

Interview with Roger Cole

FV: Tell us your name and the positions you held in working for CSEA from the beginning to your retirement. Any remembrances you are willing to tell Us about and then we will follow-up with questions.

RC: I'm Roger Cole. I worked for CSEA from 1974 to 1998 began as the assistant director of communications. I later became the director of communications and for the last twenty years I was the editor of The Public Sector which is currently today known as The Workforce, the union's newspaper.

FV: Okay. What are your earliest recollections?

RC: I think the characters of CSFA stick out in ray mind the most, particularly from the 170s, 180s and 190s when we seemed to have had an abundance of them. They all had an impact on the history of CSEA, the future of CSEA, the growth of CSEA and we should not forget those people. A great many of them have passed but their contributions are kind of strong in my mind, at least, and I would like to talk about a few of those today. When I joined CSEA, the president of CSF-A was a true character, an eccentric, a highly educated man named Ted Wenzl. Ted had a lot to do with the growth period of CSEA that began probably in the late 160s and extends right through today. Prior to that, CSEA had been in existence for 50 or 60 years but had no real power. The Taylor Law changed all that and Ted Wenzl was part of that change and part of that growth. What I remember about Ted was his mannerisms. He would remove his shoes at the most inappropriate time, in his office at the highest level meetings, throw his stocking feet up on his desk and let the, meeting take care of itself. In the course of that, he would get up in his stocking feet and water his plants. There would be governor's representatives sitting there, high level state people sitting there and Ted might, for instance, walk into his bathroom (which was part of his office; there was a bathroom there); he would leave the door open, sit on the john, conduct the meeting from there if he had to. That was Ted. A very interesting character to say the least. Ted had, however one huge fault, I think, and that was that he had no relationship or interest in a relationship with state officials from the Governor on down. He was proud that CSEA in those days was an independent labor union, the largest independent labor union in New York State, perhaps in the country and he fiercely defended that. He felt we could stand on our own. We didn't need to be close to anybody. We didn't need any other unions. We didn't need anybody. The problem was we did and the other problem was finances. In those days CSEA's annual dues were about \$45.00 a year. We spent a great amount of that on defending our independence against other labor unions and that proved to be, ultimately, our downfall during that time frame. I recall one time when we were in particularly difficult negotiations with, the state, Governor Hugh Carey at the time. Ted, having no relationship at all with the Governor decided the only answer to that difficult negotiation was to call a statewide strike. It would be the first in CSEA's history. It was completely illegal at the time and would be today, but Ted insisted that this was the solution... we need to have a strike. So we geared up for a strike and we held a special delegates, meeting at the Palace Theater in Albany, totally rigged. That's the way it was done in those days. All the speakers lined up were plants and the meeting opened and Ted Wenzl jumps up and says, "I propose that since the negotiations are so difficult and the State is not doing anything to bring an end to this difficulty, we strike." Someone who was planted at the microphone one said, "I second the motion." Someone at microphone three said, "Me too." You know, third and all like that. Ted says, "Let's have a vote." A few people said, "Aye." Ted said, "Carried." He didn't even ask for the nays. With the wave of his hand, he ordered the power to be cut off to the microphones and Ted ran off the stage, out the side door, into a waiting car and took off for Pennsylvania so that he

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hoped to avoid going to jail, which was what happened to union leaders who led illegal strikes in those days. What they didn't count on was the members themselves out there, the delegates, many of them jumped up and the stage screaming and yelling. They didn't even know what happened. They took over the meeting and most of the officers had stayed on the stage and they had a sort of impromptu meeting, redo and in the end decided to carry, on, of course,, not to strike and to carry on negotiations. An interesting side note there was that another character who had nothing to do with CSEA membership but was vital to CSEA, a legendary news reporter named Arvis Chalmers, for the then Schenectady Union Star which was an afternoon newspaper, was in the audience and he ran out and got on the phone. He called in this story that CSEA had just voted to strike the State of New York. The afternoon papers came out and by the time that meeting was out they were distributed to the delegates, World War III headline "CSEA strikes New York." It didn't happen, of course, and the next day they had to have a major retraction on page 3. Ted Wenzl wasn't seen by anybody for about a week. That was Ted. That was Ted. After the negotiations were over with and the contract was settled, and it wasn't a very good one, the Governor's office of employee relations on television was asked about the relationship between the State and CSEA and he said something on television, "CSEA doesn't have a head. its neck grew up and haired over." It was the funniest thing I ever saw. I happened to be the director of public relations at the time and I had to respond to that silly stuff. Ted Wenzl insisted that we show that tape to the very next delegates meeting in an attempt to get those people riled up and take some action. So, when it was shown at the delegates' meeting the primary response was laughter. That leads you into another real character who played a vital role in CSEA, Landslide Bill McGowan. They called him Landslide Bill McGowan because he actually won over Ted Wenzl for the presidency of CSEA by 24 votes out of 50,000 votes that were cast. No much of a mandate, but Bill McGowan wanted to become one of the most popular and highly successful presidents of CSEA, probably identified very similar to the way Danny Donohue does today with the membership. Bill was a cigar chomping person. He brutalized the English language 'deels' and 'do's' and that sort of stuff and I think people identified with that. It was during Bill McGowan's presidency that CSEA became, for the first time, politically active on a major scale. He decided, along with a few others, that what the State needed at the head was Mario Cuomo. Mario Cuomo was not a favorite candidate at the time and CSEA jumped in, endorsed him and took over and led, they actually led his campaign. We had set up for Mario Cuomo his travel agenda, his meetings where he went, we handled all his publicity, and the end result was that he was elected Governor of the State of New York. Many, many, many times he publicly acknowledged that he never would have been governor of the State of New York without CSEA. And that's a fact. Unfortunately, during his Governorship, the relationship between CSEA and Mario Cuomo soured, soured very badly. Can we cut right there, I have a... Unfortunately, the relationship between CSEA and Mario Cuomo soured rather, rapidly and very deeply throughout his Governorship and by the end of his term, when he was being touted as a candidate for President of the United States, as a Democratic candidate, Mario Cuomo had a plane waiting at the Albany Airport to fly him to New Hampshire where he was supposedly going to make his announcement as a candidate, and most people agreed he probably would have won the Presidency. CSEA at the same time had begun to shadow him with a truth squad. We also had a plane ready at Albany Airport to fly at the same time to New Hampshire where we had people ready to tell about our displeasure with the man, the promises he had broken, the fact that we didn't feel he would have been a good President or that he had been a truthful Governor- at least with our

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relationship. The end result was that Mario Cuomo did not go to New Hampshire, did not announce as a candidate. Whether or not CSEA's plan had anything to do with it, it's difficult to say. We think it did. We could have perhaps, and probably did, change the course of history there. Very, very interesting. Now, along came the next president of CSEA, Joe McDermott. CSEA's Political action really heating up at this time under Joe McDermott. CSEA became the first labor union in the country to endorse a young Governor out of Arkansas named Bill Clinton for President of the United States on the Democratic ticket. We were the very, very first. We geared up/ ran a lot of material in support of his candidacy, invited him up into New York where he did come up and we appeared with him and announced our endorsement publicly and that sort of thing. He later on, of course, then became President. He acknowledged many, many times publicly that CSEA's initial endorsement was a key factor in his election. He also, to show his appreciation over many years, two terms, appeared at CSEA conventions. You can imagine the difficulty of getting a President of the United States to come to any labor union, convention or for any other purpose. Bill Clinton did that. We had very good access through AFSCME with Bill Clinton in Washington as a result and, unlike Mario Cuomo, he is still a hero in CSEA's, eyes today. I find that very, very interesting. There were, during that time, during the 1970s a number of people who played an important role when CSEA went from centralized operations to a decentralized operation with the regional concept that they have today. I think we should note that the people who led CSEA during that growth period were people like Sol Bindette in New York City or Flannenbaum in Long Island, Jimmy Lennon in the southern region. You had Jimmy Moore who today is still the dean of CSEA regional presidents. You had Bob Lattimer in the western region. Bob recently retired with perhaps 30 years out there service as- a regional president. And in Albany you had Joe McDermott who was then the regional president and later became the president of CSEA. You had Irene Carr. Irene Carr is really a legend within CSEA, a great advocate of women's rights, many, many years of service and she personally is probably most responsible for the growth and the emergence of the women's movement within CSEA which today is really dominant. There are more women officers statewide, local, unit, regional than at any other time and continues to grow and probably Irene Carr had more to do with that than anyone else. Those are people who played such vital, important, roles during those times for the union. Who can forget, also, a couple of young lawyers right out of law school who were fortunate enough to hook up with Albany's leading law firm at the time which held a contract to represent CSEA, for legal services. They were assigned to CSEA headquarters in routine legal work. Jim Roemer and Jim Featherstonhaugh pulled off a personal coup that changed the course of history for CSEA and you cannot ever forget that day that they managed to oust their bosses and take over the legal service of CSEA at a very young age. CSEA legal services expanded rapidly at that time involvement with the lobbying of federal, and state and local legislators increased dramatically. It had a great impact on how CSEA is viewed and the success of CSEA today, certainly. As often happens in those situations, there were dissidents. There was a decision made after many, many years of success and controversy in the legal area that CSEA should have its own legal services department and that was created. Very controversial at the, time. It continues to exist today and it is probably, there is not doubt, that it is a highly successful thing Roemer and Featherstonhaugh went on to create their own law firm and become the largest law firm in the Capital District and Jim Roemer became one of our biggest antagonists, as a labor lawyer representing county, state and local municipalities against CSEA, and other labor unions, so it's kind of an intertwining history that takes place there but they did play a major

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role and certainly they are a huge part of the history of CSEA. A special part, no question about it. I'd better stop. I'm talking more than I would normally talk in a month anyway.

FV: And, all yours.

RC: One of the most memorable people that I knew within CSEA was a gentleman named Joe Lockner. He is often referred to as Mr. CSEA. Joe Lockner held every single position from a clerk to executive director of CSEA over nearly 50 years. Forty-some of them as executive director of CSEA. Certainly, any history of CSEA should note his presence and the things that he did as executive director when CSEA was operating on shoestrings and he made it work. He was really Mr. CSEA and everyone acknowledges that. His son, Bill Lockner... has carried on the family tradition and continues today as a field representative for CSEA with maybe 30 years of service, interestingly enough. I um, I'm sorry, go ahead.

FV:. How about just- getting into Joe Lockner a little bit? How did he, where did he come from? How did he get where he got to?

RC: Well, you know,, in those days, back in probably the 30s maybe, CSEA was very small, had a small staff. I am assuming that he probably knew someone, or maybe he applied off the street, as I did. I really don't know but he certainly had a major impact and was, is thought to have held virtually every position within CSEA. Most prominent being executive director for more than 40 years during the more formative years of CSEA. Very, very interesting. When I think about CSEA though, the most single event that stands out, and perhaps the most prominent event of all is really two events tied into one. The day that CSEA lost 50,000 members as the result of losing a representation election. Two or three days later the joining of CSEA and AFSCME together in an affiliation which exists today to the huge benefit of both organizations. That was probably the turning point in CSEA. I was the director of communications during that representation election for the state public PT&S unit- (professional, technical and scientific unit). 50,000 members. We had been challenged over, and over, and over, and over and we were still an independent union at that time. We had won those types of elections so many times that this particular election, it seemed to me, the organization itself became very complacent. Very complacent. We expected to win that election easily. People were shocked when the ballots were counted and we lost. And we lost quite handily. I came back to the office after watching those ballots count and had the sad news, really, to pass on to headquarters and the staff that we, in fact, had lost and everyone knew that that would lead to layoffs of staff employees, that would lead to great reductions in the union's program. At that time we had probably lost a third of our membership or a fourth of our membership in one day. It is amazing how CSEA turned that negative event into an extremely positive event in virtually no time. Prior to that time CSEA and AFSCME had been enemies of sorts. AFSCME had, in fact, challenged CSEA a number of times in representation elections. CSEA usually won. AFSCME often showed up at CSEA conventions and would attempt to get some sort of an affiliation effort underway at these conventions long before it actually happened. We would wake up in the morning and there would be flyer under our doors and that sort of stuff, and it was very interesting days. However, the day we lost that election, a call came from Jerry Worth, then the president of AFSCME. The late Jerry Worth. He called Bill McGowan and said, "Bill, you're in trouble for coming after the rest of your units. We need to get together and we need to get together tomorrow." Bill McGowan agreed and he took

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a group of us myself included, off to Washington the next day at AFSCME headquarters, where we met with Jerry Worth and laid down the initial plans for what we hoped would be an affiliation that would prevent other AFL-CIO unions from attacking us. We came back called an emergency meeting of the board of directors, locked the doors, said "Nobody's leaving here until you decide yes or no. If you decide yes, we probably have a future. If you decide no, we probably don't." It was pretty much that way, that's the way it was. We said yes, the board said yes. AFSCME said, "Great." We had a trial affiliation that lasted, I believe, three years. The early start of that was a little difficult. We did not want to capitulate entirely and AFSCME wanted to roll us in there in a hurry and start working together and so it was ... the first three years were a little testy. It worked out to the advantage of both organizations tremendously to the point where AFSCMF immediately became the number one labor union in the AFL-CIO by virtue of CSEA's membership. CSEA became the largest local within AFSCME which it continues to be today. They have worked together at the federal level in particularly, but certainly at the state and local level as well. So many different ways, so many different times to the benefit of both organizations. So that loss and the subsequent affiliation was both a disaster and a huge revival of CSEA and it really laid the basis for the strength that CSEA has today. So that was, perhaps the foremost event in the history of CSEA, I believe, all occurring within a couple of days. Losing the representation election 50,000 members and affiliating with AFSCME. It's incredible.

FV: When was that?

RC: That would have been in the mid-1970s. Perhaps 1975-1976, right around in there.

FV: A turning point?

RC: Oh, very, very much a turning point in CSEA. There were a number of staff people who played important roles within CSEA that, very few are still around today, but their crucial roles came during the 70s, 80s and 90s and when I think of some of them, I think it is important to mention some of their names and I'm sure I've missed a whole great many of them. Some of them were characters, like some of the characters I talked about earlier. Lee Frank. Lee Frank went on to become, at the time he was a field rep for CSEA, in fact, in the 70s and 80s. But he went on to become an employee of AFSCME out in the Buffalo and western region part. I remember Lee Frank. Lee Frank undoubtedly holds the record for being arrested the most times by any CSEA employee and those arrests occurred on the picket lines. Lee was a throw-back to the old time labor union activists. He was arrested many, many, many... many, many times for being aggressive on the picket line, let's say. The first time I met Lee Frank,, he walked into my office a couple days after I had been at headquarters, introduced himself, grabbed the Albany telephone directory, which was very thick, and with his bare hands ripped it apart right in front of me. I tell you, I was impressed. That's just the kind of guy Lee Frank was. Lee once, out in Buffalo at a meeting (we had some dissidents out there and they, wanted to organize someone else to represent them other than CSEA), and Lee was up there for a meeting out there. The leader of the dissidents happened to be a disabled man in a wheelchair. And he was on the stage with Lee and they got arguing rather heatedly back and forth and, in front of the whole crowd, Lee reached across and backhanded the guy. The man filed charges and, as I understand it, Lee paid a little money out of his own pocket and the guy dropped the charge. But that's the kind of guy Lee

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was. It wasn't an assault, as such, it was just Lee reacting. He was a great guy.

FV- What kind of things would he do to get arrested in the line?

RC: Well, he would ... he would break the picket line in an attempt to enter property of, say, the State or the county or wherever we were. Or if there were deputy sheriffs out there protecting, trying to keep the picketers away and that sort of thing, Lee would blow up and become aggressive to them and stuff like that and there are somewhere in CSEA archives a number of pictures of Lee in handcuffs. Another guy, about that time, was a guy named Bob Gile, also a field rep. Bob later became executive assistant to Bill McGowan when Bill became president of the CSEA. But, back in those days, he was also a throw-back guy, and back in those days CSEA rather than give mileage as they do today to staff employees for the use of a personal car, CSEA decided that it would probably be less costly to lease a fleet of cars, which they did. It was a costly mistake on their part because most of the cars were either damaged and several were wrecked, two or three of them, I understand, by Bob Gile. There was a famous story of Bob coming home from a meeting one night. And he was known to take a few drinks now and then, as were most of them in those days and probably today. Anyway, he was heading up the Northway here in Albany in a stormy, snowy, stormy night when he slid out of control, rolled the car over two or three times and ended up in the middle of the Northway. It is an interstate highway but because of the storm it wasn't too busy and Bob wasn't even scratched. He got out of the car, looked around, started walking up the Northway, which is an interstate, towards his home which was another exit up, I guess, in Latham. And a trooper came along as it turned out, and stopped down by the wrecked car and he sees this guy walking up the road and it was Bob and he went up to him and he says, "Hey." Bob says, "Yeah, what?" He says. "You know anything about this car back here?" Bob says, "What car?" He was ... I think he had DWI for that one. So those were fun guys. They made the union. They really did. There were a lot of other guys out there that were old-time kind of organizers and activists. Jason McGraw comes to mind. Nels Carlson. Nels Carlson was around a long, long, long time. Joe Reedy, currently the regional director of region four was another one of those guys. They were a band of guys that worked hard, drank hard and just enjoyed life and gave their all for the union, they really did. That's why all these stories come up. And they were all just part of what they did and how they acted and how they were. They were great guys and they achieved a lot. Another guy that comes to mind that shouldn't be forgotten is a guy named Joe Dolan and also Tack Carey. Together, they were executive directors with CSEA then had as local government and state government divisions. We were divided, and although they are not divided in that format today, then they were. Joe Dolan headed up the local government and Jack Carey headed up the State government. Joe in particular was quite a character. He was an Albany County legislator, well-known politician as well as being with CSEA. I remember the day, his office was directly above mine at headquarters in those days at 33 Elk Street, and I remember the day that I heard this tremendous crash over the ceiling above me. Glass breaking, it was really, nobody knew quite what was going on. As it turned out the county court house was just about a block down the street from headquarters in those days, and a prisoner escaped out of the courthouse that morning and was running up the street and the deputy sheriff is right behind him and he dashed into CSEA headquarters. And somewhere's up the street he had picked up a pipe and he jumped on the elevator and he made it to the third floor where Dolan's office was and burst into Dolan's office with this

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pipe and he robbed him. He said, "I need money, I want money." And Dolan gave him a couple hundred dollars, I guess, out of his pocket. And when the guy reached for it, Joe ran out the door, which was a glass partitioned office and he slammed the door. The guy went after him or tried to escape and ran right through the glass wall. Shattered it and everything. Well, he made it out the back and by that time everyone had an idea something was going on and out the back there was a big commotion going on. The guy ran across our parking lot, I'm watching it, down over the bank behind CSEA headquarters, and the deputy sheriffs start shooting. It was amazing, I watched him shoot at this guy. And he fell over the bank, he got hit in the leg, and they captured him. The funny part about that was that when they were interviewing Dolan about the robbery. "How much money did he take?" Joe says "I think it was about fifty bucks." He didn't want his wife to know he had a couple hundred dollars in his pocket. Joe also once, a real character. We were down in Ulster County and we were being challenged down in Ulster County by SEIU. This was again before we were affiliated with AFSCME. There was this union meeting going on where both sides were talking to the membership and afterwards Joe, who loved to have a drink or two, went into the bar, had a few drinks and got in an argument with the people from SEIU. But as Joe drove out of the restaurant to head back to Albany, the Ulster County deputy sheriffs were waiting for him. They arrested him on DWI. The SEIU guys had called and said, "There's this drunk guy leaving here in a car." That was Joe. Also, one time, Joe coming back from New York City on the train had a few drinks.

FV: The Amtrak train.

RC: Yeah.

FV: And...

RC: He was down in, the train made it up as far as Hudson, and Joe, I guess thought he was in Albany. So he demanded to get off. And the train started up again and he pulled some kind of an emergency cord and he was beating on the train engineer's door and everything, so anyway, they came on and arrested him. I guess he was the only guy we ever had in CSEA that actually hijacked a train. It was really funny. He got off, with his political background and everything and the fact that, you know, who we was. But we always laughed about that He literally tried to stop the train, thinking they were in Albany when they were in Hudson. That was the story about Joe and his hijacked train.

FV: That's funny.

RC: Jack Corcoran comes to mind. Jack Corcoran was long time regional director in region four, the Capital District. There came a time when we also thought we were going to strike New York that we were going to have to have a strike regardless. Jack's idea, and he put it into motion except that it was stopped because the strike never occurred, but Jack had lined up a bunch of gravel trucks and haulers such as that and the morning the strike was due to begin, Joe was going to have those guys dump loads of gravel at all the entrances to the state campus here in Albany and downtown which would have made it impossible for anyone to get into work. The additional upshot of that was he had also arranged with a provider or manufacturer and some breeders who bred laboratory rats and mice and he arranged for a shipment to be made here and the plans were to dump those rats and mice over in the concourse so that that would be useless for

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about the next six months too. None of that ever occurred but that is the way Jack was. I remember once we did have a strike against the union of the Saratoga School District and it was a heated strike. And they we-re locked in. They had some of their employees stay within the school bus compound which is also the school district offices and they stayed there 24 hours around the clock so that while the strike was occurring and we were surrounding the place, which is about a block big. And lo and behold, all the staff guys suddenly had these little devices that you could go up and remove from the tires the, whatever the hell you remove...

FV: The stem.

RC: Yeah, the stem for the tires and it also had a little sharp point on it and we popped every tire and pulled out every stem of everyone who was inside that compound that worked there. That was ... that's just the way it was done in those days. Very malicious, but, I mean, that was unionism. And it steadied everybody and it made you more determined than ever and that was ... you wouldn't do that today.

FV: When was that? What year was that?

RC: That was probably in about ...the 1970s. Yeah, late 1970s. Of course, for me, one of my great memories is the creation of the CSEA newspaper. Very important event in CSEA history for a long time, 45 or 50 years, CSEA had paid to have eight pages of news within perhaps a 36 page weekly newspaper called the Civil Service Leader, which was published in New York City. And that was how CSEA, communicated with its members in those days. It went to the members' homes. But because it was located in New York City, the publication itself, publication diminished as you went west of Albany, let's say, to the point where in Buffalo, for instance, they get virtually none. And that's where a revolt began, led by regional president Bob Lattimer to do something about that. They were never receiving coverage out there. So, the decision was made to attempt to have CSEA have its own publication. And that required a vote of the board of directors. Interestingly enough, Bill McGowan, then the president, voted against CSEA creating its own newspaper. Joe McDermott, who was then executive vice presidents, led the charge to have it done. And bad blood kind of existed between those two guys ever, forever after that one. The vote was held by the board of directors and by a four vote margin they decided to disassociate themselves from the Civil Service Leader and create their own newspaper. No one had thought it out well enough, however, to realize that we didn't have the staff. We didn't have a printer, we didn't have a publisher, we didn't have anything. And the Civil Service Leader notified CSEA that they would cease publication immediately, trying to force the fact that you'd have no communications. I resigned as director of public relations and took over the job as editor of the new publication in order to get it off the ground. We got our first edition out, an eight page addition, which was the equivalent of the same number of pages that the regional thing had done. Within the second week we had chucked it up to two to three times that in terms of size and it continued on a weekly basis for three years. There was a recall vote. People felt that they didn't have enough information, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah plus they were under pressure from the Civil Service Leader to get reinstated. The board had an emergency meeting again and by the same four vote margin, the Civil Service Leader went out and what we called then The Public Sector was in. Twenty-four-Twenty-five years later it is still going strong. It is a leader in

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communications within the labor field nationwide. It has won numerous awards. I was fortunate enough to be editor of that for twenty years until my retirement. You'd have to mention a guy, again not a member of CSEA, not an officer of CSEA, a guy named Tom Clemente. He continues to be the publisher of (it is now known as The Workforce) but was known as The Public Sector. A wonderful man. He made it possible to get that first edition out the first week. He has made it possible to get every single edition out for twenty-four, twenty-five years. I just felt like he was a part of CSEA and all these many years in the six or seven directors of communications that I worked for all felt the same way, so, I mean, he played a major role, he made it possible. At the same time, and this is something that people, initially, you didn't think it was possible- We saved CSEA about one million dollars a year in costs of the communication program by doing our own newspaper and we actually increased the coverage by five-fold.. 10 fold, and so on and that's why it is so important, so vital. It is recognized throughout the labor field as a major publication. As I said, I was fortunate enough to be editor of that for about twenty years and I feel good about it. That's probably why I'm here today.

FV: Did you save any of those early ... copies of the early...

RC: Yeah, CSEA has a complete file of all of those.

FV: Oh, good, because if we ever do a published piece about the history of...

RC: Again, since 1978.

FV: That's when it started?

RC: That's when it started. It has been going ever since.

FV: I want to get back to...you said McGowan and McDermott were at odds about whether you should get away from The Civil Service Leader or not. Did they explain why? Was there a reason for this?

RC: Well, you know, I would hate to make a statement that I don't know is absolutely accurate, but rumors were that a lot of the top officials in CSEA were let's say, rewarded by The Leader for their support. It was rumored that, and I'm not talking about Bill McGowan, but prior presidents may have received a car ... things like that. And that might account, too, for the excessive cost that CSEA was paying. I think, however, I think the primary reason was the fact that the communications ended, it was done then. It had been in place for so long and there was an acknowledgment that communications were important. I think there was doubt on the parts of many people, including Bill McGowan, who, otherwise an astute man, that maybe, maybe we couldn't do it. It just couldn't be done, or it would have been done at a level much lower, even though it was done at a low level anyway. We proved them wrong and Bill McGowan was a strong, strong supporter of The Public Sector during his subsequent terms of office and all. But I think there was a crack developing between Bill and Joe and I think that that brought it to a head where they argued very heatedly and diligently before the board in open meetings the pros and cons of that. It just turned out to be something that brought their personal disagreements to a head and people could see it.

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FV: A lot of history...

RC: Yeah, there is. There is.

FV: One other question, before you get onto your next topic, The Public Sector, Did you say it started as a weekly?

RC: Yes.

FV: How long was it a weekly?

RC: It was a weekly for three years.

FV: Wow.

RC: And we had very little staff . Myself and one or two other people and I remember in those days working til ten or eleven o'clock at night to produce that publication.

FV: Three years as a weekly. A lot of work.

RC: Three years as a weekly. Then we went another three years as a biweekly, and it's been a monthly ever since and I can tell you from personal experience,, putting it out as a monthly is very, very hard and I'm not sure how I ever got it out as a weekly or a biweekly.

FV: I'm amazed. Another thing you mentioned ... I want to get this just for the record. Directors of communication. Give me the named in order it you can during your career.

RC: Sure. I was hired at CSEA in 1974 as an assistant director of communications was another real character, a great guy. Joe Rulyea. As was the practice in those days, communications were thought to be a voice as much as anything else and Joe was a very well known local radio personality when he was hired to head up CSEA's program. As it turned out, he was much more than that. He was much more than that but he had this terrific voice and that was where they got the most use out of him. Unfortunately, when I joined CSEA, Joe was in remission from multiple cancer problems and they reoccurred and he died a short time later and I was elevated to director. One story that I remember about Joe. We had what amounted to an actual CSEA annex next door to 33 Elk Street was the Ambassador restaurant and bar. It was a favorite hang-out. It was a gathering place during the day as well as after work and people just gravitated there and it was a hang-out. Everybody knew that if you couldn't find somebody at the office, check next door. It didn't matter if it was ten o'clock in the morning or at five O'clock at night, invariably they were there. And after work everybody stopped in, had a drink. That's where Arvis Chalmers, the newspaper reporter, got 95% of all his leads for all his stories dealing with anything dealing with state government. His fellow newsmen were extremely jealous because he always had lead stories, always had lead stories dealing with the state and local government. If they only knew that virtually all of it came over the bar at the Ambassador from CSEA, they would have understood. Joe Pulyea, one night after work, decided he was going to have a couple drinks and met with some of the guys and came out to get to his car about eleven o'clock at night a little too tipsy and decided he'd better sleep it off there and he did. He slept in CSEA's parking lot that

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night. During the course of the night he got robbed. Those things happened. Yeah, somebody banged on his door, it wasn't locked and he kind of grumpily got up and they robbed him of his wallet. Not that they were in a bad neighborhood but that's just another little thing that occurred there. So Joe Pulyeal, when he passed on, I became the director of communications. I resigned to become the editor for 20 years. The only editor of the new union newspaper. And my assistant, who was then a young newspaper reporter out of Amsterdam, NY with not much future there, I wouldn't think. I hired him. His name was Gary Fryer. Gary became director of communications when I left Gary went on to have a very prominent career. He ultimately became the press secretary to Governor Mario Cuomo, for instance, and Gary, rest his soul, unfortunately died from cancer a few years ago at a very young age. After Gary, I worked for another local TV personality at the time, Mike Moran. Mike Moran was director of communications# twice as it turned out. After Mike left, the first time, Aaron Shepherd then became, also a local TV personality ,radio, became director. Aaron, incidentally, was on the wrong side of an internal political situation. There's kind of an interesting story there. Aaron strongly supported Bill McGowan's re-election against Joe McDermott and Joe McDermott won. I remember the very next day after the election, Joe McDermott came into my office. It couldn't have been more than eight-thirty in the morning and he said, "Where is he?" I said, "Joe, congratulations. Where's who?" He said, "Shepherd- Where's Shepherd?" I said, "He's not here yet." And he said, "Well, his ass is fired." He said "You can tell him., or tell him I told you, or whatever, but he's gone." And I said, "Wow." And Aaron came in the middle of the morning and McDermott was right in behind him and he did fire him on the spot and had the janitor unceremoniously escort Aaron out of the building with his little box of stuff from his desk. That's just how bitter some of those things can get. So, Aaron left and back came Mike Moran for a second stint. And then Mike left. The current assistant director of communications, Stanley Liornek, became director of communications. I enjoyed working with Stanley very much. And then Stanley was subsequently replaced by Steve Madaras who continues to this day. So, overall, I worked for six different communications directors. Seven, if you want to count Mike twice. Quite an interesting experience, I worked my way through six directors seven times and maybe four or five CSEA presidents. All in a position where, where I was actually vulnerable. Most people, probably anyone within CSEA that knew me and knows me today, would tell you that I was apolitical. I stayed out of all those things, whereas all around me people were in them. A lot of them are not with CSEA any longer because of that. Aaron Shepherd's case was not unusual. A lot of people came and went because of their involvement. You weren't supposed to do that and you're still not supposed to do that as a staffer. And you shouldn't do it I guess, but it's almost unavoidable in some cases. I avoided all that. I got along with everybody and I still do and that's probably why I was able to finish my career there.

FV: And now you can tell me the story.

RC: Yeah. Some of them.

FV: Well, you can tell them all. We're all ears. What else have you got? Do you got some other personality stories or just ... that could prime the pump too, you know.

RC: No. I'd like to say I have more. I probably do somewhere in the back of my head, but those are some of them.

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FV: Well, let me...I've got some questions here. All yours, John. These are pretty much standard questions, and you may have answered them in some ways,, but there may be other angles here. Like, this question: What are you most proud of in your career in CSEA?

RC: I think I'm most proud, of course, of the creation and success of the union newspaper that started out as The Public Sector and today is The Workforce. It occupied the last twenty years of my working career, night and day. I say night because there wasn't a night that went by I wasn't thinking about something in the middle of the night. About a story, or worrying about a deadline or something like that. Most of all, probably the organization as a whole. The vast majority of the people that I worked with were just tremendous people. Dedicated. Took their jobs seriously. Did it very, very well. There's so many of them and a lot of them are retiring now and a lot of them have retired. But a lot of people, I understand, have come along to take their place, and that's the way it should be. But the people who laid the bases for that to happen, I'm proud of all of those people. I'm proud of what I did and I'm, I think I'm proud of every single president that I worked for in one reason or another. They all achieved something of merit. Some of them, great stuff. All of them, good stuff. None of them were disappointments. None of them were anything other than successes. All different. All had their own things and their own agendas and their own way of doing things, but nice people. Good people. At least, to me and certainly they all benefited the membership. So those are things you can be very proud of.

FV: Let's talk about The Public Sector Workforce a little bit about the workings of it. I mean, you were really involved in it. When you started, like, talk of the staff. How many people did you have? What did they do? How many jobs and how many hats did you wear? Just give me a picture of what it was like to run a newspaper for twenty years.

RC: Well, when we started, we started right from scratch. And we hired an individual who had some newspaper experience as an associate and assigned him to the New York City area and we established immediately, one of the downfalls of the prior publication, The Leader was the fact that they had limited coverage. We hired a group of stringers to represent every area in the state. We also immediately built a working relationship with the CSEA communications associates. They became the key and the leader to providing the information. In those days it was the old ... you drew things out on a pencil and there was a ruler on a sheet of paper and a layout sheet and that's how you did it. And it went down to the press people and you had to count your lines of type and your character and you had to scale your photos and that sort of stuff and hope you were damn close. And it was a lot of labor intensive work I did that for a great many years that way and it was the only way I knew. And then, late in my career, CSF-A decided that they were going to go to desktop publishing and I thought my career was over prematurely because, computer-wise I'm not. We had no carryover. It went right directly from the old system to the new system. From one edition to the next. I learned by the seat of my pants. I still couldn't tell you terminology and nomenclature or any of that stuff but I was able to do virtually anything with desktop publishing and I had a great staff around me. A great staff. And most of the people that are there today were there with me then. One of them, I'd like to point out another long-term thirty-plus year employee of CSEA, Ralph Disden, retiring today. Well, no, I guess he retired last week. He was a tremendous help to me, certainly. I had the input from all the

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different communications directors. They all had their own ideas of what the publication should be. I had to resist some of that and subtly put my own concepts into it because some of the stuff I didn't agree with. Some had publications backgrounds, journalism backgrounds. Others had electronic media background, which was totally different and it was a learning process with each and every one of them but they all supported us tremendously and we went through. I enjoyed, as it turned out, the desktop publishing in the end. It was much more accurate to me. Somewhat easier, but it never got easy. I worried- about deadlines for twenty years and it never left me. And I still. have. some,, what I call nightmares now, about that I'm on deadline and I don't have the stories or the photos. And I've been retired three and a-half years, so it's still there. That was great. It was a great career change for me. It was more or less at the peak as the communications director and history tells me now that that wouldn't have lasted very long because they've gone through change after change. Usually, with every administration, they have a new person in there representing them in the public's eye and that's the way it is. And that change actually worked out to my benefit and I hope to CSEA's benefit, but certainly to mine.

FV: All right. Well, we know we want to talk about somebody who we probably should have had in this chair but, unfortunately, we lost him at a very young age, Dan Campbell. Why don't you tell us about him and your recollections of him.

RC: Oh, gosh. Dan was a wonderful man. I knew him personally. Deeply religious. A lot of people didn't know that Dan was a deeply religious person but I think that came out in his character, certainly, without ever moving the religious aspect of Dan to the forefront. Dan was already working at CSEA when I came to work there and he worked at the desk right next to mine, as a matter of fact. He taught me the early ins and outs of CSEA I didn't know what CSFA was when I came to work there. I was interviewed, hired and began with no background, basically. Dan quickly took me under his wing, showed me the ropes. Later, when the opportunity arose, became the capital region communications associate and was a. very well-known spokesperson for CSEA and activist as well throughout the capital region. The man with the bullhorn. Everybody knows Dan. Dan you could rely on for anything. If I needed a story, I needed photographs, and I needed them fast, Dan was the guy. He could do it. He could get them. If you needed to set up a rally, Dan was the guy. He did it. He did everything from A to Z. You didn't have to worry about a thing. It was going to be done thoroughly and professionally. Dan had a tremendous ability to speak intelligently on any issue involving CSEA. He was adamant in defending CSFA members. He was beloved, actually, by CSEA members who recognized that he spoke passionately for them. Certainly, Dan died, as we all know, of a heart attack within a minute after speaking before the Albany County Legislature on behalf of the members. That's kind of fitting. I spoke to Dan's wife and two sons and daughter several times since then and the feel that their loss is tremendous, but that was Dan all the way, you know. They, like a lot of us, you take Dan for granted. He's always there, he's always speaking. They were overwhelmed by the response to his death. The funeral, which I attended was huge. The priest at Dan's church, which I also attend, said, "Gee, I had no idea Dan was such a big-shot." And the truth of the matter is, Dan's family and the people who knew him didn't think of Dan as a big-shot either. It is only at his loss that all this outpouring of remembrance came out, including the governor of the State of New York, who on television paid tribute to Dan. That's highly unusual- The newspaper coverage in the capital district was tremendous. Tremendous. And a credit to Dan. So, we all

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miss Dan. He spent more than thirty years of his life working at CSEA and for CSEA members and I would say that every day of all of thirty years he did that. He did it real well. So, he's a guy I'm going to always miss.

FV: Do you remember arty stories, outrageous things he did, or remember him at his peak, you know?

RC: Dan was not an outrageous person except perhaps with that bullhorn. He could wear you down and he could wear down the opposition. School boards, if that was what it was, or the Governor himself, if that's what it was. The Governor on television said he remembered many times that bullhorn and Dan, working hard and fast for his members. Dan was just always there. Always Dan. Always reliable. Quick with a suggestion on any subject at our meetings, of which we held many, many, many meetings, Dan always was a participant, always had input... Just good old reliable and efficient Dan, you know.

FV: Well, I remember he realized all the things that would help him do his job and advertising was one of them. So when he fought for us to do a local ad, he would fight with the communications director and they would come to us and say "Get Dan off my back and do an ad." This local, you know it was just, this problem in Colonie or whatever. And that day, the copy would be faxed to us. Dan wrote it. I would just have to edit it. He knew what he wanted, he knew what he wanted to stay. He knew he wanted to get it out there and he didn't want to wait. So he wrote it. So he would do everything he could do. You're right.

RC: Yeah, you have to give Dan a lot of credit. He was continuing his education always. Held a Master's degree. I did not know that. I knew Dan for thirty years. He had a Master's degree in mass communications. I had no idea. He did that on his own in the evenings and stuff at SUNY Albany. I knew he was a graduate of Siena. It just amazes me. He didn't just stop after he had started to succeed but he continually tried to make himself bigger and better. But nobody knew it. But to me, that's Dan right there...not boisterous, not anything like that. Dan would come in... this is Dan too. My wife had breast cancer a few years ago. Dan went to a shrine over in Yugoslavia, Majorca, and while he was there he got a number of blessed medals and so forth. He came back and he gave those to me to give to my wife. I thought how thoughtful that was. Dan also, I attend the- same church Dan and his family attended and his family still does. My wife's Catholic. I'm not. Dan thought it would be a great idea if I became Catholic. As I says a very religious man. He sponsored my conversion, if you will. It never happened. I still go to church. there several times a week. It never happened only because of complications leading from my first marriage but Dan, if I can say this, Dan was concerned for my soul. Again, that's Dan, you know. We would sure use a lot more like him, and if he were here today, he is one person who could really talk about the history of CSEA. He lived it. He lived a lot of it. I saw a lot of it. Dan lived a lot of it. He was a wonderful guy and we're all going to miss him.

FV: A couple more things. That was wonderful. Dan deserves a lot of it.

RC: Yeah, he really does. He's so well known.

FV: All right we've talked about a lot of high points and things. Another question here is. In your career with CSEA, what are you most disappointed with?

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RC: Well this would be personal, I think. It's a difficult thing to say because I was always a team player but if I say live always been a life-long, hard-nosed Republican, maybe you'd understand. Labor unions traditionally support primarily Democratic candidates, although we do a good job. I have to say this, we do a good job. Especially in recent years of diversifying where that support goes and the money goes and stuff. But I used to have some personal issues with our constant support of candidates that I personally did not support. Having said that I will tell you that I did everything possible to support CSEA's position- I wrote tremendous hard-hitting, full-page ads supporting Bill Clinton, Mario Cuomo, people of that nature. I used to have fun in the office. I would put out mock newspapers and brochures and stuff where CSEA would be, in fact, supporting the Republican candidate and pass that around in the office and stuff like that. But, it's not a disappointment, I mean I understand that that was the way it was and that's the way it is, primarily. But if I was disappointed in anything, it was. What I saw as sort of an unwillingness to be a little more open to possibilities of different points of view from. a political standpoint. But I understand it. That's the history of labor unions and it never and professionally, it never interfered with anything I ever did. In fact, it was quite the opposite. But personally, I was always one of the very, very few Republicans in CSEA headquarters because by its very nature they hire, or the people they do hire, ultimately come into their line of thinking. SO, it was always a joke around there that a token Republican was over there, you know? But I have very little disappointment in CSEA. Very little disappointment. I... maybe in the total overall money that is spent in some cases, I see, I'll say foolishly, just because it's the cause. That always bothered me a little bit to see certain huge amounts of money being expended in certain areas where I didn't think we got the return. But you have to do that to make the effort. There's always a bottom line you're after. There's an objective out there and how you approach it is decided by other people. Disappointments? Hardly any.

FV: You've probably answered this in a couple of ways, but let me ask it again in this way. What do you see as the most important event during your time of involvement in CSEA?

RC: Certainly the most important event was the affiliation with AFSCME. It created, from a huge negative, the loss of the PS&I unit, 50,000 people in one day. It created from a huge negative a tremendous positive. It took years to do that and it isn't always smooth. The relationship is sometimes rocky, we all know that. But it is ultimately the most beneficial thing that could ever have occurred within CSEA. CSEA probably would not even exist today had that affiliation not occurred when it occurred. And here we find CSEA is powerful, hugely respected and recognized along with, of course AFSCME. It couldn't be done without AFSCME as well. But that was the major event within the history of CSEA for 90 years.

FV: Okay, I've got one more. Now that you've had time to reflect. You've been retired for a while, you still get the deadline nightmares, but what lessons do you think CSEA's history as you understand it holds for the future?

RC: Well, I think we've refined our mistakes when they've occurred. I think we've refined our successes when they have occurred. I think CSEA does, in fact, look back in areas that they are going into to see what worked, what didn't work... I think they have so much experience in so many areas today that it's unlikely that they'll enter any situation that they are not prepared for through experience. So it should all be positive for the most part. That doesn't mean

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that everything you're going to try is going to work because you're always dealing with different people, different leaders on the other side. But we have so much experience in so many areas to fall back on that I don't think ... and there's always people around who remember those experiences no matter when they occur, so I think that for the most part, history itself is going to dictate that CSEA is going to continue to grow and prosper as a labor union and certainly as a successful one.

FV: What do you think the people who are going to see this in the future, because they are going to be studying the history of CSEA, what are they going to learn from this? What do they need to know, in general terms, what beatitudes or what attitudes? Beatitudes and attitudes... that's a pretty good title. For their success in the future. What are they going to concentrate on from what they've learned from people like you?

RC: Well, I hope they'll realize that it was people like themselves that made it all possible. I hope their sights are not too high in any area at any one time.. They should look upon their union experience as positive. Certainly, they should look upon CSEA as a positive labor union which has done everything it can within the limitations that it must work in for them. I think there are very few people in the: future that would have to look upon deciding whether or not to joint CSEA, for instance, if they are unorganized today, I do not think there should be, too many cons for them to consider any longer. I think all we have to, organizing within CSEA has become the number one objective anyway, and I think all we have to do is go out there and contact enough people and tell the story and it's pretty darn clear that the pros are going to win out on this. So, I think the organizing programs will be a success and that's due to the fact that CSEA itself has been a success and there's very little negatives to surround CSEA compared to a lot of labor unions. And AFSCME. Very clean labor unions, relatively speaking. And that's something that the people who have ever had anything to do with it can really be proud of. There's a lot of dirt that has to clean out there.. We all know certain labor unions, particularly prominent Internationals where the negatives are very high to this day, but that's not ... that's not true. We've had some good leaders in both those organizations. I turn on the television on a Sunday and I can watch Jerry McAntee and be impressed by what he says and how he says it. I saw the same thing way back when Jerry Worth was president of AFSCME and all the people of CSEA, certainly. I've never... I've never seen any of our leaders put on a bad performance in public, particularly when it comes to, say, a television interview or something of that nature. It all creates the proper image and the proper image is that the best and cleanest labor unions out there today are like AFSCME and CSEA, of course, going hand-in-hand together.

FV: Anything else you want to say, or have you pretty much drained it all out? But if there's more in there, let's hear it now.

RC: Well, I just wish everybody working for CSEA today the best. I miss those people that are still working that I worked with and I wish them the best, of course and all those people who retired along with myself as well. No, it was a positive experience in my life, it really was. I appreciate the opportunity to come here and try to relive a little bit of it if I can. It's not an easy thing to do, especially if you try to recall thirty years of people and places and things. Sometimes it gets a little tangled up or muddled but, by golly, it's good to relive it. I'm glad you gave me the opportunity. Thanks. That's about it.

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FV: Okay. Thank you very much.