

Irwin Polishook

Professional Staff Congress
Oral Histories Collection OH-61

Interview # 004

Interview Conducted by
Irwin Yellowitz

On July 12, 2004

Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
Elmer Holmes Bobst Library
New York University

Edited by Courtney Ritter, 1/31/08

YELLOWITZ: Recording with Irwin Polishook, July...

POLISHOOK: 12th ...

YELLOWITZ: July 12th, 2004, interviewer Irwin Yellowitz. We will begin with the background of his life up until the position that he took at Hunter College in 1961. So Irwin, the first question is how would you describe your childhood?

POLISHOOK: Well, I would say that I had a happy childhood. I guess it was ordinary, living in Brooklyn. That's about it.

YELLOWITZ: How would you describe the influence of your childhood on your later life?

POLISHOOK: Well, living in the City we come to get an appreciation of the City, both its good features and its toughness, as a child, of course. And also an appreciation of different types of people, because we lived then in a rather diverse neighborhood with all sorts of people, immigrants, different racial groups, different religious groups.

YELLOWITZ: Would you describe your parents as working-class people or middle-class people?

POLISHOOK: Yes, working class.

YELLOWITZ: We won't go over the specifics of the jobs, and so on, because they are in the form that goes with the interview. Did your parents live through your entire childhood, until you entered Brooklyn College?

POLISHOOK: Yes, they did.

YELLOWITZ: They did. Okay.

POLISHOOK: But they didn't survive. They both died when I was midway through Brooklyn [College], in 1954.

YELLOWITZ: So you came to Brooklyn College then from this family and I assume that you went to the New York City public high schools?

POLISHOOK: Yes, and public ... and elementary schools.

YELLOWITZ: And which high school did you attend?

POLISHOOK: Thomas Jefferson.

YELLOWITZ: All right. And you went to Brooklyn College in what year?

POLISHOOK: 1952, I think.

YELLOWITZ: And what was the influence of Brooklyn College on your life?

POLISHOOK: Well, it gave me an opportunity to study and to gain access to a lot of different types of intellectual pursuits of different types. So it really energized my intellect and interest in learning.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. At what point did you decide to pursue a Ph.D. in history and why did you make that decision?

POLISHOOK: I think that was influenced by the basic interest in history, although I was interested in other subjects as well. And I did well at school in the different social sciences and humanities so I guess I could have gone into other areas or other fields. But I think it was the influence beyond my own preference for history of my teachers, my professors.

YELLOWITZ: Were there any teachers in particular who had a major influence on your thinking?

POLISHOOK: Well, I would say Jesse Clarkson, Madeline Robinton, Arthur Cole, among the history people. But most of the teachers I had were people of outstanding quality.

YELLOWITZ: Then you chose to go to Brown for graduate work and then on to Northwestern. Now first, why did you choose Brown for your first graduate work?

POLISHOOK: I wrote a paper as an undergraduate about Puritanism and had an interest in it, so I decided when I was accepted at Brown to go there in order to pursue my interest in the Puritans, and as it turned out, particularly in Roger Williams.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. And after you were at Brown for one year you made a decision to go on to Northwestern to complete your Ph.D. Why did you make that decision?

POLISHOOK: Well, the faculty at Brown was then in transition. I had come there and thought I would study with Edmund Morgan, who went on to Yale. I did have the good fortune of having another professor who was visiting for a year, named David Lovejoy, who was a specialist in Rhode Island history, and he helped me pursue my own interest in the Puritans and in Roger Williams. And I wrote my Master's thesis on Roger Williams, and the debate about religious freedom, and I subsequently published it. But Lovejoy was only going to be there for a year. The Department was in transition, getting new people, and I thought I needed a broader base of professors to be successful. And Northwestern had an outstanding crop of professors, particularly in American History.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. How did your graduate work, both at Brown and Northwestern, influence your attitudes?

POLISHOOK: Well, I think it accentuated my professional interest and intellectual interests. And the people I met were people of great integrity, both students and faculty, so it wasn't very difficult from that to try to apply the same kind of intellectual, professional and integrity approach to the work later, both as a faculty member and, of course, as a Union leader.

YELLOWWITZ: You met your wife at Brooklyn College. What were the circumstances of that and how did your marriage influence your attitudes and activities?

POLISHOOK: Well, my wife was fully involved in the same kinds of interests that I had, intellectually and professionally, and also in the Union. She was an activist in the Union so we had a complimentary relationship and could support one another. And we've done that ever since we were married.

YELLOWWITZ: Your wife, Sheila Stern-Polishook, was at Queensborough Community College?

POLISHOOK: Well, she first was at Brooklyn and then at Queensborough. But she was an activist as an undergraduate, as I was. Both of us were very active in the student

government, and I think we were elected to the top offices of the student government at one point. And there were various difficulties at the College that we had to deal with as undergraduates. Nothing like the responsibilities later, both as professors and as Union activists, but it was a kind of trial and preliminary introduction. And it was, remember, in the '50s, the aftermath primarily of the McCarthy period.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. Was that how you actually met Sheila?

POLISHOOK: I think it was ...

YELLOWITZ: As a student government activist?

POLISHOOK: I don't remember. I think we just met ...

YELLOWITZ: After you completed your Ph.D. you decided to come back to teach at Hunter College. Now, why did you seek your first full time teaching position at Hunter, bringing you back to CUNY?

POLISHOOK: Well, I don't think I sought it. I was offered a position at Hunter after the meeting of the American Historical Association. I had a couple of other places that were interested in my employment, but Hunter made the first offer to me, and I accepted it, not having anything at that moment, although I expected to get other offers in other parts of the country. It wasn't necessarily a desire or an overwhelming interest to come

back to New York City. Hunter, besides, was a place of good reputation. It then was a women's college, with outstanding students, and as it turned out, the students were outstanding during my first period of teaching as an undergraduate professor.

YELLOWITZ: Fine. Let's sum up this section on your background. In sum, how do you believe your background up to 1961 and your coming to Hunter influenced your later decision to become a labor leader?

POLISHOOK: Well, it wasn't very difficult to identify with the students and the University, having been one of them at one point, and having been educated at one of the public institutions in the City of New York. And it wasn't very difficult to transfer that identification and experience to the kind of issues that were facing the University at different points after I got there, such as a wider enrollment of students, issues having to do with open admissions later, quality questions having to do with the professional life of the University, matters relating to tuition, admission of students. I mean, you could just enumerate an endless list of things that were in a bigger canvas, so to speak, but still were things that I could identify from the smaller canvas of having grown up.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. This concludes the first section and we'll take just a brief pause.

We're now moving into the second set of questions which will be on Hunter College and the Legislative Conference. And let's begin with your career at Hunter. You also moved

to Lehman at one point in the 1960's. How would you describe the major elements of your career at Hunter and Lehman during the 1960's?

POLISHOOK: Well, I was active as a professor and a scholar, trying to not only earn tenure, which I did, but also promotion, which I did, and also to continue a career as a teacher and do as good a job as I could. I'd like to think that the students were happy when they took my classes and successful in life afterwards. And I was an active faculty member in different organizations on the campus, particularly at that time the AAUP and the LC.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. Were you also a Department Chairman in the 1960's?

POLISHOOK: Yes. I was the first Department Chairman of History when the colleges were formally separated in the 1967 to 1970.

YELLOWWITZ: The colleges being Hunter and Lehman.

POLISHOOK: Hunter and Lehman, and I was active in the separation of the two colleges as a faculty leader.

YELLOWWITZ: Were you active in the faculty senates at Hunter and Lehman?

POLISHOOK: No. I don't think the senates played ...

YELLOWWITZ: Or councils, whatever the faculty bodies were on the campus?

POLISHOOK: I don't remember that they played that major a role, frankly, and I don't remember if I was active in them as a representative of the Department, which is the only role I would have had other than the Chair as an automatic member. When I was later Chair of the History Department, of course, I was on all the important committees of the College and played, an important role. But it's interesting that the organizations like AAUP and particularly the LC and the UFCT were University-wide organizations with outside connections that in that period of transition could play a different role than anybody could have expected and a very powerful role. And I was active in LC and the AAUP until they decided to defer on collective bargaining.

YELLOWWITZ: This was the AAUP?

POLISHOOK: Yes. I was not in any way hostile to the UFCT. You just sort of made a choice pragmatically

YELLOWWITZ: Well, why did you make the decision to become active in the LC?

POLISHOOK: Because it was the organization that represented us. And the UFCT didn't represent us and it would have required a leap, I think, for me at least, to take on a role in another organization and give up on the LC. I had no ideological commitment to

the LC but I certainly had no reason to reject the UFCT except in collective bargaining and Unionization. So it was just a practical choice. They were there. They were there for a while and my wife had gotten to know Belle Zeller from University wide affairs, and I of course knew who she was from her years at Brooklyn and years at the University, among others that I could identify with at Hunter and at Lehman who were active in the LC. As I said before, this was not an ideological choice. It was

YELLOWWITZ: The fact that the LC did not have a collective bargaining function at that time was not a barrier to your working in the LC.

POLISHOOK: No. But when collective bargaining was legalized as an opportunity for the faculty, the LC was the place that I went, not because I didn't want the Union, or AFT or labor movement or anything like that. In fact, my subsequent career was to make the LC and the PSC a labor affiliated organization where the labor part really made a difference, both in the State and nationally. I never hesitated in that respect.

YELLOWWITZ: What was your role in the LC once you joined it?

POLISHOOK: Well, I think I was kind of activist that people recognized outside from Hunter and Lehman days, later, so I wouldn't say that I had any special, in quote, celebrity. But I knew a lot of people and, of course, my wife knew a lot of people so I had that added opportunity to know people. And I guess people respected and accepted

whatever I could contribute. I served as a delegate to the LC governing body. That's the primary role that I had. And it became more of an active role as a rank and file leader type, if that's a leader type, in the legislative body when collective bargaining loomed and the first negotiations took place. But I don't remember a top officer role until after the first contract was negotiated.

YELLOWWITZ: Now the first collective bargaining election came in 1968-'69 and at this point the LC had committed itself to collective bargaining. What was your role in that bargaining election?

POLISHOOK: I didn't play any big role in that. As I said, and I don't think I would have even if I were asked because I didn't have any particular negativity about the UFCT. And of course, I knew some of the leaders in the UFCT other than Irwin Yellowitz, Israel Cougler among others. There were fewer people who were active at Hunter and then at Lehman in the UFCT so I just naturally gravitated to the people I knew.

YELLOWWITZ: All right. The result of that bargaining election was to provide two bargaining agents with the LC representing the full time faculty and the UFCT representing some other groups: college lab technicians, lecturers, and adjuncts I believe. Now, what was ... and each group bargained a contract in 1969. What was your role in negotiating the first LC contract?

POLISHOOK: I didn't play a formal role in that. I was supportive of both organizations, if that's a way to put it. By that time it overlapped the separation of the colleges so whatever greater activity I could have was as a Chair of the History Department in setting up the Department and trying to influence the curriculum and the success of the Lehman College experiment. But I was supportive of both Unions at that time. There were other people, by the way, who were active in the LC in similar roles, very active and big talkers, including, for example, I remember particularly Al Bachman who remained active throughout my career at the PSC and still is active in the Retiree Chapter. There were others. I would have to spend moments to think about who they were, who played similar roles. But I guess people recognized that I was more of a leader type, if that's a way to put it, without being immodest. So I was there, supportive of what was being done; particularly supportive of the connection that was established with the LC and in ways also by the UFCT, which are not well-known, frankly, and not enough credit given, to the connection between the professionalism of the work we did and of the faculties we represent, including renowned classroom people, and the collective bargaining contract that emerged. I'll give two instances of that. I was a big advocate of the Research Fund and the distinguished professors. And on the other side, less well known and something that should really be explored by these oral histories, the decision successfully achieved, to recognize what had been part-time work and consolidate it into full time work as lecturers. A lot of the what used to be called fractionalized, were consolidated and the part time position of lecturer became a career position and a full time position, something that I think was a great achievement. In other words, we faced up at that early period--and I use the we collectively-- and I admired the

success to the fact that expansion of part timers, in that case though fractional lines, was a bad idea and what we did was consolidate them into lecturers. That has its own history subsequently to make that successful. And I played certainly a key role in the PSC to make that possible, when the merger took place. But those are different ways in which I remember being supportive and hopefully helpful in terms of the success of those bargaining first contracts and also making those first contracts last over more than one decade.

YELLOWWITZ: All right. Between that first contract and the merger in 1972, it was approximately a three year period, during that period did you become more active in the leadership of the LC?

POLISHOOK: Yes. I became Yes. I was very active in the Del---in their equivalent Delegate Assembly, whatever it was called, as an advocate for merger and a recognition that the two unions fighting one another would not only be unsuccessful by the University itself was in danger. I never believed, ever, that the Union could be bigger and more successful than the University it was part of. And I like to think that one of the achievements of my work was to make the Union strong enough to protect the University, rather than the reverse. And I think there's a good bit of history respecting things that we did to protect and secure the University as a entity during the variety of crises. So I was there as a rank and file leader type advocating an interest in merger, supporting the labor movement's connection with the LC, never expecting it to be hooked up with the NEA which was a decision made I think partly because of the antagonism of

the really top leaders. During that time after 1967, I was still a Chair, I became ... There was a fellow named Henry Heilberg who became a dean....He was the Treasurer of the LC and the Dean--he became a Dean at Baruch. He was a very good person. and it was then that I was asked to assume the position of Treasurer of the LC and of course, now had a top leadership position. And that was the beginning of my movement into a top leader in the merged organization. But the point I'm making is that I was already an advocate for merger and became the beneficiary, if that's a way to put it, or the victim, if that's a way to put it, of that leadership role.

YELLOWWITZ: Now, you mentioned the LC's affiliation with the NEA, which was in 1970. Why did that take place, since the history of the LC had, up to that point, wanted to be an independent organization?

POLISHOOK: Well, I would say it's more than an independent organization. Oddly enough, Belle was one of the leaders of the organization,

YELLOWWITZ: Belle Zeller ...

POLISHOOK: Yes, early on, going into the 1930's and some of the natural rivalry between the two national organizations began to effect the work of the LC and the UFCT and I didn't think that was a good idea. I never thought that was a good idea. In other words, it began to become a fight between the NEA and AFT when, in fact, there should have been just a single organization. And as it turned out, a single organization for K

through 12 is what turned out in New York City also. So I was one of the advocates for putting it together. The reason the LC hooked up with the NEA was because there was a recognition that there wouldn't be enough monetary and political support otherwise in what would be another a stage, another opportunity to challenge the LC's role for the full time faculty and the LC leaders had decided, and I certainly thought there would be very little chance of winning the part-time unit. So it was matter both of practicality, what seemed best at the time, but more importantly, what was best in building a faculty organization, a real Union, at the University- there were still people that oppose any Union,-and of course, the forces outside were opposed. So the hook up with the NEA was opportunity knocking on the door, money coming in through the odor, but more than that it gave us a chance to confront the AFT and the UFCT with the reality that there would be a bigger fight with a lot stronger body and wouldn't merger locally be a better idea? And of course, one of the echoes of that was wouldn't merger in the State and nationally be a better idea? There were a lot of things happening at that time that endangered the University particularly.

YELLOWITZ: You mentioned the State and the State--two State organizations of NEA and AFT affiliation did merge in 1972 and so did the LC merge with the UFCT in 1972 to create the Professional Staff Congress. Now, why do you believe that merger between the LC and the UFCT took place, despite the fact that there was a lot of bitterness between the leaders of the two organizations?

POLISHOOK: I would say there was bitterness only between the top leaders, if that's a proper way to put it. I never was witness, and I was witness to a lot of private meetings. For example, between Belle Zeller and Isreal Cougler. There was always a great deal of civility and respect that they showed one another even while there were fights over who would finally be the President of the new PSC and what its direction might be and might not be. I would say the leadership role became more important than the direction because it didn't take a lot of figuring out that all of us had similar kinds of commitments and interests and there was no great and no even small ideological divide. So it was a fight at the top really, almost literally at the top top, with some exceptions. There were others in my category of leadership who were opposed to the UFCT partly because of the previous fights and continuing fights, but never for ideological reasons or principled reasons. Not that they were unprincipled. I mean, they thought they could do better in leading the organization. And I think I was one of the people, and there were others I could name, a lot of others, including the interviewer, Yellowitz, who were advocates for the making the merger work and recognizing that the things that were dividing our top, top leaders and some of their supporters were not things that should be supported by us. And I think that what happened was, we were successful in overcoming their leadership fights, even to the point of taking over the top leadership positions or giving direction to the top leadership of the succeeding organization, the PSC.

YELLOWITZ: All right. We're coming to the end of this section. Is there anything you want to add that I haven't covered in the questions that I've asked you?

Just at the time we paused I had asked you if there's anything you wanted to add about the Hunter College and Legislative Conference years?

POLISHOOK: As I mentioned, both my wife and I were active in the University, she particularly in the University Faculty Senate and on the top leadership of that; myself as well. One of the things we haven't discussed is the role of the University Management in all this. And I would say that probably was the first to use frequently the term Management to refer to the administrative leadership of the University. And I say that because it's important. The University administration or Managers had a conflicted role, so to speak, during this period of time. Most of them still remained former faculty members, primarily at CUNY but also at other places, and so they were ambivalent about collective bargaining because of their managerial role but not necessarily opposed to it, and certainly not opposed to it consistently. So Chancellor Bauker, for example, initially was hostile to collective bargaining, very hostile, and when it won his position changed to the extent that he became more accepting and was willing to help the Unions, both to negotiate contracts that achieved important things as first contracts with the University. Subsequently, they reversed their role and began to become hostile, partly because the funding situation and issues having to do with free tuition, Rockefeller's interest in restructuring higher education to amalgamate CUNY and SUNY or at least make them more similar. In other words, one of the things that we didn't talk about was what the Managers and administrators were doing, particularly in the central office and also among the College Presidents. And their role was hot and cold, so to speak, during that

period and to a degree, hot and cold going into the next phase after the merger of the two Unions that I supported very strongly.

YELLOWITZ: Now we are going to move into the next section which will be on the PSC through the 1970's, which was a very critical time for the Union and the University. Let's begin with your role in the period of the Co-Presidents, the first year of the merger in which Belle Zeller was President and Is Cougler was Deputy President. That was '72 to '73. What was your role in the Union in that period?

POLISHOOK: Well, I was one of the officers of the newly merger organization with the title Co-Treasurer, I think that was my title, and of course, a member of the top Executive Council body, if that's what it was called at that time. So I was one of the top leaders and officers and involved in whatever was going on with respect to the PSC in its beginning.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. It was during this period that you did become a major leader who was well known among the faculty. And why did you choose to make Union leadership your major professional activity because I think it was in this period that that was beginning to emerge?

POLISHOOK: Well, I don't think I chose it. I think I was sort of caught in it at that point in time. My expectation was that either Belle or Is would continue as President of the organization after the first go around and second go around and that I could then have

time to decide whether to return to my own interest in teaching and scholarship which I didn't leave because I wasn't comfortable with it. I enjoyed it. Not that I didn't enjoy or appreciate the role that I could play as a leader of this faculty organization. I might say also, parenthetically, that talking about myself has not been one of my public roles, so I'll be talking more about myself in this interview than I normally would in ways that I never did publicly. I always sort of felt it wasn't necessary, although others thought it was not such a good thing for me not to talk about myself as a leader and the achievements and all that stuff. I've never felt comfortable with that. But I never chose to be a Union leader forever. It happened that way. And to an extent I couldn't get out of it once what became the PSC started to take on its own life and it had, as most lives, its own necessities and own opportunities.

YELLOWWITZ: All right. It was during this same period, 1972-'73, that the PSC was negotiating its first contract. That was a very difficult contract negotiation. It lasted a very long time. What was your role during that contract negotiation?

POLISHOOK: I probably was the leading person in that negotiation, partly because Belle and Is were having their difficulties in keeping a unified leadership, so I became probably, the most important person in that negotiation and the most important person in the PSC other than the other two. And I would say, too, that I probably had the support of if not most, if not all, most of the other people on the Executive Council. I don't recall the number but I do recall we had an even split between the two former organizations and I would guess that I had the support of everyone. If it was necessary to make a decision

that I advocated a position, I would have the support of everyone, even if the other two leaders took a contrary position.

YELLOWITZ: During this difficult negotiation, the PSC took a strike vote which, I believe, was the only one that it took in its history up to this point. Do you believe that that strike vote was critical in concluding the negotiations, and also do you believe that if the negotiations had stalled that the Union would have gone on strike?

POLISHOOK: To give the context, getting back to the earlier question, a thought just occurred to me and then I'll try to respond to that. At one point I was asked by one of the Board members, so I must have had an impression on the Board members, I would say largely positive. I can't attest to that because they wouldn't necessarily tell me, other than what I could pick up by vibrations and sometimes watching and listening to them. But I didn't go seeking their approval. But one of them said to me: Why are you doing this? Why are you leading the Union? And I turned and said to this Board member: Well, who do you expect to lead the Union? And the person responded: I guess a professor type like yourself and a younger type like yourself and then someone who might have been a good teacher, this Board member on reflection said: I guess that's why you're leading the Union, which is, of course, to explain why it's possible for me to have become involved in this, never having rejected what I did before and never thinking of it as the end of my career. I continued to teach, by the way, during this period of time. Even after the period of the first contract where I got full release time, I still continued to teach a class going into either 1976 or '77.

Now, getting back to what was happening in collective bargaining, as I said earlier, the University Management was hot and cold about collective bargaining. In other words, they were never finally favorable and always for reasons, I suppose, in dealing with politicians and the Board members would never be saying positive things about collective bargaining, but certainly not at that time. It wasn't in their interest to do that. On the other hand, hot and cold they were, like a Cold War attitude or a hot war attitude depending upon circumstance. During that negotiation, the first PSC contract, they were in the Hot and Cold War attitude toward the Union to the extent, for example, they challenged the merger vote of the faculty and the reality of the merged organization that we created by saying that they wouldn't recognize it unless we had another ... First, they wouldn't recognize it altogether and the reason for that was a tactic, maybe a strategy, that if they didn't recognize it and got faculty support then they wouldn't have to give in at the collective bargaining table on the issues that they were fighting us and holding up a contract. So it was both perhaps a strategic and certainly a tactical move to say that they wouldn't recognize the merger even though the merger took place with an overwhelming support of the faculty. And what we told them was we were willing to have another vote and we'd support another vote, therefore, in order to prove that we represented the faculty that they didn't want to bargain with in good faith. And we did have another vote which was overwhelming in favor of the PSC becoming the collective bargaining agent of the faculty. And we made clear to people, I certainly did, that if they voted no it would waken our ability to secure a contract and defeat the Board and the Managers of the Chancellor on the issues that they had identified and were holding up an agreement. The key issues didn't involve salaries or money. They involved other kinds of

principled questions, and I'll try to recollect one or two of them. One was an effort to impose on the contract and the faculty what's called in the trade, that I didn't know anything about before I got involved in this, a "managements rights clause" or a "zipper clause" which, in effect, said that whatever was not specifically or explicitly negotiated did not reside in this contract. In other words, the Union contract could be interpreted only to mean what it said exactly and would not mean anything other than that. We rejected that because we said that there was a whole body of what we would call past practice and a whole body of collegial practices unique to the University, as practices not unique to the University; it's a common term I believe in negotiations and contracts in industrial area, but there were lots of things. For example, the existence of a faculty Senate and what its rights were and what its rights weren't, things of that nature that were outside the purview, specifically, of collective bargaining that nonetheless things that we felt should be enforceable through the Union and the Union contract. Another was questions related to academic freedom. The Board had taken the position that the preamble of the Union agreement with the Management, the fist agreement, which had a statement about a collective bargaining was not enforceable because it was not explicitly stated

YELLOWITZ: Academic freedom

POLISHOOK: Academic freedom was not explicitly stated as enforceable and it wasn't included in the rest of the contract so it had a character as a preliminary or an

introduction, or whatever, that was different from the rest. These were the kind of issues we were dealing with: Managements rights, an effort to lock us up in whatever we negotiated and not permitting the Union to grow as the faculty entity and to grow, in my view, as a faculty entity because our role had to be something more than the specific terms and conditions of the agreement. It had to be something that would allow us to represent faculty interests and professional interests other than those that were explicitly given to us through collective bargaining. While this was not such a tidy arrangement, I suppose, they hated that, some of the managers. On the other hand, Universities can't be run in a tidy way. It would be impossible to do that. So those were just some of the issues. There was another issue relating to efforts to change the status of Counselors and Librarians, take away their professorial standing. They were issues of more normal collective bargaining having to do with the two, the Counselors and the Librarians.

YELLOWWITZ: But ultimately the Union won on most of those issues

POLISHOOK: Yes. We won on all of them.

YELLOWWITZ: Do you think that the strike vote was an important force in winning that contract?

POLISHOOK: Let me just add that there were issues relating to the payment of increments. I said that salaries were not an issue, but increments became an issue and in fact, remained a continuing issue throughout the history of the PSC and I would predict

will become an issue again at some point, with the PSC in its future history. We had to fight on all of these issues having to do with the status of counselors and librarians, for example, having to do with the management rights clause that would have locked us out of the normal work of faculty members as an organization; having to do with increments which was a corollary faculty issue having to do, for example, with our struggle, successful, to equalize the salaries between the community colleges and the senior colleges. Management's positions on all of those were very, very tough. And they finally took the position, after not a prolonged period given the later history of the PSC and the University bargaining as well as bargaining by other labor Unions in New York City and New York State. They finally took the position that they didn't want to continue bargaining even after the mediation process took place by the State PURB intervening in our struggle. They finally took the position that the State Law gave them the right to impose a contract and they were going to impose a contract if we didn't come to an agreement. And what they told us, they told me, personally, that the zipper clause was absolutely critical, and that they would not negotiate a contract unless we gave that up and accepted their position. They wanted to make other changes. I don't recall what other things they wanted to change. We said that if they imposed a contract we would attempt to mobilize the faculty and go out on strike if we had to. And they didn't think that we would. They didn't even think that we would begin the process, but we did. We began the process of taking a strike vote which was overwhelmingly in favor of a strike on these kinds of issues. And I know I haven't elaborated them fully and certainly not clearly as they were in retrospect, in those days. And I went around the campuses myself, probably the leading officer, speaking at campus meetings, explaining why we took a

strike vote, what this was about. It was as much an informational campaign as it was a campaign of mobilization because I recognized that it was going to be very difficult to bring the faculty out, certainly initially. What would have happened I don't know. We probably would have tried to put up picket lines in different parts of the University. Some of the ... There were just practical problems that I don't know how we could have overcome: for example, how many different entrances there are on University campuses and whether we could put people at every entrance, because Management for sure would have identified entrances that were less well-covered to bring people in, both Managers, of course, and people who violated our picket lines. What would have happened, I don't know. I would say that this did have an effect on the Managers. I mean, I told the Chancellor and the Principle lawyer negotiating for the Board as well as other political leaders that we were at risk as an organization. If we accepted the kind of contract they wanted, we would be destroyed by the faculty. And we were never accept it anyway because it was wrong. On the other hand, I said, whatever would happen we were prepared to go out on strike if we had to, if they imposed a contract. It's hard to imagine what that meant now because we were able later to secure legislation which eliminated that weapon for public administrators of public entities. We later got what we called Triborough, which had to do with the increments but also had to do with an existing contract; that managers in the event of collective bargaining disputes and no successor contract could not change the existing contract. The law provided that the Board could change the contract and then we would go back to the bargaining table within a year. I think they could only extend it for a year, maybe two years, and then we would start bargaining again. It didn't eliminate bargaining. It didn't eliminate the Union. On the

other hand, it did eliminate the provisions that were changed by the Board unilaterally so we went back to negotiation, if it ever happened, with whatever they were proposing, not what existed before the war, so to speak, had taken a new turn with the Board deciding to do what it wanted to do and the Managers decided to what they wanted to do. But in answer to the question of what would have happened, I don't know. If you were to ask me did they think we would try to strike if we had to, the answer is yes. I had told the leaders of the Board and the leaders of Management that we would do that. I would say further, by that time Belle and Is, I wouldn't say they were not leaders of this, but I was playing the role between them and for them, so to speak, of leading the PSC and giving direction to the Executive Council as well as a very active role on the different campuses.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay, good. We now come to the contested election of 1973 which actually took place during the contract negotiation period that we just discussed at length. What role did you play in the contested election of 1973 in which Belle Zeller ran against Israel Cougler and there was a third candidate whom I'll get to in a subsequent question. What role did you play, especially between the two of them?

POLISHOOK: Well, initially I played the role of trying to see if I could get them to come to an agreement about who would run for President and then we would have a unified slate to the extent we could have a unified slate, of the people who were then the leaders of the PSC and I met. Of course, I knew both of them quite well. I think I had the trust of both of them. I certainly respected both of them greatly as the people who really gave life to the PSC in terms of principles, both of them in different ways. Israel said that

Belle had agreed as part of the merger that she would serve only one term and then he would take over. Belle denied that that ever had happened. And I recall meeting with both of them and discussing it with both of them. I made a proposal to Is that if Belle was permitted to run another term, that she would not run again and that if he ran as Vice-President, he would then be at least my candidate for President of the Union, and I promised him that I would support him. And I described this not well known, to people, there are some people who knew about it; I think Irwin Yellowitz knew about it, at the time, very few people knew about it. It wasn't the kind of thing to get out there anyway, but he was insistent that she had promised and he didn't want to wait. And I told him there was no way that she was going to back down and that what we could do is give her another shot and then agree on who would support you and then make sure that you were supported when the next election took place and make it clear that that was what was going to happen, even if we didn't make it necessarily an announced program for the faculty. Is refused to accept it, Belle refused to accept Is. In the middle of all this there were, of course, discussions among the people on the Executive Council of who would run with whom and I was under pressure not only to run as President of the Union, but to try to reconcile all this, which I told everybody was impossible to reconcile. It couldn't be done. And with Is and Belle promising to run against one another. It had never been my intention necessarily to run in any position for the FSC, maybe go back to teaching or research. I wouldn't say that I was thinking clearly about what my future was, but most people, certainly historians, think about their past and going back to a regular role as a faculty member and continuing my own scholarly interests wouldn't have been something I wasn't looking forward to. I had two books that I had underway, one was by a contract

which I never fulfilled, having to do with Confederation, the Articles of Confederation, and the other was something I had started working on having to do with the diplomatic history of the United States during the period after the Revolution, and particularly into the period of the Confederation, the Articles of Confederation leading up to the Constitution of 1787. So I had scholarly interests that were waiting, that I had not given up on, that I never, as it turned out, never could complete.

Now, what happened was with Belle and Is declaring, in effect, both quietly and then more publicly that they were running and beginning to organize slates, I had to make a decision about what I would do and others on the Executive Council. And what I decided to do for the betterment of the Union, it wasn't entirely self effacing, I guess, because when you make these decisions you don't make it without thinking of what it is that you're getting into. On the other hand, it wasn't what I originally thought I would do. I decided to organize a slate with myself as Vice-President and try to get as many of the existing members of the Executive Council and others who were leaders, to form a slate and that we would run without a top. So we ran a slate and created a Caucus with myself as the leader running as Vice-President, with a set of officers and Executive Council members otherwise. Belle ran by herself and Is ran with his own slate which had a couple of members, not too many, of the existing Executive Council. What we also agreed was that individuals Most of the people were ready to support Belle, including people who had formerly been supporters of Is. On the other hand, some who didn't want to support Belle regardless and wouldn't run as a joint slate unless the slate itself didn't have Belle at the top. So we ran without a top and people were allowed to endorse Belle as they chose, or Is as they chose, on our slate and that's how the election bloomed with a

headless slate, so to speak, with people supporting Belle, the larger number, and Is running with his slate, and then there were independents running, particularly Edgar Pauk. I would say that the political strategy, as it turned out, was smart because it gave more credibility to supporting Belle to people who were not formerly identified with the LC, if they weren't running formally with her, but could support her informally, and the same was true of the slate. And, of course, my support for Belle accounted for more since I was the head of what appeared to be to faculty to be a nonpartisan group, which in effect, was a political group. But all of this emerged from the fight between the two of them as to who should run for President and what would happen afterwards.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. On this election, on a question about it, is the actual outcome, which was a very close election. Belle won by something under three hundred votes over Is Couglar for President and Edgar Palk, the third candidate, who you mentioned, polled about three hundred votes. Do you believe if Edgard Palk had not been in the contest that Belle would have run that election against Cougler?

POLISHOOK: I think Belle would have won. I think the results would have been similar. We'll never know, of course, the election as very close even for the principle officers, including myself. I think the one for Treasurer, Rader Agronin, who had formerly been a UFCT leader and was my Co-Treasurer as a UFCT leader, ran for Treasurer of the PSC on the headless slate, the slate that I put together. She won by a very narrow number of votes, just a few votes, and I think her election, particularly, required a recount, it was that close, demanded by her opponent who was a colleague of mine from

Lehman College, a very good person. There was in retrospect some bitterness about all this, but nothing like the kind of political bitterness that you would find in politics nowadays and maybe in Union politics, whether the PSC or otherwise. People understood the need, after the election, for unity in order to protect what we all were fighting for. And we were facing an even greater storm, as it turned out, than we could have ever imagined in the bankruptcy of the City. We haven't talked a lot about the kind of issues that existed for the University during that period before that, before the bankruptcy.

YELLOWWITZ: Oh, before that.

POLISHOOK: But I don't think it would have made a difference, Palk coming in. Palk, while the people who knew him knew he had a greater identification with the UFCT, I think, this is what I remember, or the faculty we looked like a kind of independent... So I think he took as many votes away, of not more votes away, from our slate and Belle, who gave more of an appearance of independence than Is and the UFCT slate, which lost the election.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. I'm going to ask you just one more question and then take a pause before we move onto some of the substantive issues of the 1970's. Belle Zeller's administration lasted from '73 to '76. She was the President. The Executive Council was divided, although she had a majority of people who had supported her on it, Cougler still had a Caucus and still had elected some of his people so it was a very complicated situation. What role did you play in the Zeller administration of '73 to '76?

POLISHOOK: The Executive Council and the principle officers were divided but the division was small in terms of the numbers that I had on the Executive Council. There were just maybe two or three people at most among twenty or more, twenty I think it was, so it was a small number. Not that it was a small problem because at least for me, one of the things to do was to try to bring the Union back together. I still had a good relationship with I and certainly with Belle and other people, including the couple of people who represented the former UFCT who had been elected with it and remained on the Executive Council. As I recall, principally from the community colleges, a couple of the seats were held by community college people. The rest of it was our slate with Belle. And I guess I was the leader of all this. I wouldn't say that Belle was not a leader, she and I worked very closely together, but there wasn't any place she went that I didn't go with her when the decisions were made. And the primary decisions and the direction of the Union, I guess, fell into my lap during that time.

YELLOWITZ: Well, we're now going to proceed to two of the major issues that were faced by the Union in the 1970's. This Union that you've described was going through its own period of initial growth and trying to establish its leadership. And the first had to do with the tenure quotas which was a policy of Chancellor Kibby in 1973, and the tenure quotas would have set tenure quotas of fifty percent in the Departments across the University. And this policy was actually passed by the Board of Higher Education on the advice of the Chancellor. Ultimately the PSC was able to defeat this policy and to get the Board to reverse it. Why do you think that happened?

POLISHOOK: Well, I described earlier the what I called the hot and cold war and the hot and cold Management of CUNY and Kibby, of course, was central to that with a couple of the other Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Chancellors as supporters and advisors. I don't believe in the evil advisor theory; that somebody's always advising somebody so you can't blame them or at least you try to work with them. Kibby made these decisions and he had some leaders in his own administration who were big advocates for this, for restricting the number of tenured faculty and in effect, creating a fulltime, non-permanent work force at CUNY. You remember earlier in this tape I said that one of the great achievements of the UFCT was to consolidate the number of part-timers in the lecturer title and create a fulltime lecturer title and allow people who had served in those positions to claim them as part of the collective bargaining process and to expand it by new faculty who were hired, primarily as teachers, in the lecturer title so that we could eliminate or reduce sharply the number of part-timers. And that was achieved for a time at the University. What the University Management figured out, I suppose, was that this tenure quota thing was something going around the country. They would become leaders, I suppose nationally, by imposing it at CUNY. But it was a way to make an adjustment, at least I think in retrospect, to the fact that there were fewer part timers among than before because of the Lecture title so they would create a work force in the fulltime title that would be less tenured, giving them more opportunity to make changes. The big word that they used, borrowing it, ironically from the industrial sector, was flexibility. They needed flexibility to operate. That's what they kept saying.

I remember meeting with Kibby and with Belle: Belle, myself and Kibby, in his office. And he was someone, my wife kept telling me, we could work with and he was a lot better as a leader than I gave him credit for, because we had had some really tough battles in getting the collective bargaining contract. See, you have to remember that the tenure quota, which came in September, I believe, I think it was September of 1973; I think those are the dates, it came almost immediately after the successful negotiation of the collective bargaining contract so it was a slap in the face. I remember meeting with him and discussing this with him and telling him that if he tried to do this and get the Board to approve it, we would really be back at war worse than anything that had happened before and it was coming on top of what appeared to people to be a reconciliation between Management and Labor; between the Professors and the non-classroom work force and the people who were the administrators at the University as represented by our successful negotiation of the first contract with PSC, which was a very successful contract, as a matter of fact and lasted. In fact, its primary provisions lasted till now. So Kibby said: Well, if it's going to be war, so be it. I remember him saying that particularly. He had in his office a very large chair. He would sit there puffing on his pipe. And he sat there listening quietly to us and primarily to myself telling him that we were going to go to war if he did this and finally saying, well, so be it. We'll be at war. And basically that's what happened. What we decided to do was we decided to mobilize the faculty and the non-classroom professional staff against this. And there were a lot of reasons for it. It was just bad academic policy and certainly bad policy in the City of New York to impose an automatic restriction on merit. There were ways in which the faculties decided who to keep, who not to keep, who to promote, who not to promote. But in the

keeping and not keeping the decision should have been always one based on merit for those appointed to full-time positions that carried with them a tenure consideration over a five year period. So we were opposed to that, primarily because it was a mechanism rather than a process that was academic with respect to who to keep and it was one that violated what we felt were the traditions of academe both at CUNY and elsewhere. And it was something that was absolutely intolerable. And we went around the University talking. I know I did. I was on the circuit at every college of the University practically, speaking at very large meetings of the faculty telling them that what this represented initially, I suppose, a betrayal of our ability to negotiate a contract, and secondly, a betrayal of the norms of academic life that if they were successful in imposing on us would really change the University radically. And, of course, the merit consideration was very important. And as it manifested itself outside and to a degree inside, with respect to racial issues, ethnic issues about who to hire, it wasn't very difficult for me to say we were going to get a more diverse work force and why should we be imposing a tenure quota at a time we were doing that and what did it mean? You might think that, in retrospect, most of the ethnic and racial organizations that represented different groups in the University would have favored this so that they could open up positions for people, but we had almost a hundred percent support from everyone on this and all kinds of organizations on this, inside the University and of course, outside the University with the Civil Liberties Union and a variety of groups of that type that supported our position that the tenure quotas should be taken away by the University after they put it into the University. So we put on a tremendous battle. We also put ads in newspapers, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, warning people to think twice about CUNY was the

of resolutions endorsing the Union position and argued for them publicly at the Faculty Senate. And the Faculty Senate, though some of the leaders of the Faculty Senate were willing to accept the tenure quotas or at least didn't like the fight that was taking place there, we pressured to back down. We forced though, I did and others, of course who supported the position I took as senators, we got the Faculty Senate to vote to advocate to the Board that it reject and eliminate the tenure quotas. The Chancellor was so upset at his defeat that he told the Senate at a public meeting that he wouldn't come to the Senate any more and wouldn't participate in their meetings, and for a long while he didn't, while we, after we passed the resolutions and continued to pass a variety of resolutions respecting tenure quotas. And I was the leading voice there, not only because I was Vice-President of the Union, but also one of the leading voices if not the leading voice in the Faculty Senate on these issues. It was not an easy fight because privately some of the Senators didn't like the Union playing a role in the Senate. Some of the Senators didn't like the position we took. They liked to cozy up to the Management of the University. Some of them, I suppose, hoped that they would be appointed to administrative positions. That was never an expectation that I had for myself. And even if the thought arose in some peoples' minds, I always thought it would be a conflict of interest so I put the kibosh on that pretty quick, right up front. But there were Senators who argued for that. the Chancellor, I think, we even got, I think, as I remember, an editorial in *The New York Times* among other places, in favor of our position against the tenure quotas and we got the support of our national organization with which we were affiliated, then the AFT and NEA. So we had like, a hundred percent of outside support, ninety percent of the Faculty Senate support, some of the leaders were against us. We had ninety-five percent of the

these. And my question is how did the Union succeed in preventing these results and what was your role in this process?

POLISHOOK: Well, I mentioned that 1973 was the period of the tenure quota, so we go from the tenure quota and the PSC success in overcoming the tenure quota, into 1974 which is the beginning of the fiscal crisis which extended from ... in its obvious and difficult phase, from 1974 to 1978, so just to give it a periodization, the term of the Vice-President and President of the PSC first Vice-President and President was from 1973 to 1976, so I became President of the PSC in 1976, right in the middle of the great fiscal crisis. With respect to retrenchment, every single one was a disaster from my point of view, both personal and professional, but we had about a thousand people, maybe more, lose positions that were full-time as a result of the fiscal crisis over a period of two years or more, maybe twelve hundred over a period of two years. It is smaller only in comparison to what happened to other Unions, including very powerful Unions like the UFT, which I believe had about twenty-five thousand teachers lose positions, plus massive retrenchments in some of the other Union workforces, including police particularly, but other places as well in the City's work force. CUNY, remember, during this time, was not a City agency nor was it a State agency. It was an independent body, an independent corporation like the Board of Education with, in our case, both City and State support. The City was committed to support whatever the proportion was, a significant part of the operating budget and the capital budget of the senior colleges. It was always a sore point with us as well as University leaders that the State gave a hundred percent of support to the State University and something like fifty percent of

faculty with us and the non-classroom staff and a decision was made by the head of the Board and Kibby to back down. And what they did was they met, I know they met with me; I think Belle was there, and told us that they would back down and wanted a Committee to be appointed on personnel practice to make a recommendation to the Board about the tenure quota and other things relating to these issues. And we insisted--I insisted--that if they appointed such a committee I wanted to serve on it to make sure that it was kosher, so to speak, and I did. And there was a Committee on, I forget the formal title, personnel practices that actually made a recommendation to the Board and the Chancellor that the tenure quotas be eliminated and that there be some other changes in University personnel practices. But basically it was a ninety-nine percent victory for the PSC--the new PSC--on the tenure quota.

YELLOWWITZ: Sorry.

POLISHOOK: That's alright.

YELLOWWITZ: I might be able to say something different. One of the most important issues of the 1970's and of the history of the PSC was the fiscal crisis that took place in that decade and the PSC was able to succeed in preventing two results that could have come from it: first of all, massive retrenchments. There were some retrenchments but they could have been much worse, and second, the restructuring of CUNY which was talked about continuously during this period. So the Union was able to prevent both of

support to the City University, and I think a higher proportion but still not a hundred percent to the capital projects of CUNY, which were suffering terribly during this period without sufficient funding from the City or the State to maintain and to expand the University's buildings during that time. So we go into 1974 and the city begins to get into very serious trouble over its ability to maintain a balanced budget and going into '75 it's evident that the City is no longer able to fund all of its programs and begins significant and massive retrenchment of programs other than at CUNY. But by 1976 CUNY is right in the middle if it with massive retrenchments, although proportionally not as large as elsewhere. So just think of the sequence of time in which this took place. I was then the Vice-President and finally became the President, but throughout, I think, the leading spokesperson for CUNY, certainly internally, with all respect to Belle who was not necessarily only a formal leader. There was never a problem between us respecting decisions and what do. I like to think that she accepted whatever proposals I made that seemed to be sensible. If we had a disagreement, and I don't remember many, if any, we would work them out. Where there was formal role to be played by the President, making a speech or representing us, of course Belle would be the one. It wasn't a question my deferring to her. But she certainly deferred to me when it came to the real decision making about what to do, how to do it and how we were going to deal with this. You want to turn it off?

One of the things we did to prevent this from becoming worse and more difficult was to try to restrain ourselves because we were then beginning to bargain contracts in the middle of all this, with respect to what our contract expectations would be. We did it not only publicly, but also privately because in 1975 I recall particularly meeting with Al

Shanker and of course, I already knew from other meetings with the Municipal Labor Committee leaders, including myself on the Steering Committee, that the City was in terrible shape. And Al confirmed at a conversation we had, I think it was in 1975, early on, that the city wasn't going to make it; that this really was for real, which we all knew, and that the solution to it would be very, very severe cutbacks in the City's operations and big time changes in the way the City operated, things that I don't think I'm going to be able to talk about in this interview. But we had a pretty good idea by 1975 in the late spring and early summer, and I had it confirmed by Al and Victor Gotbaum, among others, because I went to see other people. Gotbaum had employees represented by his Union as did Barry Feinstein, who then was becoming a leader among the leaders of the Public Employee Unions, that this fiscal crisis was for real and it would involve very severe cutbacks and dramatic changes in the way the City operated. And it required the intervention of the State and the Federal government to prevent the bankruptcy of the City itself with very dire consequences for the employees of the University. So we already were aware of it in 1975. One of the things that I did as a strategy was to try to ameliorate it by putting as much of the burden of this in the future rather than allowing it to happen in 1975. We're dealing with two academic years which are different than the fiscal years of the City and the State. So that was just by happenstance a little bit of an advantage. We could spread it out over a longer period of time so that there were very few if any ... There were some, I think, retrenchments in 19--in the academic year '74-'75. By '75-'76 we were all in it big time, not only CUNY but every agency in the city. The police force I remember specifically, was severely affected by the retrenchments in '74-'75, our academic year, during that year. And then they were affected again in the

subsequent year, as were other Unions that were affected in both years, which is why their proportions were higher, their numbers were higher, why our numbers were lower because we aimed at spreading out as long as possible. Management at CUNY at that time was under severe pressure from the State and the City and I met with Kibby many, many times. I wouldn't say I convinced him because we had a decent relationship personally, and I have a great admiration for him personally and professionally, but it is an admiration that of course grew with the experience we had in dealing with the fiscal crisis. He decided privately that it wasn't a bad idea for us to work together as I stated to him openly that if we continued our fighting it would destroy the University; that the issues that the University faced, particularly the fiscal problems and particularly the way they were intertwined with the State and the City, made it impossible for us to be successful and retain both open admissions, or at least easier admissions to the University than the State University which was critical of the City; a building program which would give us buildings that looked like a University, and also proper recognition of the faculty in terms of collective bargaining, salaries and things of that nature; that we had to work together. And we would be the club but we didn't need him clubbing us in the meanwhile. So he understood that and we began a relationship that proved to be reciprocal until, unfortunately, he died after 1976. I don't remember the exact year but ...

YELLOWITZ: 1982.

POLISHOOK: We worked closely together from that moment recognizing that we had to work together. And it goes back to what I said earlier in this interview: I never

believed that the Union could be stronger than the University of which it was a part, nor did I think that was a good idea necessarily, that the professional life of the University had an ambiguity that was not similar to the kinds of ambiguities that existed in other kinds of labor situations, although I suppose in other labor situations you would find it. But ours was general rather than specific. It wasn't specifically issue-oriented. It was just general, the way we operated.

YELLOWITZ: On the restructuring of CUNY, I'd like to focus a little more on that. How serious a threat do you feel there was in the various restructuring proposals and what did the Union do to prevent CUNY from being dismembered?

POLISHOOK: Well, I wouldn't use the word restructuring necessarily to describe what's happening because the State had a commitment to support CUNY less than it supported SUNY but not enough, in terms of what Management and Labor at CUNY thought they should be contributing. This is an old problem. In the middle of that there's the free tuition that existed at CUNY and not at SUNY which allowed the State to say, well, you have free tuition. That's why we're not going to give you the same kind of support we give the State. And there were previous attempts, by the way, to restructure CUNY , more than one, under Rockefeller and intervened in the University, which is one of the reasons we didn't support Malcolm Wilson when he ran for election after succeeding Rockefeller, but supported Hugh Kerry who became the Governor and a leader in respect to what was going to be done to help the City in the fiscal crisis that became severe from 1974 to 1976. That's the period we're talking about. So what we're

looking at, at CUNY wasn't just a question of restructuring. It was a question of the survival of the University itself because some of the so-called restructuring proposals were proposals to dismember the University and change it. Free tuition became a kind of symbolic issue and a real issue, one that we went down fighting on. But on the other hand there were issues equally important, less emotional, having to do with the way in which the senior colleges operated and the support they got from the State, and of course the way in which the community colleges operated and their relationship to the senior colleges and to CUNY as an entity. CUNY, I used to say, was the only agency in the City that faced dismantlement completely and disappearance as a result of the fiscal crisis. The other agencies of the City and independent agencies of the City and State, such as the Board of Education, nobody was proposing to eliminate the Board of Education. But there was a real threat to eliminate CUNY as an independent corporation and to dismantle the University which is primarily one of the manifestations of that was for the State to take over the operation of the senior colleges, maybe continuing all of them or maybe not, and allow the community colleges to be independently operated either by the City or by some State agency which had not yet been worked out. But that was a real threat throughout this period and it manifested itself in different ways. So survival was the question in terms of structure, not necessarily restructuring. There were a variety of proposals, and I'm not trying to remember them in sequence or be more formal in remembering what actually happened. There was one proposal to the effect of restructuring CUNY which involved restructuring all of the State Institutions of Higher Learning. In other words, create regional state operations for community colleges and four year colleges and university centers in different parts of the state as a way of

restructuring higher education which arose, primarily, this proposal, because of the bankruptcy of the city, the inability of the city to continue to support the senior colleges, capital projects, and once that happened, there were proposals as I suggested to dismantle CUNY and eliminate it, and also proposals to change the state university itself, as well as things in between. Restructuring was absolutely critical because what it meant for us would have been something very different as a university than existed at that time. And we wanted to continue the traditions of CUNY. For example we wanted to continue it as a unified university with community colleges and senior colleges, just a center on that, with the ability for students to move from one set of institutions to another. With proper funding from the state, equal to what it provided for the senior colleges of SUNY, something that we had advocated before, but now it was no longer a matter of advocacy, it was a matter of necessity, since the city was no longer able to pay for the senior colleges of CUNY. And all the while to get the state to put up more money for the capital projects of CUNY, which were very important to us, while maintaining for the community colleges the statewide formulas of support that it gave to community colleges throughout the state.

YELLOWITZ: Now in this struggle that the PSC waged during the fiscal crisis to prevent retrenchments and to maintain the university, the union did have allies, important allies within the labor movement. I'd like to ask you questions about some of these. First of all, what role did the NYC labor movement play in helping the PSC's efforts during this time?

POLISHOOK: You have to remember during this time the PSC additionally took the position of being prepared to make concessions in terms of wages like other unions were doing or compelled to do, we were prepared to do that. The one big difference for us is we didn't have a collective bargaining, a successor collective bargaining agreement to give things up. So we had a problem with that, and during the course of the fiscal crisis we had to figure out a way to give things up with the existing pay scale, and then to get it back, which we did, and also to negotiate a successor contract, with some salary increases, which we did, during this period. Keep in mind, other unions, according to different types of negotiations that I took part in were giving things up. Mostly giving up, initially, the existing pay increases in their contracts, we didn't have that to give up. And also, making other kinds of wage concessions, pension concessions. We never made any pension concessions after 1973, which was imposed on CUNY, but we never made any of those. But we were required to make some concessions of wages, and we got the money back, later on, and then we negotiated a contract during this period with some wage increases, just to keep collective bargaining alive. The other unions were making all sort of concessions. We took part in those, so keep that in mind.

YELLOWITZ: Now why were the PSC's concessions relatively less severe? We were a small union, compared to much bigger and stronger organizations, and yet the concessions made by the PSC probably in total were less than those of some of the larger organizations. How do we explain that?

in the middle of a semester. I always said to them, you know if you retrench people we're going to have to close down classes while they're going on. The happenstance between the academic year was an advantage that we played up greatly. But you don't want to hear all this detail about what was my continuing point of argument with different people who were in powerful positions of the university, so...

YELLOWITZ: Did you get support in this larger position?

POLISHOOK: I'm getting to that. Initially, like you would expect, the unions looked out for themselves, and I don't say that pejoratively. That's their responsibility. Within the range of responsibility, I would say most of the unions, if not all of them, were not irresponsible. "You take the burden, and we're free from it." Victor Gottbaum and Barry Feinstein, just to name two, and I pick them only because they were representing people at CUNY, were advocates for the end of free tuition, which was a symbolic issue, and would have been prepared, I believe, to support any number of forms of restructuring; were never, of course, will to accept retrenchments of personnel, even if it did occur. They were up front with a position different than CUNY. And it particularly hurt us on the free tuition issue which we defended to the end. On the other hand, I'm not sure, given what the crisis was, that free tuition could have been saved. Although it was a symbolic issue, and it didn't really mean a lot in terms of state support and state help, fiscally, for reason that there were federal programs that would come into play if our students paid tuition that would more or less transfer the cost, some of the cost, of what was paid out to student enrollments. To help students participate in the union would have

been transferred to the federal government, and the state government , the state support for student tuition, the state program. So it was more of a symbolic issue than a real issue although for us it was a real issue in terms of emotional commitment and a desire not to put too many impediments in the way of students. So when you ask who supported the labor movement, remember, two of the top labor leaders were opposed to our positions, initially: Victor Gottbaum, and Barry Feinstein. So we had to move in that environment. I met with both of them at different points in time. We had some, at least from me, very angry responses to them. Which was completely out of character for me, so for them I think it had more of an impact. I think, in retrospect, they understood that there were some things we could tolerate and not tolerate, and they began to mute those messages, and Barry later apologized for the position he took. He just said, in looking back, he may have took the wrong position. Victor I never pursued on that because he left the district council some years later. There's no point in pursuing it, it became an irrelevant issue once it was over. The Central Labor Council, the state ALF-CIO, took our positions, we forced though resolutions in different bodies, even though Barry and Victor didn't like it, they accepted it. Of course, I had the great club of Al Shanker and the teachers. Now Al had his own agendas with Victor, less so I think with Barry. But he supported us a hundred percent on everything we wanted to do. Although, I think if he were making decisions it might have been different. But what we needed and wanted, he accepted and supported us uniformly. Which meant, also, that we had the support of NYSUT throughout the fiscal crisis. Now some of them could never understand...

YELLOWITZ: NYSUT is New York State United Teachers...

POLISHOOK: ...United Teacher. Some of them couldn't understand how we could be still advocating free tuition and against retrenchment the faculty and for getting a contract and not willing to give things up and then willing to get a contract with increases, we got a contract with a two percent salary increase, I remember. How do you fit all that together? But I suppose one of the tests of leadership is; "can I tell you that this is what we did and largely succeeded with this agenda?" We did. That's what we wanted. And we got what we wanted, finally. Within the structure of something that almost was unprecedented, it was unprecedented in the history of the United States. I'd add to that, what was going on with the federal government. Because as a member of the Steering Committee of the Municipal Labor Committee, we met frequently with federal people. Secretary of the Treasury Blumenthal, for example. One of the congressmen, who was chief of one of the fiscal committees, who was later arrested and imprisoned for bribery, a southerner from Florida, among others who were really, really tough on CUNY. They threw back at us for free tuition as if that was what took the city under. So I was there to say...I've said things like "you know that's ridiculous," to people of importance. It was not ridiculous politically, to say things like that, but it was ridiculous to say things like that because the tuition issue, really fiscally, was a non-issue.

YELLOWITZ: Now you mentioned that NYSUT was a strong supporter of the PSC, and I'm wondering if you could give us any greater information about that since so much of the final solution to the fiscal crisis had to do with New York State.

POLISHOOK: I think it's critical to remember that NYSUT was a very powerful organization and remained a very powerful organization throughout. It was a state organization of teachers and professors and others. And of course, Shanker played a key role there, but of course he also played a key role in New York City. There were other leaders of NYSUT that played roles that were independent in themselves, such as Dan Sanders, and Tom Hobarth. They accepted our positions on these issues, including free tuition, recognizing, I think, clearly and advising me that free tuition would not survive and it was not the best thing for me to be defending it all the time. I have no regret about defending it, because as I said, when I was put to the test, I could explain that it was not a fiscal issue, free tuition. The remaining issues were clearly fiscal issues. What we had to do was prevent the imposition of restructuring when the idea was alive of actually dismembering CUNY. Now to give further evidence of that assertion, there were faculty members who organized in the four older senior colleges, which had the acronym FASC; City College, Queens College, Hunter College, and Brooklyn College, who began to argue that the state should take over those four, without much saying about what would happen to the remaining senior colleges, or the community colleges for that matter. And we had to fight that too, because it undermined our position that we should wait, which was really our position, prevent any of these restructuring proposals from coming about, and when the economy improved- for example, even if we elected a democratic president, which we did in President Carter, over Ford, that we would be in a better strategic position to defend CUNY, and defend what we were defending to begin with, which was a unified university, a unified union, a collective bargaining agreement that we had, free tuition, open admissions, or some program of admission that suited the city,

and so forth. So it was very important to have NYSUT on our side, because to restructure CUNY and change it meant the state had to vote for it. Now the disadvantage, of course, was that the state had to vote also to give us money. Or change the disproportion of what it did for the state university or what it did for CUNY. On the other hand, to oppose the Whessle Commission Report, which I had described as a regionalization. There were others. Or to accept faculty who were demanding that the four senior colleges enter the state university. We had to have solid state support for that in order to make sure the politicians understood that for us this was a matter of life and death. And I'm glad to think, in retrospect, that we were successful in convincing people that the program that we had in mind was the program they should follow, politically. And that was no easy task, because at different points it looked like the city would go under. This had to do more with what the feds were doing with the city than it had to do with the situation in the city and the state. The city clearly needed federal support for periodic funding until the economic and fiscal conditions changed and the state was able to help the city and particularly the university in this context, a smaller part of it, in respect to keeping the institutions of the city alive. There's a lot of other history here that is not part of this discussion, having to do with the control board, but basically our strategy was: we knew what we wanted, we knew we didn't want something bad imposed on us, or something that would get in the way of what we wanted to do, and we were successful in preventing restructuring. And then when we talked about what happened a little bit later, we were successful in helping to create a new governing structure and funding structure for CUNY.

YELLOWITZ: In the midst of the fiscal crisis, the union conducted its election for general officers in 1976, and you ran against Is Cougler, and won a substantial victory. This was quite a different result from the election of 1973, when Belle Zeller had won over Is Cougler by a very narrow margin. First of all, why did you choose to run for president in 1976?

POLISHOOK: Well, I chose to run because there was no alternative. It wasn't a matter of not wanting to return to the classroom or scholarly career, and it had always been my hope that I would be able to do that, almost up to the end of my career at the PSC. So I was ready to run, and I also thought that I had the best chance to get together a slate that would combine people from the old organizations and some new people and that we would have a better chance to win. And the faculty knew me, because of the fiscal crisis. I'd been everywhere in the University, I took a clear position as to what we had to do in terms of sacrifices. I always believed and said things like, I believe that we have to do some sacrifices, but reminded people that we didn't believe in human sacrifice. We didn't have to do everything. And similarly, I believed that the university had to be restructured, but that we didn't have to be dismantled. We didn't believe in suicide, in terms of helping to solve the problem of the university. There were faculty voices that in effect offered death to one college and survival for another college. We rejected that categorically. I did, anyway, and was upfront about all of these issues, throughout securing votes of the faculty, and supporting the faculty, on what we had to do to get out of it.

YELLOWWITZ: Why do you believe that you achieved this substantial victory?

POLISHOOK: Because I think the faculty accepted, and I mean faculty in this respect to classroom and non-classroom people, community college and senior college, they accepted the message that this was the only way out of the fiscal crisis. That we were not going to reverse or eliminate the dangers by different proposals. And there were various proposals from different people. To create a program that included some wage concessions and included keeping the university together, defending free tuition, defending some form of open admissions; a program like that was sure to get a lot of enemies all over the place, but I suppose I was successful in convincing people that this was the only way to maintain the university and defend the university. And I think that message came across, and I guess the best test of it was the vote. There was an alternate message from Is and people on his slate, that they could do better because they would do different. I said that different wasn't going to make a difference. He challenged me in different places. We debated in different places. Other members of his slate challenged me in different places. But the faculty and the non-classroom staff supported the position I took and elected our slate by substantial margins, every member of the slate was elected.

YELLOWWITZ: Following this election, Is Cougler disbanded his caucus. Many members joined the caucus that you headed, and many of them also became leaders in the union. Why do you believe Is Cougler chose this time to disband his caucus and opposition did not reappear until the 1990s and under very different people?

POLISHOOK: I'm not sure I can explain why he did what he did because I was not privy to it, nor did I try to find out from people why he did it. I think basically he felt to wait for another election he couldn't change the result and wouldn't be successful. There probably was some pressure from among his leaders in his own caucus to dismantle his caucus and join us, because my message to them was, "we should now join together." I was willing to accept the opponents. I never denigrated any of them. I remained good friends of many of them, I think, even including Is, whom I greatly admire.

[Beginning of Second Interview]

YELLOWITZ: Irwin, how did the crisis of the 1970's shape your views of Unionism, first, and then second, the role of the President of a professional Union?

POLISHOOK: Well, I think the Union was faced with an unprecedented problem, probably duplicated in some other kinds of instances which looked different which include bankruptcies of industries or companies. I don't think you frequently come across a whole industry which is going bankrupt. You do come across companies that are going bankrupt where the Union itself is endangered and the members' jobs are endangered, and the work is endangered, if I can put it that way. The crisis of the University was different in the sense of the University itself was facing the question of its survival and everything connected with the University would have been completely transformed or disappear if the University was transformed or the University itself disappeared. I think we earlier

talked about, for example, the Wessel Commission which proposed the regionalization of higher education units in different parts of the State, whether four year or two year colleges. That would have meant without question the elimination of CUNY as an institution and would have had some drastic impact on the Union itself and an equally drastic impact, if not greater, on the faculty and the non-classroom professional staff, to say nothing of the support staff represented by other Unions. So in that respect, I think the CUNY crisis was different. People talked all the time about the survival of the City in the bankruptcy in dire terms but I always had the chance to correct this if I didn't want to be too obnoxious at different meetings, smaller and larger, by saying that the City itself would survive but CUNY as an institution, from the beginning, was faced with its elimination. Now, that did not so much shape as reinforce my conception that I mentioned earlier of the role of the Union. For example, I've said that the Union itself couldn't be stronger than the University of which it was a part and in fact, if it appeared stronger and was stronger it would mean some kind of deficit in the operation of the institution. Just to compare things which maybe aren't comparable, the UFT frequently is stronger than the Management of the Board of Education over many, many years, but that doesn't make the schools stronger, better, and it doesn't give greater satisfaction necessarily to the people who work there. And of course, during the fiscal crisis there were comparatively disproportion of teachers fired as against people in our Union so I always thought that we had to be part of a thriving University to thrive even if sometimes we outclassed the Management and even sometimes were able to get from politicians what they didn't want to give. But the Union itself couldn't always be stronger than the University. Otherwise there would be something wrong with the operation. I also, from

the beginning, the crisis was so severe and clear that it sharpened my idea that in order to be effective you have to tell people what they should do. We had unprecedented things thrown at us for a work force, if you will, and for the City work force. For example, we had to recommend, not for the first time ever

YELLOWWITZ: ... of the President you were talking about.

POLISHOOK: Well, we were interrupted just But I ...the crisis was so sharp and clear, at least to me, in terms of the issues and the survival of the University and the survival of the Union as a Union and the survival of our benefits and positions as faculty members that I thought my responsibility was to tell people what to do. And we were talking about things that were unprecedented not only for the PSC but, of course, for the work force generally in the public sector in the City of New York. For example, the deferral of wages among other things; the deferral of increments where they were paid, or step increases where they were paid. We had to make decisions about how to save the City money in the short term and save ourselves in the long term so we were out there with proposals that I think were unprecedented, although not unique, because there were other circumstances in the labor history of the United States when this happened.

YELLOWWITZ: Within the Union, did you consult with other offices in making policy or how was policy developed at that time?

POLISHOOK: Yes. I had no hesitation to lead in policy recommendations but I always attempted to gain-- this is a third point about the way I looked at leadership-- a consensus around an issue or a proposal after the proposal was presented and frequently that was accomplished. It would start, of course, with the principal offices as well as where consultations were necessary, with either other public employee Unions, which sometimes was the case even in our own unique collective bargaining things, and the President of the UFT, Al Shanker, in that case and some of the top UFT leaders and the representatives of NYSUT, to be sure that we had their support in keeping the word out for PSC with politicians in Albany who came from all over the State. And then, of course, to deal with the members of the Delegate Assembly. And we had frequent meetings on the campuses for me to have the chance, and other officers, to discuss the issues before us and the proposals to solve them. This involved not only a contract but also widened into issues that normally were handled by Management, particularly issues having to do with the budget and funding of the University.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. Did you change any of these attitudes about Union leadership or your view of the proper role of the Union within the University during your later Union career or did they continue pretty much as they had developed?

POLISHOOK: I would say they continued over the years maybe, as we expanded the base of consensus building and contact with member and other political leaders, Chapter leaders and political leaders outside of the University, other unions, of course the contacts continued. It didn't stop. Because there had been repeated crises over budgets ever since

the fiscal crisis of 1974, as I characterize it, and 19--to ... till 1978, but there were always imitations of that life at different points and subsequently having to do with budgets, having to do with politics and having, of course, to do with our contract negotiations and benefits.

YELLOWITZ: All right. We're going to move now to the 1980's and although the fiscal crisis had passed, the PSC still had to deal with budget issues on a fairly regular basis. There was one crisis with Governor Karry in the early 1980's and then another set of budget problems with Governor Cuomo in the late 1980's. Did the Union deal with these in ways any different from what the situation and approach had been in the 1970's?

POLISHOOK: I think the... when the issues began to narrow, so to speak, although they weren't small by any means, away from the question of the survival of the University, the survival of the University with a connection between community colleges and the senior colleges, a way of describing really big questions that affected the life of the University and its structure, we began to deal as we had been dealing before, with matters of funding and in the case of the State of New York, the funding of the Universities, and I include SUNY and CUNY together here, is an annual effort. So that became a focus each year of our activity in order to be sure that we could get the University funded properly, and secondarily sometimes efforts, particularly for the first time a contract had to be paid for, get enough money into the Legislative budget to pay for our agreement without the State cutting out other funding in order to pay for our funding. We had to protect against that because there wouldn't have been much of a gain if they cut out classes and positions in

order for us to pay. We fought those kinds of battles very frequently and repeatedly under both Karry and particularly with Cuomo, at different times. And I think it's important to remember that throughout this period, particularly after 1978, there was an interest on the part of the State whenever surpluses loomed, to cut back on taxes. These were Democratic administrations but they responded, maybe to a lesser degree, to the same kinds of forces and interests that Republicans, if you will, respond to with respect to tax cuts. So under Cuomo, for example, over his whole administration there may have been tax cuts that were so massive that they were, if not without equal, certainly among the biggest ever in the history of the country and the State. We're talking about cumulatively billions and billions of dollars that were that cut taxes in New York State. And when those moneys began to get shorter, the problems of the Universities became greater. It was almost as if there began to develop a culture that the Universities, because of their size, and I include both SUNY and CUNY, became targets either for less funding or targets for cuts in order to be able to pay for tax cuts or alternatively, in order to be able to pay for the operation of the University. There were tremendous pressures to cut back on expenditures. It was at that point that we began to have an acceleration in each budget crisis of the growth of part-timers again, after the success of the UFCT and the LC and the PSC in reducing the number of part-timers by creating full time positions among the lecturers. So you have an erosion that begins at the end of the '70's and into the '80's of the growth of part timers as a method of operating the University. We frequently took the responsibility for it, members demanding and complaining to us about it and it was a legitimate complaint, and we complained, of course, and made it less worse than it would have been otherwise. But fundamentally it was a failure on the part of Management to

understand that in the long run a career faculty of full-time people was essential to operate properly an institution of higher learning. Just to give you one anecdote of how this sometimes operated on Management's part, they tried to be as imaginative as possible in cutting things back. A frequent target was the Research Fund that we had established and had it grow even during the fiscal crisis, or the distinguished professor group of appointees, both of which involved some sums of money. I remember at one point the Chair of The Board, Albert Giardino--this is in the height of the fiscal crisis--came to me and made a proposal that if we eliminated these he would save a commensurate number of positions. My response to him was to reject it, partly because it would have been unprofessional to make the faculties as a collective body less professional than other places with research money available and distinguished professor appointments or higher rank appointments for very distinguished scholars available, and also because I was not certain that he could deliver it. I was also sure that once the idea got out from a proposal from him, even if we didn't up front support it, it would catch fire with the politicians and particularly with the Governor's staff who were looking for ways to cut back on the Universities. What was most significant about this is that the Universities spent a lot of money in the State of New York. They were multibillion dollar operations. And so every time there was a crunch, partly as a result of tax cuts, the Universities were among the targets that were looked at. And of course, on the other side, once tuition was imposed we had periodic issues about tuition issues about student support for the State and the Student Assistance Program which affected both Universities. All of this meant that that there had to be a stronger interest in the political life of New York State. There was an elevation of the importance of NYSUT to us, not because we couldn't lobby for

ourselves but strategically with hundreds of legislators up in Albany,--we were in New York city, our base--we needed as many allies as possible just to get the work done of getting our message out. So the work with NYSUT became more and more important; the support of UFT became more important, as important as it was during the fiscal crisis. UFT, of course, as Shanker used to say, and particularly Sandy Feldman when she was President, even the two of them and Sandy particularly acknowledged the importance of NYSUT; that even an organization as powerful as the UFT had to have a Statewide base because its support from the Legislature came from people all over the State.

YELLOWWITZ: You were on the Executive Committee of NYSUT for a very, very long time and played an active role throughout the organization. How did your role there affect this interaction between the PSC and NYSUT that you say is so important?

POLISHOOK: Well, initially I was not on the Executive Committee or the Board of Directors. I don't remember any longer the exact date that the change took place. But what I was describing just before, began to become more apparent to me. At first I thought it was more important for someone else to be there so that I could be in New York City to deal with the fiscal problems and deal with the building of our organization and be available to members whenever possible and so we had another representative, or other representatives in Albany in NYSUT, including as I remember, Belle Zeller and David Goldman who we could describe as an activist, if anybody is interested at some point. Dave had been one of the leaders previously from the NEA contingent and active with the NEA. Belle, of course, was our President initially and continued on a role as

lobbyist because she was very well known in Albany. But I thought that I had to stay in New York City to carry on my work in the City building the Union, meeting with members, meeting with officers, meeting with members of the Delegate Assembly, chapter chairs, and of course, more and more, meeting with members of the Board, making sure that members of the Board were people that we could support--

YELLOWITZ: Board of Trustees of CUNY.

POLISHOOK: Board of Trustees--when their positions came up--things of that nature. The Albany connection began to become more and more important, as I said, as the fiscal crisis immediately became less of an immediate issue and the Union seemed to be much stronger, I thought, and the members much more supportive. And there began to become a need for me to be in Albany more because the political leaders of Albany, particularly the head of the Senate and the Assembly and the Governor's people, the Governor himself, would prefer by the nature of their positions to meet with the President of the Local rather than with someone else like Dave Goldman or even in some cases Belle herself, whom they knew and admired. Everybody admired her. But there's nothing like having the real leader there when you needed to make decisions or proposals or lobby, so I made a decision to replace Dave with myself and replaced him on the Board of Directors. And when I did that, I was appointed immediately to the Executive Committee of NYSUT where I became the leading person certainly in higher education. But I like to think of myself also as a participant in all NYSUT decisions and a leading voice as part of the collective decision-making.

YELLOWITZ: You also played a major role in AFT, which is our national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, and I'd like to know what your role was there and why you believed that you became the leader in higher education in AFT rather than perhaps a leader from a larger Local than the PSC?

POLISHOOK: Well, the PSC was a very dynamic Union and the work we were doing was recognized by other people. I've said before that I sometimes find it difficult to talk about the "I" and I'm doing it in this interview. Anybody who takes a look at the printed record, the documents et cetera, will get maybe a different impression because I, in my public work, even in my personal inclination was to think about "we" rather than "I." Here I'm obliged to talk about "I" and I want to indicate it's not only a function of ego. I like to think it's not a major function of ego. When our claim on a position in AFT began to strengthen in the early '70's. We're talking about our first participation in the AFT, I mean, PSC and LC. UFTC always participated, and similarly a role like that in the NEA, which has a completely different structure. When that happened it became important, I thought, for one of our leaders to be actually appointed to a position of importance in both organizations. The NEA has a different type of leadership structure which I won't discuss, more collective and more complicated in some ways by having many more voices. Even the President of NEA was not the dominant voice at that time. Frequently the Executive Director was of National NEA, but the Executive Director kept quiet and the President was, to some degree, a factotum of the organization. It was hard to look at them and figure out who was in charge of what. PSC played into that and played a key

role while we were still affiliated. AFT was different. It had a dominating President who could be reelected, Al Shanker at that time. After Al was elected in Toronto as President in 1974. He chose to become President because the onset of the fiscal crisis and the politics of the K through 12 educational sector became so pressing that he thought that he'd better take over and make sure people understood that he was not only the powerful person but the actual leader. To some degree that happened in higher ed while that was happening and he became President. I remember quite well the AFT in 1974 in Toronto we had the same interest in Higher Education generally so we started, and I started to make a claim for an appointment and an election of a leader from Higher Ed, myself, in the AFT structure. Now, what that means in AFT isn't President of the AFT. That was Al Shanker, and the likelihood of anyone from Higher Education being elected to such a position was zero, less than zero. The other elected position was Treasurer. There already was an existing Treasurer of great eminence and importance, Porter, so what elected position was open that was left? It would be one of the Vice-Presidents. And we made an effort, a very strong effort, in 1974 which was not successful at the Convention that elected Al Shanker. But in 1975 Al promised when we met, when I spoke to him privately, he said that he respected what I was doing--what we were doing---and he was ... The we here meant not only myself but all of Higher Education. There was, of course, a President for UUP, Sam Waeshil at that time. But Al said that when the next appointment became available for the next general election of officers he would support me and I would be put on the Executive Council by an election. That happened by coincidence in 1975 because one of the Vice-Presidents resigned and Al came to me and said that we have a resignation, and I promised you and I'm going to deliver it. And I ran