation that New York State's, you know, not just largest public employee but independent, and I think it enjoyed that.

I don't think anybody made the issue -- became an issue after the fact.

INTERVIEWER: But certainly there were AFL-CI union -- CIO unions involved in pushing the decertification.

MR. LANGER: Well, I think PEF was made up, you know, the parent of PEF was within the AFL-CIO umbrella, so they -- you know, we became -- "we" being CSEA -- became a target because we were not protected by that umbrella. I mean clearly had we been involved with the AFL-CIO this never would have happened.

To the extent that we were not involved, yeah, it allowed that -- you know, we were vulnerable, something we have not been particularly since then, but we certainly were at the time. But our involvement -- you know, we started to take note of that after the events unfolded.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the fallout from that PS&T split?

MR. LANGER: Well, clearly there was a financial loss for CSEA and that was a given. When you lose 50,000 members, that's gotta hurt just a little bit. There was also a loss of leadership in some ways because a number of

folks, myself among them -- you know, a lot of PS&T individuals were local presidents, had other offices within the organization and suddenly there was a void, you know, that a lot of folks no longer could be involved, you know.

And PEF, as I recall now, would never allow any former activist within CSEA to take a role within their organization, so the people who left, left and fell into space somewhere because they could not emerge again, at least within that organization.

Some -- you know, we had to reinvent ourselves. You know, I had the opportunity shortly after the loss of PS&T to take over the State's Labor/Management committees, you know, and I had to take on a new title and a new role because of the new job I had so I guess to that extent I had to be reinvented and I was.

And there were a few others who were equally reinvented in order to retain at least some of the folks who had been major activists within CSEA, so I think the two parts that I can recall were the financial loss of the unit and the need to try and rescue at least a couple of

people who had been PS&T employees who had been major active players within CSEA.

INTERVIEWER: And, of course, it also led to the affiliation with AFSCME. I wonder if you would recall what that entailed and what you saw of that?

MR. LANGER: CSEA had been courted for years by -- by AFSCME, by Jerry Wirth, I guess, and CSEA always resisted it because it really wanted to remain independent. It enjoyed its independence. When the PS&T unit was apparently lost, that whole thing had to be rethought.

One, because in the long term there was much to be gained by being part of a larger organization. Politically there was much to be gained. From the standpoint of becoming less vulnerable there was much to be gained. There was also the possibility that before the entire new organization was fully certified that if CSEA had affiliated with AFSCME and come under the umbrella that maybe, just maybe, that this whole thing could go away.

That was not meant to be. Even though the attempt was made, there was no way to

reverse that. It was kind of a done deal at some point, so PS&T was lost to PEF but the affiliation with AFSCME did go forward and I believe CSEA as now the largest affiliate of AFSCME has prospered as a result of that --

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m.

MR. LANGER: -- that unification.

INTERVIEWER: Was there resistance to -- from the leadership to the affiliation with AFSCME?

MR. LANGER: There were -- there were always mixed feelings. I mean there was -- you know, I can recall, you know, the conventions that were held specifically and there were pretty close votes. A lot of -- you know, a couple of the major players within CSEA were not thrilled with this, but I think even with the dissension that I think, you know, they kind of understood that this was something we needed to do, but there clearly was a degree of unhappiness.

I should say there were people probably not unhappy over the loss of, you know, the bargaining unit because they were not

thrilled with having that particular group belong because, you know, just as everyone kinda understood that the institutional unit was the one that got the better of the contracts and everyone else got a "me too" along with it, there were those who were saying: Listen, we had enough of the "me too's." Let them go; let them go in peace.

The truth was that we needed every part of the organization, and their loss was a major loss, but there was dissension even -- you know, and there was happiness and unhappiness with the loss of that group at the time, to be sure. After they gave it enough thought, it was purely unhappiness because the need to have them back was always there.

INTERVIEWER: Was there tension between CSEA and PEF with -- in the early days?

MR. LANGER: These was clearly no loss of love between CSEA and PEF. You know, as I said before, they -- you know, I can tell you from my own personal experience of debating some of their leaders before the election was held that they lied and I think there was a lot of

resentment over the fact that they did lie in what they told people to expect, you know?

And when you build an organization or the creation of an organization on the basis of a lie, that's tough because eventually that's gonna unfold and people are gonna realize, hey, wait a minute. We've been had. And CSEA was not happy about that. Losing under false pretenses to that extent was not a good thing.

INTERVIEWER: M-m h-m-m. Let me -- let me shift gears because in -- around that same time Hugh Carey is up for re-election I think in 1978 and his opponent is Perry Duryea on the Republican side. CSEA did not have a very warm relationship in the early years of the Carey Administration.

What do you recall about the decision on whether to involve the union in that -- in that race and how did that play out?

MR. LANGER: Okay. (Laughter.) CSEA in that particular election year endorsed a candidate for Comptroller. CSEA endorsed a candidate for Attorney General. CSEA did not endorse a candidate for Governor because at the

time of the convention everyone agreed that particular year at that convention that in order for us to make an endorsement -- something we had not really ever done on a statewide level. CSEA had always backed away from that -- they decided that it would be in the best interest of the organization to make sure we had a firm understanding of the majority of the organization being in favor of whoever we decided to back.

Two-thirds of the delegates wanted the Attorney General, two-thirds wanted the Comptroller, and two-thirds did not want to see a particular Governor. As a result there was not enough votes to make a recommendation that year so we were neutral, so there was no endorsement made in that particular year and that's how it unfolded. The numbers didn't play out and therefore we didn't go forward.

History is yet to decide as to whether or not that was a good thing or a bad thing. I know that we had some understandings with the Carey Administration regarding, you know, the Mental Hygiene group which really became

something. We had the Morgado Memorandum, for example, was something that we had just prior to that.

INTERVIEWER: When you say "some understandings," kind of like a wink and a nod that there would be some support for the Administration based on --

MR. LANGER: Well --

INTERVIEWER: -- their taking some action --

MR. LANGER: Well, you know, they had tried to court us and they wanted to do things that would benefit them and benefit us, you know, with the hope that we would not go against them. I think their greater concern was that they would not have wanted us to back -- to back the other guy for two reasons.

One, we're a large union. Secondly, we were then now part of a much larger union, so the consequence would have been, you know, had the Republican candidate for Governor been endorsed, not only would CSEA have moved in favor of that and worked towards that particular person, but it's quite possible that our voice

within the entire state in the public sector would have been heard, and who knows how that would have turned the election at that point.

So in the end it probably was more of a benefit for Hugh Carey for us to not make an endorsement and it was certainly not to anyone's -- not that Duryea's advantage in that year for us to not endorse him or for us to go neutral did not benefit him, but it probably did benefit Hugh Carey and that's the way it unfolded.

INTERVIEWER: You referenced a moment ago the Morgado Memorandum. What was that and what was its significance for CSEA at that time and certainly well into the future?

MR. LANGER: The significance was -- well, politically, I mean, they were hoping to court CSEA with something that they knew we wanted. As I said a little bit ago, you know, the institutions were phasing down. The CSEA-represented work force in the institutions was starting to become a little bit concerned about its future and one way of addressing that and addressing the needs of the work force, the needs of the residents and the consent decree

that was agreed to by Willow...you know, at the Willowbrook Consent Decree rather, was to come up with an understanding that would incorporate a lot of people's concerns.

And the Morgado Memorandum was an Executive Order signed by Secretary of State Morgado and agreed to by the Governor where for the world of the mentally ill two goals were established.

One was that the ratio of employees or staff-to-patients would rise from some terribly low level that it was at the time, somewhere in the .04 level to a 1-to-1 ratio, which would have been far better than ever had been before so that in institutions, you know, you would have a reasonable number of people working on the wards taking care of patients.

And of equal importance, that from that point forward 50 percent of all growth in the community in terms of the institutionalized residents would be in the State sector so that from that point forward if ten community residences were gonna be put up, five of them would be State operated so that not only would

the institutions be protected by better staffing levels, the community would be enhanced by having a State work force out there.

And similarly in the world of MR, the staffing level was gonna be raised to 1.78-to-1 which was really consistent with what the Willowbrook Consent Decree talked about and again, 50 percent of that growth in that sector would be State operated.

Now, in truth, that was a document that we can all point to. Unfortunately it was a document that's all we could do is point to it because not much of it, you know, really came about, at least with respect to the growth in community.

Over the years I should say that the ratios in MR are even better than 1.78 at this point so that was done, and while 50 percent of the growth in the community may not have been State-operated from that point forward, a substantial part of that growth in the community in MR was State operated and that worked out fairly well.

In the MH world it took many years for

the ratio to get up to 1-to-1 and I think it's safe to say that there are 8- or 900 beds maybe in its entirety out of many, many thousands that are State operated, and there's been virtually no growth in that area at all.

So the world of MR probably came closer to living up to Morgado; the world of MH I suspect not.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Talk a little bit about how that reality played out in the OMRDD world in the mid-eighties and the whole process that the State went through in terms of closing institutions for the mentally disabled and moving into the community and how that affected CSEA's delivery of services.

MR. LANGER: Well, MR reached the point -- what I had said earlier was that OMRDD reinvested its staff. You know, as it phased out institutions or phased down institutions and individuals went out to community programs for the most part in the voluntary sector, the in-patient staffing levels kept going higher and higher because the staff was being maintained.

And everything was fine, actually,

until somewhere around 1987 when a conversation was held between CSEA and Arthur Webb, who was then the commissioner. And he basically said we've reached an interesting point. If we lose one more resident, you know that 1.78-to-1 ratio? Well, we're there, so from this point forward unless we get real State growth in the community, every resident that we see lost from an institution to the voluntary agencies will take with him or her 1.78 staff. So we decided that's not good.

Maybe it's time to sort of do something we've not had -- we've not really done, which is to now go into high gear in terms of State growth, and from that point forward it was agreed that 90 percent of the growth in community would be State-operated growth, State development, and we would design closures that were gonna allow facilities to phase down and community beds to phase up that were all gonna be State operated.

So for quite some time thereafter, I won't say it stayed at 90 percent, but to be sure for any number of facilities there was a 90

percent growth in State facilities and somewhat to the credit of the voluntary sector, they kinda knew for a variety of reasons:

One, that the people who had been left in the facilities at that stage -- you know, you gotta remember that the entire process had begun ten years earlier at least, if not fifteen, and the kinds of folks who were being deinstitutionalized were the somewhat more tractable people and so the people who were left within the facilities were a lot more difficult to serve.

So if there was a need to close down facilities and reopen smaller group homes for the mentally retarded or developmentally disabled, well, maybe the State which had always been the provider of last resort should take that responsibility because they're more equipped to deal with the more difficult folks. They've had the training. They've had the experience, and hopefully they'll have the right numbers of people to do it.

So they stood back while all this happened, so for a number of years we had an

understanding that as we went into a closure mode in the MR system that the bulk of the development that would go forward from that point would be State-operated growth and that worked.

We did some templates. The first of the closure facilities was the Craig Developmental Center. We had the good fortune -- I had the good fortune, since it was my assignment, to work with Kathy Button who really was a treasure. She understood what the future looked like. She understood what needed to be done and she worked with us and she worked with the agency and 90 percent of that development for the closure of Craig was State-operated and that became a template that we used from Craig to, you know, what is now called the Finger Lakes to almost all the other facilities.

So in many ways 1987 rescued the system. If that conversation had not been held with Arthur Webb and if we did not agree that we would come up with a plan to do a tremendous amount of State development and retrain workers who had been other than direct care to work in

direct care so that we could basically transition everybody into a community center, that we would not necessarily have rescued that system.

But I think today, as I look around, the MR system has been reconfigured but not closed down. You can now pretty much find everyone who is in the system or at least account for them if they're not still around as to where they might be and more likely that would simply not be around at all.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think that transition means for the staff or the quality of life for the individuals and even for the taxpayers of New York? What has that really meant?

MR. LANGER: Well, let me do it in inverse order. In terms of the taxpayers, the MR system to its credit learned that you need money to fund a system and you can't necessarily rely on the tax base of New York State alone. It won't handle the burden.

And there were those around in the MR world early on who realized that you're not

gonna get money for institutions, but you can get money for small, nicely-operated group homes in a community and the maximum number of beds you can have is 16, so we can build small homes in the community that are 16 or less, that we can maintain a funding stream where the federal government under Medicaid will come along and help us significantly.

Medicaid is supposed to be a 50/50 split between the State and the federal government, so at the least the MR agency understood that half of their bill could be paid by somebody else if they were just smart enough to reconfigure their system. I suspect they have mastered ways to even get more than 50 percent back, but that I couldn't tell you for sure.

I'll just assume that that might be but, in any event, from a taxpayer standpoint having community homes has been a blessing because you have ensured a better way of life for the residents and I would hope and pray for the staff because they -- for whatever it was worth, the agency itself did a lot of

questionnaires after they did their closures and they were particularly interested not only in everybody who went out, but they were interested in both the people who had transitioned from ward service to community care and from other than ward service to community care.

And in I can't say virtually every case, but in by far the preponderance of questionnaires that had been responded to, the answer was we're happier out here than we thought we would ever be.

We don't need necessarily the reliance upon an institution because if we configure this design properly we're never so far from help and we have more staff out here than we ever had on the inpatient unit because the staffing level in the home usually is better by far because they know they have to fend for themselves.

So the world is better. I think, you know, if you can visualize in your mind what Willowbrook might have looked like in its worst moments and compare that to a community residence for the mentally retarded, I think you're looking at night and day and I think any

visit out there would prove that.

So I think the taxpayers benefited, I think the employees benefited, I think the residents, to be sure, have benefited and CSEA still represents a viable work force...

(End of Side A of tape.)

MR. LANGER: (Continuing) ...so I think it was kind of a win/win.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now let me shift gears again. You have referenced a number of individuals. You know, certainly we've talked about leaders at the statewide level, but you've referenced a number of individuals as we've been talking here who were leaders at kind of the local level.

How important is the local leadership to the effectiveness and longevity of CSEA?

MR. LANGER: Well, in -- I think what I said before is probably true. That a lot of the power that trickles down, if you will, to the local level comes from a strong leadership in Albany, but if you don't have the strength at the local level you don't have much because the vast number of people within the membership,

they read in the public sector about the leadership but what they see tangibly is what they see when, you know, they have membership luncheons and they have grievance committee meetings and their world is really more of what goes on locally.

You know, if I have an issue I need a local understanding. The contract is great because that gives me a global set of things that I can point to that are my protections, but there are things going on right here where I am that I need to have addressed and I can't go to Albany with that. I need somebody right here that I can talk to that can address those concerns and if you have somebody who has the ability at the local level who draws his or her strength from an Albany that, you know, that people at the management level at the local will always know, you know, who am I talking to and who in turn can that person talk to.

If that -- you know, if that management person believes that the local person is alone on an island somewhere, then they have no concern. They'll do what they want, but they

know if that person isn't sharp, has got union interests at heart and has significantly -- has strength that he or she can draw from from Albany, a case you can ride over me maybe if you really push the issue, but I can turn to somebody who's gonna make you pay.

That's something that becomes known very quickly and so it's important for Albany to be involved but unless you have a local leadership that can relate to the local membership it's tough to have an organization. You don't have a CSEA in Albany because you have a couple delegate meetings. You have it because you have local leaders who really run their locals.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about a few of them that you've encountered over the years. I know you called me a couple of weeks ago to tell me about the passing of an individual named Eva Katz who you were very fond of.

MR. LANGER: Eva Katz who just passed away two weeks ago, three weeks ago, was not just a dear friend. She was someone who was indifferent to me personally but she grew up in

Labor. When she was a young girl she was actively involved in the International Ladies Garment Unit -- Garment Workers Union. She just had union in her blood and she just lived it and breathed and felt like that was her calling.

She was my vice president when I was the local president at Rockland Psych or Rockland State at the time. She -- I would like to think she learned from me and I'd like to believe as well that I learned from her. I had my approach; she had her approach. She was a perfect illustration of the kind of labor leader you really wanted, somebody who could speak to the individuals.

Because unless you walk around and hear them, unless you make rounds of in those days the laundry or the housekeeping department or the kitchens or the ward service, you don't necessarily know. All you hear is occasional words.

She would walk face to face and hear what those people had to say, which is what a local leader has to do because, you know, in many cases you have a lot of different kinds of

folks all within your obligation of leadership and she had the ability to speak to every one of those kinds of individuals and hear them and she knew how to, you know, how to make the deal.

She knew how to make the deal that could actually make it possible for people to not just keep their jobs but to enjoy their jobs. People knew that when she was around they didn't just have a voice, they had a shield. Someone who could be there for them, who could make their jobs something they didn't mind going to every day.

And I can tell you personally, growing up in the world of the mentally ill, you know, that was a tough population to work with and for, and you needed to feel like someone's watching out for your interest. Eva was a person who could do that. She could relate to them, relate to the management and get the job done and that's the kind of leader that CSEA thrived on.

I hope and pray there are still many, many more like her still around today, but Eva's loss is a loss for this organization because her

history is part of this history.

INTERVIEWER: Any other individuals you can think of kind of fit that model of folks who are very effective at the local level?

MR. LANGER: Well, I referenced before Kathy. Kathy Button was and still is a special kind of a person. Kathy was special in every way that I just mentioned about Eva, but additionally I think Kathy was not afraid to get up and sort of fight the fight; not necessarily just against management but within the organization at times.

It wasn't easy for CSEA to really believe that you could trust management even a little bit to do what management says it's gonna do because we had not been spoken to in any positive way and with follow-through for a long, long time so there were a lot of folks with trepidation about, you know, you really want to go into a closure? You really believe that the State's not gonna go out and, you know, even if they do somethin' now they're not gonna turnkey these operations later on?

Well, Kathy was a believer along with

me that this was the future, so she -- she was at the time and still is someone who was not afraid to speak to the issue, not afraid to make a local arrangement that was gonna allow this change to unfold.

And she had -- you know, she had people within her local that were terrified of moving out into another venue. This was nothing they ever dreamed of and she had to assure them with her body and soul that this was gonna work and I had to assure her, I grant you, but she had to lay out there on that same front line with me and it was a scary thing.

She was a perfect leader and still is for that local. I'm glad that she now has a local that's gigantic because I can't think of anyone else who is better able to serve their -- that entire membership.

You'll forgive me but my focus probably is MH and MR. There are many others, you know. I mean I can remember Bob Lattimer, you know, when he was in charge of the Labor Department local in Buffalo. Also a firm and solid leader, you know, but again my focus is

really on people in the MH and MR world.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well, let me ask you another one with some significance and that's Danny Donohue. You certainly have worked very closely with Danny or his executive assistant for a time.

I wonder if you'd give us a little thumbnail about Danny's strengths and maybe some of his challenges as a leader.

MR. LANGER: Well, Danny -- Danny is a perfect, you know, if you can forget everyone who came between like Joe McDermott for a moment, Danny was a perfect individual to follow Bill, actually, because Danny in some ways is in the Bill McGowan mold.

You know, Danny's heart and his gut tells him where he needs to be and he's there. He has -- you know, he's mastered a degree of eloquence that maybe Bill didn't have in some ways but basically his background was sort of similar.

Where Bill came from the TV repair shop in West Seneca, Danny I think came from the Transportation Department of Central Islip.

Neither one of them worked in ward service but both knew how to relate to the people in that particular area.

Danny -- Danny grew up, you know, in -- I think when Eric Flamingbaum passed away, Danny had already risen to the position of being the number two in the Long Island region and suddenly thrust him...you know, there was Danny being the local -- or not the local but the regional president for Long Island, which came as a surprise to him, I think, but something he was just comfortable with.

You know, he came out of a local which was relatively small within the MH world. He did get to know people and he also understood the Island mentality and he was comfortable with it and he got to speak the New York type of thinking, but he was transportable. Danny could not just think the way Long Island thought and the way the Downstate area thought. Danny could come Upstate and go around the state and have that same quality that Bill did to relate to people all around the state and he got to be very comfortable.

I think he, you know, he just simply learned the ropes along the way. It didn't just come to him in terms of -- what came to him early was his instinct. You know, like Billy he had -- he knew where he needed to be on the issues, but I think he learned within the organization how to operate within the organization and what he needed to do to become an effective leader.

And I watched him personally grow. I was comfortable with him because his background was Mental Hygiene, which was clearly where I was coming from, so I watched him mature as a leader, as someone who could not just represent the Mental Hygiene world but, again because of his ability to relate, he started to represent everybody.

So he grew; he got to be the number two in the organization and I watched him unfold. I remember -- you know, I worked with Danny, you know, in his role as executive vice president doing a lot of Mental Hygiene issues. We covered closures. We covered closures in Gowanda which were much more difficult closures

than the one in MH and -- MR rather.

But Danny was a comfortable man to be around. He was smart. He always was smart and he kinda could look at things and see very clearly to the root of what the situation was and what it called for in terms of the position CSEA should be taking and what position he had to take.

I found him very genuine, someone who was good for the organization early on, someone who could do good for the organization, so as I got to work with him as the executive vice president, which was where I got to know him better, I started to realize that he'd become an admirable successor to Joe and someone who I would enjoy working with.

And in my role, you know, I just had, you know -- my personal world conflicted with the role I had to play here so I couldn't forever be his executive assistant. And I should add that during the time I spent as his executive assistant I got to know him even more than I already had and I -- I enjoyed the role he allowed me to play because he gave me the

latitude that I think you need to have in that role but he always made it clear that the buck did stop with him.

So even though I could make a number of decisions, that he always wanted to be the one to make the final decision and anything that was of great concern was his and his alone. So, yeah, he never wanted to say; well, look, you made your mistake. If there was a mistake to be made he was always gonna say it was my mistake and if there was something good he would allow me to take the credit.

Just a nice way about him. I enjoyed working for Danny. I still enjoy being his friend and I miss the fact that I can't work with him every day because CSEA, I think, has prospered under his leadership and I think as long as he remains around it will continue to prosper.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Let me ask kind of one final set of questions here. Can you think of some things that jump out at you as some of the more memorable and positive things that you've experienced during your time with

CSEA?

MR. LANGER: Well, probably the most positive thing goes back to what I've really been alluding to, which is that this change that I watched the CSEA organization go through, not internally but the role it plays within the State of New York and the Labor movement. I enjoyed being a part of CSEA going through this growing period where it went from being kind of a social club to being a major force in New York State.

That was at the time of the Palace Theater, as terrible a moment in time as that might have been, it helped create a change because it made clear that the need for CSEA to grow up was right there and that there was a need -- you know, if that was to happen there was a need for leadership to change and for the course of CSEA within the State, within the Labor movement, to change as well.

And so I was around at that moment. I was happy to be a part of that and that was at the beginning and I guess I was happy to say personally that, you know, I worked with Danny

at the end, for my end, in terms of my direct involvement because I watched that continue.

I watched CSEA continue its role as a labor organization that was certainly much more than a social club. That to me was the biggest part of my involvement; the fact that, you know, when I started my involvement with CSEA it was fun. When I ended it I was working for a labor organization that was pronounced and anyone anywhere in this country certainly knows what CSEA is all about now. That's something that was not the case 35 or 40 years ago when I first got involved.

INTERVIEWER: That's a great place to end and, Marty, thank you very much as always.

MR. LANGER: Okay. Thank you. My pleasure.

(Conclusion of interview of Marty Langer.)

