

**Interview with Bob Lattimer, 7/25/01**

FV: Let's start with your name and your association with CSEA, how it started and...

BL: Well, my name, of course is Bob Lattimer, and it started because a coworker was the Department of Labor. He had a project going. He needed some help. He thought I could help him. Then he kind of backed off and left me there. By that time, I was probably hooked or they knew too much about me, and I didn't want to go out or whatever the deal was. But it was nothing that was planned at one time.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Yeah, I was working with the New York State Department of Labor, and his name is Lee Andrews. In fact, we saw each other for dinner just last week, so we still are friendly. Lee's a very easygoing guy. He felt that the union needed to be some needed to be there like in a lot of other places where state employees were and are, to a degree. The union isn't really there, just because nobody will do it. He thought that he had a prospect here I guess, that he could get involved. So he did, and we did, and then he kind of faded back into the woodwork. I was having so much fun that I decided to expand my wings if I could and have more fun.

FV: So, what was his first project? Organizing?

BL: It was-there was some problems within the Division of Employment, you know, the usual. The lack of adequate management, which started here in Albany with the industrial commissioner, whose name was Louie Levine, and if anyone knows him, they understand what I'm saying. He had no-he had no sympathy or no feeling for CSEA specifically. He had another agenda and this was affecting the overall operation and the people who were in Buffalo and other parts of the state. The management-type people naturally followed his lead, so the union had no-very difficult at that time for the union to have any affect at all. So Lee felt that maybe between the two of us, we could at least do something out in the west and we found some other people who contributed probably more than yours truly did over a period of time. We got going and it kind of slid from there, I guess.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: This would be sixty-probably sixty-eight or sixty-nine because I didn't start with New York State Department of Labor until sixty-seven, so I was not a veteran when I got...

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Yep.

FV: So, basically, probably the first program was organizing in Buffalo?

BL: Well, yes. It kind of flowed from one to the other. I mean, I was thinking about it the other day. I guess it was a natural growth, but we go together out there because the problems that we were having were germane to western New York. And then as I, I don't know, spread my wings or whatever a little bit, got to be known-and got to know a lot of people in CSEA-not in this building, because they weren't here then. But it was, you know, it started with what we then called chapters and that was where our problem was, with the local hierarchy really. And then as time went on, it wasn't too long that we were dealing with the New York State Department of Labor, which is where we wanted to go anyway. So that was my indoctrination to this lovely city. Then they just grew and become

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more encompassing. For a period of time, was with the Department of Labor. Then, in the early 70's, it began to develop into something a little deeper when I learned that there was more to the organization than the Buffalo City Chapter, they called it at that time, where we already weren't popular because, very bluntly, they had a company chapter. I mean, it was-leaders were all somewhat in management positions within the Department of Labor and that's where they stood. So that did not sit well with me as I learned more about it and the people who, at that time, had come along and kind of got into it a little bit. So that expanded the horizon and meant that we had more to come to Albany for and we got involved with people in CSEA management staff here and CSEA members from around the state. As that developed, I got more of an interest in the operation overall. Meanwhile, I was pretty much my usual self, because there was a bug when they did things in Buffalo such as holding a meeting in Canada, which I frowned upon then and I frowned upon my entire career, as it turns out. So we raised a little hell and got less popular than we already were. Management-type people did not like-there were only a few of us that were behind this. Lee Andrews, Ramona Gallagher, maybe a couple of others whose names I lose at the moment. But that kind of brought me into it further and the next thing I knew, myself and Lee were delegates to a convention, and we really wondered why we were after we attended our first delegates meeting, which, incidentally, was in Buffalo. The big issue that year was one of those veteran ladies in CSEA had to go to the ladies room and she had to pay a dime or a quarter, or something like that to use the facility, and that became the cause. We were fighting the big fights, the good fight, and I was learning more about the operation and wondering as time went by why I was there. I guess I must have convinced myself or something because I stayed around for a while.

FV: You met a lot of union officers back then Any stories that you remember about them that will help us understand them and CSEA at that time, and who they were.

BL: Well, not really. I do remember with Lee Andrews, who brought me in, that somewhere in that period of time, in a two to three to four-year span, Lee, who was a very capable, honest and down-to-earth type of guy, was getting a raw deal from the Department of Labor. I forget the details right now, but it was definitely wrong. So, I remember him coming to me and asking me if I would represent him and work with him in fighting this battle, when he was probably more capable than I was, but he was the victim. So, I gladly said yes, and we fought the good fight, because we won. I remember Ramona Gallagher taking on the first major grievance; I forget really what the deal was, but she felt that the employees were getting the shaft and so she filed a grievance, basically on her own, and she won that. And she went on to become the Commissioner of Labor in western New York once the regime that was there left. So, you know, we had people of that caliber and it was a battle. Probably the first or second time that I ran for "chapter president", I lost. The guy who ran against me was a nice guy and we still see each other once in a while, but he was-he ran against me because I had said a couple of things that upset some of the management-types out there. So they did what they can do and, next thing I know, I lost. But at the same time that I lost the chapter, that was the year that I won-that was my first shot at running for the region president, which I did. So, I lost the chapter, but I won the region. So, I became-by then I was hooked. This is the type of business that, if one gets a feel for it, and believes in what he or she is doing, it's very difficult to walk away, and I didn't walk away.

FV: So you were elected in what year?

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BL: In 175.

FV: (inaudible) reputation as a fighter you in particular and CSEA in general dealt with administrations...

BL: Well, right off the top of my head. I can't probably remember any specifics, but it was a constant battle. We didn't have a lot of the things we have today with regard to a political action setup, sophisticated, if you will. So we were still going and begging-I think that's the only term I can use. And we were going to people like Malcolm Wilson at first, and then we went to people like Ronald Reagan, but by that time, we were a little more into the process and had learned a couple of things, but we still weren't recognized in New York State as a political force. We were looked upon basically as a large social club. I think that was an observation that was correct. Some of us, and I certainly wasn't the only one, there was many, many people who worked-that was maybe our main goal was to become an effective political organization because that's the name of the game. If you can't convince the people on the other side of the street over here, or the people in Washington who you need-and of course, that leaves you basically usually with one party. We became very-we became convinced that we had to get involved in the political action, and that was maybe our-the once constant thing. It was difficult to sell it within the confines of the union because a lot of people thought politics were always dirty, they thought politics weren't necessary. This is a free country, you know, God save us, we wave the flag and we'll say the right thing and talk to the right person, and we'll get what we deserve and they will give it to us graciously. Somehow, that never became...

FV: (inaudible) naive

BL: Very naive.

FV: Is this when you started working with people like Bill McGowan and...?

BL: Yeah, McGowan was-then they called it the-it wasn't the region president when Bill was there; same thing though, except he-it wasn't a full-time job with him, as it was for a little while with me, just went to work, but you were wearing two hats. And that's when I first became involved with Bill and then, of course, after a short period of time, Bill came here as the president of the organization and that was then at the time when I ran for office and got elected.

FV: You worked with him before you got here.

BL: Some. Not a great deal. We were-we did work together, but he had more things. He had a different agenda as a mental health and mental retardation section. That section was his real bag because that's where he was working and that's what he was mainly interested in, and he was absolutely correct. He came here as president and then we go to know each other and went from there.

FV: You worked on a project to... a lot of projects I know one of them was getting the (inaudible)

BL: I forget quite a bit of that, probably because I wanted to. But, you know, we were-once again, we-Joe McDermott was one of the players, naturally, and, off the top of my head-we were extremely dissatisfied with the-I wouldn't-no, I

should call it a paper because that's what it was supposed to be, but were extremely dissatisfied, didn't feel that it met the needs of a labor union, felt that it was a good tool for a garden club or something like that, social club, but not for a labor union. We didn't feel that they had-that paper had the best interests of labor and the employees in its makeup.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Yes, it came out of New York City. It was called The Leader, which it wasn't. So we got into a-hard to remember now how much time. It seemed like a long drawn-out I think it was, but probably realizing what we were trying to do, change the bible over what had been-was all anybody knew, that ... It did become a difficult project and it put factions of the union against one another, and it probably turned out, as everything did at that time-it was basically a combination of things: the old timers and the downstate located people against some of the young Turks. We were scattered all over the state but I would say we were certainly more upstate than places like region 6 and region 4 and things like that. And that became our big battle.

FV: Battle?

BL: Yeah, we-fighting the newspaper thing. The sides were pretty much drawn out-drawn up and I think that was the time that was probably the moment when my status with the downstate people was on its way down. Probably it had started before then, but it was always a bit of fun to me, even though they didn't know it. I can't forget this because at delegates meetings it would happen that when I would get up to the microphone to speak on something, immediately, the call went out. I mean, there was no question; the booing started. I know that no one at that time realized that all the booing did was get the adrenaline going and I played some ball and was never too popular a ballplayer with the opposition. In this issue, I had something to say; I said it and I revved them up. They in turn revved me up. That was kind of indicative not only of my status but probably of the organization at that time. They definite split between upstate and downstate with the-probably the downstate and certain sections of upstate. So that was another thing that we had to get through. It entered into everything and, of course, it didn't help anything because you spent a lot of time on in-house garbage, but it had to be taken care of; it had to be done. It was part of the process. It went on for quite a while.

FV: How did The Leader become The Public Sector?

BL: Well, that was another battle between-I wouldn't classify that one as strictly upstate and downstate, but still the same dynamics played. I would have to think back and look back, really, to find out who put together more things-you know, be more knowledgeable about what I'm talking about because that's an issue-it was a big issue, but I-one of the things that's kind of behind. Joe McDermott was a big player in that and everybody thought that it was an impossible task to get rid of The Leader because there was some question as to which came first, The Leader or the Holy Bible. There was also some question as to which was more accurate. Not in my mind; don't get me wrong. But The Leader had their supporters and they had two or three or four people who had been around on their staff for a long time and gotten to know a lot of people, and obviously had friends, so that prolonged the battle. The battle went on for a long period of time until finally, in Albany one day, we were able to make the moves and retire The Leader and go to a new newspaper, which was one of the most important things that ever happened to this organization because it gave the organization a chance to speak with a different voice, to speak more openly

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reflect the wishes and thoughts of a lot more people and come into this century with regard to communications. It brought new blood and new people into the organization. Very important.

FV: It sounds like it was one of your priorities to help, and it seems like it did-The Public Sector turned the club-like atmosphere into a political force because it everybody in the state.

BL: I probably-you summed it up. If we had to do-we had to say that there's one thing that had to be done, it was to make the change overall in many ways. We had to go from-I think a lot of us knew. Lattimer wasn't the only one, especially McGowan and McDermott, and a lot of other people. A fellow by the name of Jim Currier out of northern New York and names that come to me- John Wolfe out of Albany, an old timer. We knew that if we were ever going to be a union, we had to get a different mindset and that's why it's-today, thinking back without really looking at a lot of notes, or not having a lot of notes because I'm not a note keeper, it's kind of-you remember you went from one battle to another, and it wasn't-well, we've won this one so now we can sit back and relax, because there was always another one there that had to be taken care of. They weren't prioritized. I guess they were prioritized by the people involved, the pro and the con, whichever one we thought was helping the group that wanted to keep it as it was, and I don't think they really looked at it that way. I don't mean to paint them with a brush. They didn't look at it like they were doing that sort of a thing. They honestly felt, many of them, that the way things had been done was the way to go. It had worked to some degree, probably they thought more than we did. I guess what I'm saying, in case no one could recognize it, is that they weren't necessarily bad people; they weren't bad people. But they were used to one way and some of us felt that so many things had to be done differently that it just made for a constant turmoil. We had a board of directors who, in fact, used to meet for hours. The room was bigger than this one, but we used to meet down at Elk Street in the building once a month probably. We'd start out about nine o'clock on the morning and many, many months, we'd go until midnight. I mean, that was turmoil; that was wearing, but it's a process that happened. It's been a lesson for me forever-I watch Congress sometimes; sometimes I don't feel that well. But it taught me that changes that are significant are just not made with a snap of a finger. Now, I'm a slow learner, so it took me a period of time to get into that. Did I ever accept it? No. But it's a way of life; it's a fact of life. There were a lot of people in CSEA, on both sides, who were willing to, and did, pay a price individually for struggling or fighting, or whatever you want to say, their beliefs. I also learned that just because you disagree with me, it doesn't mean you're necessarily wrong.

FV: How many people were on the board of directors?

BL: Well, it seemed like about 5, 000 when we got going, but there was probably, give or take, 100. There still is. The CSEA board of directors is a huge group of many, many people. Probably-not probably-nowhere near as contentious today as it was. And I'm not sure that's all good because at least at that time, if anybody had anything to say, they said it. And maybe they said it once, and maybe they said it 15 times, and maybe they said it for months, but they said it. I think the organization, any organization that gets participation, whether it's pro or con to my feelings, is doing a better job because eventually, the pro or the con is going to, regardless of who it is or what it is, is going to stir up ideas that have merit, and ideas that will be

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accepted, some not having merit, but it will bring about change. If you don't have that, all you do is stagnate again.

FV. Well, something happened in the mid-eighties, according to my notes, that McGowan and McDermott got a 'little contentious.

BL: I don't think there was any one factor. That was just a combination of things, and it was not only McGowan and McDermott. I mean, I was involved in it and I was not with McGowan. That surprised people for a long period of time because he came from Buffalo and I came from Buffalo, and so we would, of necessity, be on the same side. Well, things don't work that way. A battle over the law firm was there. The number of officers, myself included, as I said before, wanted change. We wanted it when Wenzel was here. We thought we'd get it when Bill took over and I couldn't say that we didn't get some, but we didn't--some of us felt we didn't get as much as we should. I can remember one episode when Wenzel was still president. I don't know--I don't remember how it started, but like 12psy, it grew and some of us were planning a meeting. We wanted to get a meeting of a group--a meaningful group who would deal with the issues that we felt that were important to the union and quit looking at it from the parochial standpoint--parochial. So, lo and behold, some of us were instrumental in getting a meeting arranged in Syracuse on a Saturday in January or February. I think we ended up getting probably 60 or 70 people. You know, when you get 60 or 70 people to travel from around the state of New York to Syracuse, which people don't understand is the snow capital of New York State on a regular basis, just down from Boonville, which was originally the snow capital ... But for people to travel to Syracuse to meet on their own time, CSEA types and union types, at their own expense, you know something is going on. The meeting was arranged and of course it became--it stayed a secret for about a second and a half after the site selection was picked. So we trundled off to Syracuse one Friday and Saturday night. This was not the McGowan ... this was Wenzel, but it was a part of--the whole thing was boiling. In fact, Wenzel heard about it naturally, and he showed up out there in Syracuse and tried to scare people. He went out in the parking lot, writing down license numbers. In fact, I remember somebody deliberately walking out and standing in front of him and as many cars as he wanted to write down, make sure that he knew who the person was... that was--that's where we had come.

FV: What was that issue? Why the meeting?

BL: Overall, I can't remember. Maybe I can another time. I can't remember the one specific thing, but it basically boiled down to Wenzel's policies and his perceived, probably, lack of leadership and the fact that the organization once again needed change badly. In fact, I remember the following week, on a Tuesday or Wednesday, he called a meeting of the ten officers downstate somewhere, region 3 or region 1. I'm not sure where, but he had it down there where we never had meetings and of course, it wasn't called for our benefit. I remember going to that. It turned out to be like a lot of things that are blown up. It turned out to be nothing. But the importance of the Syracuse meeting was, I think that, finally, it was out in the open where it had to be. There were a lot of top staff people that were there too, and they took some chances. They took some chances. I think that gives anyone the impression, which is true, that the organization was in turmoil and needed a lot of-- this was--I remember in region 6, there was--early on, they had a region meeting in Olean and there was a big restaurant called the Castle in Olean at that time. That was selected to be the site of the region meeting. I don't really remember the issue, once again, but

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it was-this was Wenzel and Wenzel had a supporter in the region who was all pro-Wenzel and she was pro- Wenzel to the point that the Saturday night speaker was deemed by her and a couple of others to be President Wenzel. I was the president of the region and I wasn't a part of the team. I wasn't a player. So I can be a so-and-so too, and I remember when it was time for Wenzel to come on, in fact, when Wenzel had stood up, I got up and I walked out, and probably half the crowd walked out with me. That was another example of where the organization was. A region president and the president of the organization weren't speaking. I remember, when I got outside, I do remember somebody from a radio station down there coming up to me and saying something like, "Mr. Lattimer, when Mr. Wenzel got up to speak, you and some people left. What was the reason for that?" I said, "Well, I can't speak for the other people because I didn't say anything to them, but for me, it was a matter of getting some fresh air. I don't smoke because I don't like tobacco." We were in it.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Once again, I'd have to look it up.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Wenzel was still the president, yes.

FV: And you walked out of the meeting.

BL: When we walked out of the meeting in Olean, that was before. That was before the Syracuse thing. That was probably when things, were really starting to boil, and a lot of it did happen for some reason in region 6. Quite a bit of it happened in region 4.

FV: But you were head of region 6, so...

BL: It probably wasn't all coincidence.

FV: So your objectives were to unify the state to get more representation for upstate, for western New York, who?

BL: No, I didn't think, and it wasn't my alone. It was a number of people, that the organization was doing anything anywhere near what it should be doing. It wasn't involved; it wasn't growing; it wasn't growing in the fact that we still had no say or no whatever in any other labor. We were CSEA and that was it. We weren't there, we weren't going anywhere. We were our own-we could be happy I guess because we were the big fish in the little pond, but that didn't fly. I don't like to use that word because I use it too much and there were so many people who did as much as I did. All of these people had similar thoughts that if we wanted to be a labor union, a real labor union, and if we wanted to accomplish things, we had to modify our structure. We had to get more people involved. We had to open up the frontiers for them to get involved in and we had to let the rest of the state of New York, especially the State Legislature, the governor and various locals where we were situated, know that we were fed up. We weren't going to be the dumb little kid on the block anymore, that we were serious. You know, that sounds holier than thou and all that stuff, but it was a fact of life. That's where we were. We were ineffective. CSEA was ineffective. If we wanted something, we went across and put the hand out and if Malcolm Wilson, who was so inclined, you might get something. I just pick on Malcolm

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Wilson because he's the one who comes to mind, but all the other governors had the same thoughts. The state legislators, with few exceptions, did not know we existed and really didn't care. So there was no political action. We were going through things that we had to go through. We had to grow; we had to change. A lot of us learned that growing and changing also entail other things like working and

FV: (inaudible) convinced government that you were serious...

BL: Well, one of the ones- once again, I have to recall, would have been getting on board on the safety issue when New York State finally got involved in safety and, as an organization, that was one of our first big battles. McGowan was a big believer in the safety issue and it was very important to- mainly, the important thing was it was important to our members, that they have a safe environment, so that was one of the big ones. I'm kind of drawing a blank right now. We started to get involved in politics and that became a big battle, as everything did. I've said it before. CSEA had to be recognized, had to be a player, and to be a player and to be recognized, people had to know about you, you had to put together a record, whether they like it or not, but you had to put together a record that says that we're involved, dammit. This is important to us because it's important to our members. It's important to their jobs and, therefore, their livelihood. We have got to be involved in this damn thing and we are going to be. Now, that and ten cents will get you what, probably nothing today. But at least it was a start to do the things that had to be done to get into political action, to get into various other areas.

FV: So, demonstrations, PR, advertising.

BL: All of those good things, which actually, when you put them altogether, for eyewash, their great. For accomplishment, you have to talk, we learned. We were taught. You have to be able to go over in New York State and talk to whoever is in power in the legislature and talk turkey. This is it. This is what our members need. This is what we as an organization need and, dammit, we're going to get it one way or the other eventually. We never told them "eventually" because they already knew it. If I had done my homework, I would have a list that I could just give to you of things that we have done, but safety was such a big one.

FV: That eventually did happen.

BL: Eventually did happen and somebody else got credit for it, like the speaker of the house or the leader of the senate, but that's life. Those in the know, know where the hell they came from, and they got done because CSEA got serious and put together a, I would say, sophisticated political action plan were people who just did that, wrote up a book about this long at a place called Canoe Island in the Adirondacks, Tugboat Island, whatever it was nicknamed. We did those things...

FV: Who were some of the other people that were involved with...

BL: I can put together a list of names for you, but I wouldn't be able to do it right now. By doing it now, I would hit a couple and I'd miss, but I would certainly be willing to sit down one of these days and look back and think up- because there were a number of people who worked very hard.



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FV: (inaudible)

BL: Yeah; not a bad idea.

FV: Let's take a break and...

BL: I don't know about you guys; I'm sick...

FV: ...political force was...

BL: Definitely.

FV: Tell me about that.

BL: That was long overdue. That was probably, in my humble opinion, as an important a thing as had ever been done since I've been here. McGowan and I go-did go a lot of different ways, but one has to give him the credit for that. He had the... I don't know where the idea to be truthful about that, but he did not back off from it and he was very strong on it. Probably, in reality, it saved the organization because the...let's face it, the head of SEIU at that time was an individual by the name of John Sweeney and I don't think there's any question as to where they would have gone if CSEA had not joined. So, McGowan gets full marks on that one. He stood up; he was resolute about it; he was determined that it was going to happen and that he was going to be a big part of making it happen. I say in all candor...I wouldn't say it for the record, but that wasn't always Bill McGowan. But on this issue, he was there. I remember him telling the delegates that he was going to lock the doors at wherever we were in Albany at that time and nobody was going out until the issue was taken care of. That's basically what happened. I remember him bringing it to the officers, the statewide officers. I can't believe that everybody there accepted it as whatever. I'll be generous. Because was there-whatever. He brought it to the statewide officers who basically backed him and then went to the membership, which was my role in the thing, of the membership around the state, preaching the gospel and listening to their whatever and-then, one day, it was over and we were in the AFL-CIO, and we were all of a sudden players in the big ball game. Of course, it wasn't too long after we got into that big ball game that we had to go on and play another role with our benefactors at AFSCME because Jerry passed and therein came another big battle, which I think we played a role in; we did play a role in it. Those two happenings, but the AFSCME president being a major, major decision, nobody can stress the-overly stress the importance, but as opposed to making the move to join the AFL-CIO, that was-well, there wouldn't be any CSEA today. There wouldn't have been any CSEA probably just a period of time, maybe a couple of years after that happened if we hadn't have done it. Because everybody and their brother had been after us for a long time, but more players would have been on the field and they had the bucks and by that time, they knew who to go to and they would have gone to the ones that one will always go to. You go with people who are supposedly the leaders" and then you-more importantly, you go with the ones that are in the background but don' t want to come forth, but have say with a lot of people, but they're probably going to swing it for you. Hell, that's not or anybody else. That, as I said before, McGowan and I just went on different paths.

FV: What were some of the issues?

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BL: Well, probably the main thing was the debacle over the law firm, but Bill was marching to a different drum. Do I know the reason? Well, probably, I...but it's pure speculation and I'm not going to get into that.

FV: Well, we've done other interviews with other people and I'm getting the impression that the law firm was almost running CSEA...

BL: Well, let me turn that one around. When you don't have anybody running an organization this size, the individuals that should be running it aren't, then you got-your two choices are to either let that group continue to go down whatever road they're going down or you try to find somebody else who can do it. I don't think-I didn't hear a lot of-and I was pro law firm. Let there be no question. There never was with me and let there be no question now. I didn't hear a lot of valid complaints about the law firm. I heard a lot of garbage. I've been to a lot of board meetings. I've been to a lot of delegates meetings, and I heard a lot of things that were said that, to be kind about it, probably were modified from the truth. I don't think-Jim Roemer is Jim Roemer. He's a friend of mine; always has been and I imagine will be, but there had to be someone who could influence enough people to get some things done, some things that had to be done. Tried to keep us somewhat on the straight and narrow. Yeah, people said the law firm is doing this, the law firm was doing that. The law firm, in reality, didn't do a hell of a lot that they weren't allowed to do because the board of directors had the ability to say no, and the board of directors usually opted to say yes. The law firm was-were they egotistical? Yes. Were they overbearing? Probably. Were they haughty? Yeah. Did they think they knew it all? Yeah, probably. Ever know anybody like that? I know a hell of a lot of-I'll tell both of you, I know a hell of a lot of people like that. I've known a hell of a lot of people. Most of them couldn't deliver. The law firm could deliver. You know damn well when Jim Roemer argued for something that held be able to back it up. Feathers was feathers, but the same way. When it come to politics, Feathers knew the morass over at the capital and he knew how to get into this cubicle and get out of that cubicle and who to stay away from and who to talk to. And things still got accomplished despite the inertia of the organization. I probably shouldn't say it, but I will. I think a lot of people who would say that the law firm was running things maybe didn't know everything they thought they knew. There's a book that CSEA has. It's about this thick. The procedure and the rules and the bible for the CSEA political action fund. That was put together by one of their lawyers who was still with Featherstonehaugh, Wiley, and all of the officers of this organization sat in on those things and had the chance to comment and, as the officers are wont to do, everybody had their comments, times. Hell of a good book. Nothing in it that's illegal. Nothing in it that can't be done, and it crosses every T and dots the I's and does all of those things. Does all of those things that we all want done, but when somebody does them, we get upset because they're taking too damn much time or we didn't want that comma there or whatever. I'll get off the soapbox, but that's my rebuttal to the majority of the people that you're talking about. I don't know who they are, but I will tell you that I would make an uneducated guess that I don't think too many of them were ever in the room that I just talked about. I mean, I was in the room many days. There's a place up the river here, above Saratoga somewhere called Canoe Island. Some of us transferred that name to Tugboat Island, maybe... But that's the place that we did this, most of it, and I remember that place because, one morning on a break-it was a nice place. I don't know if you've ever been there or not. One morning on a break, I was out wandering around the lobby looking at things and. every piece of paper-not every one, but 70% to 80% of the papers that are

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picked up, the magazines or whatever, were published and whatever by the John Birch Society. And I say that just because I don't know how many other people know that. Not a hell of a lot. If you didn't know that, they weren't there. Jerry McEneny was there, that day and was Jerry, because he was innocent like all of us were, but when we reconvened after the break, I just jumped in the middle and I looked at whoever I thought was appropriate, "Shall I take this out of here? Shall I make copies of these things? Shall I distribute it around to various people in this organization and outside this organization? Would it say something about the organization? Where the hell will we be once they find out we're in a right-wing John Birch building spending members' money to deal with an important document like we're dealing with. Are we tainting it with this? No, we are not. Will anybody believe that? Hell, no. Something like that.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Oh, the, officers that were there, including Bill McGowan and the president of AFSCME. Only because he was there; he was the victim. He didn't do it. He was there. None of the rest of them probably knew. But that was the damn thing. I'll guarantee you that were the law firm running that thing, that wouldn't have been out, but it was laying all over the damn place.

FV: That's sort of typical of the lack of attention to detail?

BL: I think that's a good way to put it; lack of attention, slipshod. Just not paying attention. Now McGowan and Roemer had been like that for I don't know how many years, ever since Roemer was on board here. Jim and I are friends today. In fact, I was going to see him last night and it didn't work out. Yeah, he's a prick. He's intelligent, he's smart, he's shrewd, he knows what he's doing, and he knew who he was working for at that point in time. I never knew him to make very many moves that weren't in the best interest of this organization, despite the garbage that was said about him, and I don't know how the hell-when it was going on at some of those meetings how he and Featherstonehaugh and whatever was said there and took, I couldn't have done. I would have either been up on my feet roaring or trying to get to somebody. I'm not that smart. Sorry about that monolog.

FV: No, that's what we want. That's what we're after. The first hour of our conversation must have stimulated some other memories that I haven't asked you questions on, so this would probably be a good time to do another monolog about those things think about it.

BL: Well, I have been thinking about it as things jump from one to another. I'll probably do more thinking about it when I leave here, but I'll do what I always should do and always should have done and never did, and that's jot some things down on paper. Because, yeah, it's interesting to me. It brings back a lot of things. It-what I always found about being in CSEA and being in the jobs that I was in, I found myself that I can be a so-and-so I but I found myself more and more trying to learn what was going on as a learning situation. I would say, and a lot of people would probably disagree with this, but it helped me in a way that I never would have expected. As you can probably tell, I'm a little quick on the trigger. I've been known to have a temper, but it taught me one thing, to temper that and it enabled me-that job alone, the business enabled me to learn that the best thing I could do with people was to

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listen and if I didn't like what they said at the start or whatever, not to overreact, especially don't overreact...It also taught me something that I probably never thought I would have learned but, and I say this for whatever it's worth. The thing that it taught me was I-long before I left, I came to a point where I no longer was interested in, retribution. I never really was into it too much despite what people might have thought, but if you disagreed with me, or if I had problems with you or whatever, during an election or during anything, I brought myself to the point, I think-I didn't do it by myself, but I came to a point where if you came to me or if anybody came to me with a problem, I accepted that problem as something they needed help with and tried to deal with it. Is that worth anything? I don't know. It was worth something to me because I knew I was practicing it. A couple of people even brought it up to me after I left when the election brouhaha was going on, but it taught me that. It taught me that whatever it looked like or if you were in the organization and I was supposed to be representing you, and if you had screwed me over or I didn't think you were the greatest person in the world, that I still had the obligation to do the best I could.

FV: (inaudible) role models, I guess...

BL: I don't know. There weren't-I've never been one to really pattern myself or whatever after anybody. I mean, I respect people; I do. There was a fellow around that I became very close with in CSEA, Jack Carey, who was a-I forget the various titles that Jack had, but he was usually number one in the state division and probably number two in CSEA for a number of years under different presidents and so on and so forth, and a very easygoing guy. I guess people would have thought-probably laughed at it. Jack and I became very good friends. He's a-he was an Irishman who probably was beholden to-my favorite school, Notre Dame. Ho, ho, ho. Incidentally, I thought last New Year's Day was one of the greatest days in the world. That shows you where I am. But Jack was somebody that I thought this business needed. Very bright, probably didn't always use his full talents, but who does? But he had the perfect temperament for the union and Jack was one person that I related to very well. Roemer and I-we had our moments. Who the hell wouldn't with me? And who wouldn't with Roemer? He's the same way. No question about that. But a brilliant guy and if you're going to pick an argument with him, or you're going to argue details, you better know your stuff. At one time, I probably had an admiration for McGowan. I probably still do to the effect that he was able to relate to a lot of different people. And he would be-this guy would be surprised about it, but Jerry McGinty-I don't think I've ever seen anybody better on their feet and able to deflect things and say the right thing and, you know, do the right thing with a lot of pressure on him. Jerry Worth was an interesting guy. Could I stand him? No. Could anybody stand Jerry Worth? I can't speak for anybody else. But at the same time, one had to give him credit once again for the courage of his convictions.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Well, I don't know too many people, including yours truly who would have had the wherewithal, fire in the belly, or whatever, to do what he did early on himself with the blacks and their problems and, you know, I guess we can look at it today or people can look at that and say, "Well,, that was the thing to do." Well, that would be the thought today. At that time, it wasn't the thing to do. I mean, he not only did it, but he had to know that he was putting himself right in the cross hairs when he was saying those things and marching all through the south. He could be-he never did it to me, but I saw him do it to other people,

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but he had the courage of his convictions and I think that ... Those are things that, I don't know, we have them today, but probably the people who are able to view them don't articulate them for-that thing is one of them. The camera. The camera. Most of them would look at that thing and, hey, if I say it, you know, I can say all I want, but I didn't say it because it's going to be there. I think that probably has unmasked a few people, but Worth is one of the people ... Anybody who has really stood up in the labor movement over the last-over history probably, but especially it seems to be getting tougher and tougher. We always say that. But look right now. You've got a president who prides himself on the fact that he-every decision he comes down with is geared towards-openly geared-towards the people who have the money. He's not afraid to do that. He...The head of his air force has a big company, makes planes. One other person is in the same boat. I forget who it is. Not Secretary of the Navy, but one of those people. The same boat, same boat. Makes a lot of money off what he's doing today and in a government position. The guy appoints the person who lives on government property and uses all government facilities and runs up a debt of \$163 for an electric bill last month and wants the government to pay him for it. I mean, he's got the gall, balls, whatever you want to call it, to do things like that. Where is the fever in...where's the fire? Where's the fire? Jerry Worth was very good at that. Jerry McEneny is very good at that. Labor needs more of those people.

FV: You were a fighter one time.

BL: Yeah, but small potatoes.

FV: What are you most proud of in your... There's a lot of things, but can you a couple?

BL: Well, I've really never given it much thought. I really haven't. Oh, did I enjoy whatever? Sure. Did I like to win? Sure. That's why I play ball. I play ball to win. If I didn't win, I hated it, so that's no big accomplishment. But I don't know if there's any one thing I ... I really think probably it-I mean, I know I've got a reputation out here.

FV: What's your reputation?

BL: Oh, I'm a hard head, a big prick. But, I also know I do have a reputation and I just-maybe I heard two people say this and I accepted it. What I was saying earlier about being able to-I think most people, even now, they-a lot of them didn't love me, a lot of them didn't even like me. I think most people respected me as being-and I could be all wet, because I've never take a survey, but that was kind of important to me. You try to do the best you can and I was lucky. I was extremely lucky because I've always been, since I've been in the business, I've always been surrounded by some pretty damn good people, both staff and elected people. Stand up people who were there when they had to be and were many times there when they didn't have to be. They could have taken a walk and that would have been understood. They -not only were there but they were up front about it. That, I've observed and maybe I'm making more of it than was there but...

FV: You want to name some of those people that you're proud of,

BL: I prefer to put that on some paper because I know damn well if I started reading or start jogging whatever, memory I have then I'm going to forget,

somebody and I wouldn't write two books on it either, but I would put some on paper.

FV: Just a couple more questions. What in your CSEA career are you most disappointed by?

BL: I don't think-when I think a little bit-that's kind of an easy question. I'm disappointed by the fact that the membership-we still haven't convinced the membership of how important the union is to them. They take the union in most cases for a-I think-they take the union for granted. "You're getting paid the big bucks; you ought to!" They don't really understand what the union does. ...paper last week, they were-well, it was another union. Retirees-one of them was a CSEA member at one time, I know, but anyway, some retirees' group was having a picnic and they invited me. That was an easy one not to go to, but they wanted people-they invited people to come and meet their legislators and thank them for passing the COLA. Jesus H. Christ! We've been trying to get a friggin' COLA passed for year. The members did not have a goddamn thing to do with it. Of course, that's nobody wanting to learn the political action system. But that just burned me. But in reality, whose fault is it? It's the union's fault, because we haven't done-I don't know how you do it. But we obviously have not done an adequate job of informing the membership and giving them, not so much to participate, but even getting them to understand. If we can get them to participate, we could do a lot-the union could do a lot of things, but they can't. If they don't get something, it's the damn union. And when they get something, then they read the Buffalo news and one of the other papers, and it's the damn politicians who gave it to you because you gave them all that money, and sometimes that's true, but no always. That's probably my biggest disappointment, I think, is the fact that we all felt at one time when we started, I think, that we'd be able to make a difference and the members who didn't listen to us-I mean, thank God New York State-and I'm showing my political preferences; big deal-but thank God New York State didn't vote for George Bush. I mean-but a lot of others did. They voted for a guy who has told them he's going to screw them, is screwing them, and will continue to do it as long as he's there, and they don't even know it. The political process-maybe it goes a little deeper than that at this-we have not been able to get our members to make themselves aware that the political process is so important to them and their families and their future and therefore, this country's future. Yeah, when I think about it, that's an easy one.

FV: But the gains that you helped fight for and got them, is that in spite of them?

BL: Well, I probably wouldn't say it was in spite of them, but it wasn't much because of them. ...goes, whether it's Congress, with AFSCME or us with New York State Legislature or us with the Albany County Legislature or Erie County Legislature or whatever. Most times, they don't give you, oh, they'll give you help if it's something that is near and dear to their hearts, really near and really dear, but even then, they're reluctant. I mean, if we were to ask people to go out- couple of hospitals in Erie County and hospitals everywhere, their people are striking because they just don't have it. They don't have the money, they don't have the time, they work too hard and all that. If we ask our membership to go out and support them on the picket line-I gave up doing that because I didn't want to be embarrassed anymore. Every once in a while, you hit a magic button and people will respond. I don't care whether they respond to me or they respond to a field rep or-as long as they respond to somebody in the union, that's the important thing. But it hasn't been done; it probably never

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will be done. Of course, the bottom line is that they don't-they miss out on a lot that they could have had, because the politicians aren't afraid of them.

FV: What are some of those magic buttons that they did respond to?

BL: That they did respond to?

FV: Yeah, the magic buttons.

BL: If you can identify to them, usually, that is, actually taking food off their table or something like that, they sometimes will respond. But it's hard to get them to believe in it. I always had the belief that maybe we could convince them about children not getting whatever. They will get excited when they've had too many bad contracts. They will get excited because they see that their pay has not improved. Of course, they'll probably get more angry at the union than they do with the people who are responsible for it, and that's their friendly politician. Because their friendly politician says, yeah, yeah, you're right; I'm gonna do everything I can for you. I'm there. Oh, hey! He's there, he's there. He's for us. And they believe that, and don't try to tell them otherwise because then you're a...I don't know. I don't have too many magic buttons.

FV: Well, let's look back. What do you see as the most important even during your time of involvement?

BL: The affiliation with AFSCME, because in my humble opinion, there wouldn't be any CSEA if we had not gone...

FV: Okay. Let me ask you this. What lesson does the history of CSEA hold for the future of CSEA?

BL: Well, I can tell you lesson it should hold, but it isn't. The lesson should be, I think, especially to people in the State Life board of directors, that you're now in a position that you can have some say about what CSEA, a union of a few hundred thousand people, is going to do for its membership and what AFSCME is going to do for our much larger membership. All of these things that they're going to do or not do are going to have some impact on your world and they're going to have an impact on your children's world, and they way things are changing, they're going to have an awful impact on the rules and regulations that run that world. Maybe-obviously, I'm wrong because nobody gets excited about it. One of the last things I said at a CSEA board of directors meeting for whatever it's worth was along that line. A few staff people come up to me after the meeting and liked what I said. I don't think any member came up because it went in here and it went out here. This is all they got. An example of how bad they are, I think I've been telling you about, let's come and meet our legislators and thank them for passing the COLA. I think the COLA bill was first on the table in 1776, or whenever New York State had a legislative ... So, that's scary.

FV: Now, you were a leader...

BL: Whatever a leader is...

FV: How would you characterize that time. What adjective would you use to describe what drove you? Crusader? Fighter? What?

BL: I enjoyed it. Maybe that's because it was a fight. There's nothing dramatic to say. I mean, I happened to be in that place at that time and I would say I got lucky. Others might say, he didn't deserve it. And that's true, too; could be true too. I was able to do something that I enjoyed doing and when you can do something for 25 or whatever years that you enjoy doing, and you don't mind going to work, and I don't think I ever really did ... I don't know. Can you be much more lucky than that? I don't think so. I'm frustrated because that's me. That's just about everybody if you don't get what you want, but...

FV: You got a lot of things that you wanted.

BL: Yeah, but never accepted it enough, and I can look back and say, why didn't I do this and I was wrong. I wish I had done things other ways, so on and so forth, but, no, I've been pretty lucky that way. I enjoyed what I did. Although I thought I was fairly good at it, I could have been better-wish I would have been better. Wish I had the magic buttons. I know how to accomplish certain things but I never did and I never will. It was a great ride.

FV: I think this was a very good session and if you will do some more thinking, we'll come back and

BL: Now that, you know-I'm not saying that I walked in here unprepared, because I just-but it's still hard to, you know, to envision...

FV: Well, you didn't know what direction we were gonna take and how we... You're still holding a lot of history in your head and we want it. Posterity wants it. People are gonna want to know who was there, what happened, why, from everybody's point of view. That's really what we want.

BL: What was the big dummy from Buffalo?

FV: (laughs) I love your dry sense of humor.

BL: Well, I appreciate you two gentleman putting up with me for five or six hours, or whatever it was.

FV: It only seemed like it. (laughs)

BL: No, like Steve said when he talked with me. He says, after you get into a couple of hours and so on and so forth, you kind of and dry up a little or whatever and I firmly believed it at that time, and he was right on the mark. Now that I've done it, I'll try to-I'm not a good note taker. I've never been one to play off notes. That's another shortcoming. You're a hell of a lot better if you do, but I appreciate you gentlemen very much.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Well, that's one thing you'll do. You'll buy a lot more newspapers, print, paper because of it.

FV: (inaudible)

BL: Yeah. Who made that? The printer, the owner of the Buffalo News, number two in the country for money, Warren Buffet? It was said just a few weeks ago that newspapers are going to become extinct. A few days later, something happened



and collapsed. Something went wrong with the. Internet and they couldn't get anything out.

FV: I guess we're done for now. We'll come and attack you again sometime.