

WILLIAM LUCY

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CSEA INTERVIEW

of

WILLIAM LUCY, AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer

July 2003

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1 THE INTERVIEWER: When did you first
2 become aware of CSEA?

3 MR. LUCY: I think anyone who did
4 work in the public sector knew CSEA or knew about
5 CSEA all the time, specifically in the
6 mid-sixties, late sixties, when the campaign for
7 recognition in the State of New York took place
8 under the new Taylor Law.

9 THE INTERVIEWER: I'm gonna ask you
10 to talk a little bit about The Taylor Law. CSEA
11 and AFSCME had a very contentious relationship in
12 the late sixties and early seventies after the
13 establishment of The Taylor Law in New York in
14 representation size. What do you remember about
15 those times?

16 MR. LUCY: Well, I clearly remember
17 the fact that both organizations were very
18 competitive, both in terms of the areas of the
19 work force that they represented at the same time
20 as well as competing for new areas that were made
21 possible by The Taylor Law itself. We had a
22 direct competition in the Institutional Unit which
23 involved the Mental Health Institutions and those
24 at the State level in addition to some of the

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1 Local governments, County and Local government
2 races.

3 THE INTERVIEWER: How did the
4 relationship soften over time to the point where

5 CSEA considered affiliating with AFSCME?
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7 MR. LUCY: I think both CSEA and
8 ourselves recognized that ultimately we were not
9 each other's enemy but the employer was the enemy
10 of both, and while we had different missions our
11 representations were our State Councils and
12 certainly our City of New York locals under
13 District Council 37. We were trying to find the
14 best way to service the needs of public sector
15 employees.

16 I think what caused the situation to
17 really, you know, crystallize was the fact that a
18 large piece of CSEA, notably the what is called
19 now PEF, the Public Employees Federation, came
20 into being which, I think in the minds of the
21 leadership of CSEA, really raised the question of
22 fragmentation and how could they best keep their
23 entire unit together.

24 THE INTERVIEWER: What do you
remember about the affiliation? How did it happen

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1 and what role did you play in helping to make sure
2 it happened?

3 MR. LUCY: Well, as I said, the --
4 on the event of the Public Employee Federation
5 comin' into bein', I think great thought went
6 through the minds of the leadership of CSEA as to
7 how to avoid this fragmentation issue and we,
8 AFSCME, were then the largest public sector union

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9 in the state and I think the natural drift was to
10 see what kind of relationship could be worked out
11 with ourselves and that same view was going
12 through our mind and it was on that basis that a
13 number of discussions began to take place at the
14 leadership level and also at the affiliate level.

15 THE INTERVIEWER: How important was
16 the affiliation for AFSCME?

17 MR. LUCY: Oh, critically important
18 to us. I think it not only established AFSCME or
19 reaffirmed AFSCME's leadership in the public
20 sector, but it brought into bein' a large unit of
21 public sector employees in the State, which meant
22 for us that we had to intensify our efforts in
23 understanding State government and certainly
24 developing stronger procedures and methods for

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1 being the State employee interest.

2 THE INTERVIEWER: How has the
3 relationship between CSEA and AFSCME evolved over
4 the years?

5 MR. LUCY: I think it's been a
6 magnificent relationship. CSEA was an independent
7 association. I personally come out of an
8 independent association background, so we had --
9 those backgrounds give you a different perspective
10 on your role and your relationship with the
11 employer, whether it be a State government or
12 County government.

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13 I think we convinced CSEA leadership
14 at it's top level and local levels that we
15 understood public sector representation and I
16 think what they drew from us and learned from us
17 was that we were not sort of the wild-eyed radical
18 union that we had been presented to be on a local
19 situation, but that we were trying to increase our
20 ability to meet the needs of State employees and
21 Local government employees and that they were a
22 key factor in that.

23 we had to work together to improve
24 the whole and I think over time this proved to be

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1 a very wise decision.

2 THE INTERVIEWER: How would you
3 describe CSEA's role in AFSCME today?

4 MR. LUCY: Oh, CSEA is a major
5 participant, a major player in shaping the policy
6 direction of the union as well as how we approach
7 major public policy questions, not just in terms
8 of the day-to-day representation but what's public
9 employment gonna be like two years, four years,
10 six years from now, and New York State and the
11 various public entities in New York State are a
12 unique piece of our union and a unique piece of
13 that problem. I mean we want to maintain quality
14 public services performed by trained and qualified
15 public employees and CSEA's vision of that, as the
16 largest group of public sector employees in our

17 union, is critical to how we formulate our
18 programs for the rest of the country.

19 THE INTERVIEWER: What do you think
20 were the most important events and issues for CSEA
21 and AFSCME over the past 25 years?

22 MR. LUCY: I think it's probably
23 been the continuin' to build this relationship so
24 that each party sees the continuous -- as a work

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1 in progress. We're continuing to learn about
2 their needs from a political perspective in New
3 York State and they are continuin' to learn that
4 they are a part of a -- of our, should we say, a
5 magnificent whole.

6 And what they give us is a sense of
7 stability as we look at major public issues and
8 hopefully what we give them to deal with our
9 situation is resources and support wherever it's
10 asked for.

11 THE INTERVIEWER: This is the
12 (inaudible) question. We want you to comment on
13 some of the CSEA leaders you've worked with over
14 the past 25 years and I'll just (inaudible). Bill
15 McGowan?

16 MR. LUCY: I think Bill McGowan was
17 probably one of the strongest leaders who
18 recognized the need for CSEA to make this
19 transition from an independent but strong
20 association to an integral part of the American

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21 labor movement and that to come in as a strong
22 organization meant that you not only played a
23 rightful role as a part, but you became even
24 stronger by increasing the size of the total

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1 union.

2 THE INTERVIEWER: Irving
3 Flamingbaum.

4 MR. LUCY: Irving was one of the
5 most colorful individuals I've had the pleasure of
6 meeting. As a matter of fact, I knew Irving
7 Flamingbaum before I met Bill McGowan. Irving was
8 a leader at the County level, one who really makes
9 his knowledge and understanding of Local
10 government, had an incredible sense of political
11 engagement and was really a sort of a people's
12 person, so you put all those three characteristics
13 together and it gave -- you come out with a leader
14 that was both cunning in the context of dealing
15 with the employer, he was politically
16 sophisticated because he was able to -- I say walk
17 all sides of the street on behalf of his
18 employees. Irving was a master politician.

19 THE INTERVIEWER: Joe McDermott.

20 MR. LUCY: I think Joe McDermott as
21 a successor to Bill McGowan really built on the
22 foundation that Bill laid, that foundation being a
23 strong and forthright engagement inside of AFSCME
24 itself, makin' sure that CSEA was well-represented

1 in the decision-makin' process of AFSCME, but
2 bringin' his basic trade union skills to work on
3 behalf of this affiliation. And both Bill and Joe
4 had major roles in terms of integrating the two
5 organizations together.

6 THE INTERVIEWER: Danny Donohue.

7 MR. LUCY: I think Donohue is one of
8 the brightest and ablest leaders in the American
9 labor movement today and while he represents CSEA,
10 which in the grand scheme of things is just one
11 piece, his leadership of CSEA and his
12 participation in our national union has allowed
13 him to make a mark for public employees and
14 workers in general at the highest levels of labor.
15 I have a great deal of admiration for Danny.

16 THE INTERVIEWER: Mary Sullivan?

17 MR. LUCY: Mary and Danny and George
18 Boncoraglio played two important roles. One,
19 representing CSEA on our board, but also
20 representing our total union in New York and
21 across the rest of the nation. They have been, I
22 think, key parts of transmittin' AFSCME's agenda
23 to the CSEA leadership and rank and file and vice
24 versa; makin' sure that the executive board of our

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1 union is totally in tune with the thinkin' of CSEA
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2 membership.

3 THE INTERVIEWER: Irene Carr.

4 MR. LUCY: Irene, aside from bein' a
5 tremendous leader in CSEA, did somethin' for the
6 national union and I don't believe we could have
7 done without her and that is to take on the chore
8 of building the women's movement in AFSCME and in
9 buildin' in a way that kept it focused on what
10 it's ultimate goal was. She was a very quiet but
11 effective lady and one who had the total respect,
12 even though she come from the association side,
13 all the other members came from basically the old
14 AFSCME side, and she was able to bring her
15 leadership to that group in a very quiet and
16 effective way. We've probably got, as a result of
17 her contribution, the most effective women's
18 Committee of any union.

19 THE INTERVIEWER: Anybody else that
20 I haven't named?

21 MR. LUCY: No, because if I name one
22 or two we have to mention others.

23 (Laughter.)

24 THE INTERVIEWER: How has the CSEA

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1 changed AFSCME over time?

2 MR. LUCY: Well, I'm not sure
3 "changed" is the word so much as maybe how has it
4 made us intensify our work. I mean we have
5 become, obviously, much more knowledgeable about

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6 the importance of State government in the overall
7 scheme of government: State, County and Local.
8 And I think that's as a result of, (a) the need to
9 recognize that in terms of State and Local
10 governments being able to function, State is
11 where, you know, the action starts and we have
12 intensified our efforts in that area. We've
13 restructured our service mechanism to meet some of
14 the needs that exist there, so I would say we've
15 gained from understandin' the need to focus on
16 State government at that level.

17 THE INTERVIEWER: How has AFSCME
18 maybe changed CSEA?

19 MR. LUCY: I think we've convinced
20 the leadership and the rank-and-file members of
21 CSEA that we are all public employees with the
22 same set of problems and that as an institution of
23 1.4 million folks our ability to focus on the
24 policy issues, focus on the day-to-day problems of

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1 workers, is the key to our survival and that they
2 are as much a part of this institution as we are a
3 part of them and that together we have an
4 obligation to confront employers irrespective of
5 whether they're national Presidents or State
6 Governors on the day-to-day issues that affect our
7 work force.

8 THE INTERVIEWER: One of the last
9 questions. How did you see the relationship

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10 between CSEA and DC 37 evolve over time?

11 MR. LUCY: I think it started off as
12 a distant, a nonexistent relationship because as I
13 said earlier, the competition, you know, between
14 leadership, the competition for turf was alive and
15 well for all the world's ears leadin' into the
16 sixties. But under Danny's leadership, that gap
17 has been breached and you now have DC 37, 1707,
18 and CSEA meeting as a family in one state to talk
19 about policy questions that affect everybody and I
20 think that that could not have happened
21 effectively without the leadership of Danny
22 Donohue and the enlightened leadership of DC 37.

23 THE INTERVIEWER: What are your --
24 what are some of your most vivid personal memories

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1 of CSEA events and activities?

2 MR. LUCY: Well, I think I would
3 have to go back to one that George Boncoraglio got
4 me engaged in and that's when I discovered that
5 the Brooklyn Bridge is not nearly as short as some
6 folks think it is. (Laughter.)

7 One of the most magnificent
8 demonstrations that was held in the region that
9 George is vice president of was in New York City
10 and those of us who jumped at the chance to walk
11 across the Brooklyn Bridge jumped at a chance.
12 The bridge is longer than they say. That's my
13 most vivid memory.

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