

for President, for Vice-President of the AFT in 1975. There was an opponent, Norm Swenson, but Norm presented himself, for whatever reason, but it was clear that the Higher Education community, almost ninety-five percent supported me. And of course, the K through 12 sector, which was directed by Al, there was like ninety percent there, and I was elected a Vice-President to give a voice to Higher Education. And over the years I served twenty-five years as the Vice-President of AFT. I guess I was always the leading voice of higher education for everyone. There's more to it than that in terms of different proposals, different things we achieved, which is a matter of record.

One other point to make about this which would reinforce the "I" part of it rather than some other interpretation, I was the only representative on the AFT Executive Council---I think the only one--that was not a President of a Local in 1975. I was selected President in '76. So it had to be a matter of a discussion with Belle about what the future held. She understood that I would be running in '76. Not that I would push her out. This was something that she was prepared to accept and wanted to accept. But even earlier than that I would be the representative of Higher Ed on the Executive Council and elected a Pres--on the Executive Council, though I was a Vice-President of the Local. As I recall, usually the people who were there were members who were Presidents of Locals around the united states, big ones, occasionally smaller ones depending on geography, or depending on the nature of the structure of the Locals, sometimes an executive Director. But the more common thing was the President of a Local would be there. I was the only Vice-President that I remember at this point, who was elected on the Council.

YELLOWWITZ: Let's turn to the third organization which is the American Association Of University Professors that operated on a national basis and is limited to higher education. The PSC joined ... affiliated with the AAUP in 1981. Why did you favor this affiliation?

POLISHOOK: Because I thought it would strengthen higher education and would strengthen our Local by securing an affiliation and participation, which was as important as the name plate, in the AAUP, professionally: that it made the claim to be a professional organization devoted primarily to academic freedom. And I thought that to supplement--not offset--to supplement, the trade Union commitment we had made through AFT and to a lesser degree to NEA, when we were affiliated with NEA. We weren't affiliated long enough to change its image as being an exclusively so-called "professional operation," which it never was really. We were prepared to support a connection with the AAUP in order to gain another dimension in order to gain another dimension in terms of members looking at our organization. Just as important was to put a damper on the institutional battles we were facing with NEA and with AAUP in elections around the United States so there was a national objective. And I also thought it was important to strengthen AAUP for its own sake because I was fearful that the AAUP, given the competition for membership and importance among NEA, AFT and AAUP, it would become the lesser of the three, which of course is what it is now. Much, much the lesser of the three and much less important of the three when it comes to the delivery of important, powerful things to members. On the other hand, it had a history and tradition with respect to what I call professional issues, particularly academic freedom. So very

early on in the '70s I proposed to the AAUP leaders that we create a jointly affiliated structure with PSC and AAUP, which we were not able to work out. The NEA at different points tried to be competitive in that respect, including a big battle that we had within AAUP where we participated and NEA participated, where there was a shift in the proposal by the leaders of the AAUP to affiliate exclusively with NEA. We defeated that, actually, in a Convention of AAUP in Los Angeles in the 1980s. But it was in the 1980s that we were able to work out finally a joint affiliated structure with the AAUP which gave us a harmonious relationship in terms of collective bargaining interest in New York State. It prohibited them, for example, from again, as they did in the '70s, supporting a challenge to AAUP, and it set us on a track of working with them nationally to win collective bargaining elections around the country. Yeshiva, I think, obstructed the whole great success of that ....

YELLOWWITZ: The Yeshiva case.

POLISHOOK: The Yeshiva case ....

YELLOWWITZ: ...decided by the US Supreme court.

POLISHOOK: Yes. Yes, in the private sector. If that hadn't come, I think that this would have been a much more evident relationship in terms of practical gains for collective bargaining, for Unionism, for a new kind of professionalism that would emerge

from that, and of course, success for AFT and even, I think, success for NEA, where we were able finally to work more closely with NEA at my leadership, for the same reasons.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. Do you believe that a merger of these three national organizations, either throughout or just in their higher ed components, would be beneficial?

POLISHOOK: Yes. We always were a supporter of merger. We were a supporter of merger at the beginning of the PSC creation. We were a supporter of the relationship with NEA and AFT. We became, when the battle between NEA and AFT loomed and it began to affect New York state, we had to choose between NEA and AFT. We were, I think, the last or one of the last Locals to disaffiliate from NEA. They made all sorts of proposals to us, even willing to accept a jointly affiliated structure and make dues arrangements that would have been successful for us to remain within NEA. But it became impossible to continue the relationship while they were fighting AFT in the State. We had to finally break our relationship with them, even though the idea of merger was one that was in the forefront and I always was a proponent of that. My advocacy of that in the position I had with AFT and on the Executive Committee of NYSUT was such that in the '80s we began to have meetings with the Higher Ed leaders. I think it would have been possible--still is possible to have an affiliation of all the Higher Education people together even while the organizations are separate. But a merger of the two big organizations nationally would have been a lot better. As you know, there was a proposal for a national merger. I served on one of the Committees of AFT early on that began to

discuss with NEA ways of working together and finally began to discuss ways of merging together. I was on the original Committee.

YELLOWITZ: What date was that approximately?

POLISHOOK: It's in the '80s. It's in the '80s, mid-'80s. But even before that we began to meet with the NEA leaders. We began to share in the beginning meetings of the top political people. We had commensurate Committees. Then we began to meet at Conventions of each group--that's the Higher Education group--with meetings of the group, then we began to share speakers from each side at these places. I know I was the first speaker to speak at an NEA meeting since the time of the merger that went back many years before the PSC where we were affiliated with both. But I've always been an advocate of merger because it magnifies the power of the Higher Education Local and interests. It also makes that interest more clear to the political leaders of K through 12 in both organizations. And, of course, it makes for a better image of unification, a united political group and organized labor group, when it comes to political people, not only in the States but now we're dealing with the national government. I can tell you some things, if you wanted to spend a lot of time, about some of the political activity that I had as a leader of higher education in Congress. The most pissed off, my ... top of my head, one was to secure the elimination of mandatory retirement by the Federal government. We got that with the opposition of Senator Moynihan and the opposition of the Presidents of the leading Higher Education institutions in the country. I remember, for example, being in one of the Congressmen's offices who was key to this legislation in the House when

we were lobbying for the elimination of mandatory retirement. When we left, the Presidents of Harvard and Yale, et cetera, came into the same room and they must have been wondering who we were. We knew who they were, which says something about who we were and who they were. We knew who they were. They didn't know who we were and what our message was. What we got, over Moynihan's objection, among others, was a bill that gave a five years period for the elimination of mandatory retirement, a study by the National Academy of Sciences as to what would happen as a last shot at the legislation. In the meanwhile, interestingly, we went back to the Legislature in New York State and we eliminated mandatory retirement in New York State before it was eliminated by the national government. But there were lots of activities of that nature by me having to do with Student Assistance Programs particularly, loans. The Pell Grants were always a priority.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. I believe AAUP also opposed the end of mandatory retirement?

POLISHOOK: Oh yes. Oh yes. I remember meeting with the leaders of AAUP. There was one national Committee that I served on appointed by the, I think, by the Feds where I was there and the AAUP leaders were there. They were opposed to the elimination of mandatory retirement, as were the public sector leaders. So we overcame the opposition of AAUP and of course, by the leaders of Higher Education, particularly the big institutions like Harvard, Yale, you name it. They were all against it. There wasn't one that favored it. We opposed it. We argued it would have only minimal impact. We argued it was discriminatory because Higher Education Professors, and here the trade

Union terms made a difference, and we did it without any hesitation, that Professors were workers like everybody else. They had eliminated mandatory retirement for almost all workers so why shouldn't Professors be treated in the same way when it wouldn't even have the impact that it had for other workers who could go on beyond seventy. And we were successful in getting that legislation. We've overdone that retirement issue in the sense that much more important, in my view, was protecting the Pell grants, the funding of public institutions in higher education by the Feds, which is much greater in amount and importance by far than anything they do in the Federal government for K through 12. It's in a magnitude that's hundreds of times larger in the funding of higher education by the Feds than it does for the States.

YELLOWWITZ: And I assume the role of AFT is very important

POLISHOOK: Oh yes.

YELLOWWITZ: In securing this legislation in Congress and enhancing it.

POLISHOOK: Yes. Yes. And I was the point man, so to speak, for AFT and to a degree even for NEA, and to a degree even for AAUP. I always used to tell the people from AAUP, not immodestly, that how can you expect to effect Federal legislation of this nature when you don't play a political role. And while I never would do that with politicians because after all we were trying to work with AAUP and I believe they were important as part of the higher education community for their traditional role and in

centering on academic freedom, among other things, but in point of fact, the real clout came from us, even more so than NEA, because the NEA leaders were having difficulty in making clear their importance to the NEA of having the NEA follow their objectives, although they had some very good leaders. We didn't have that problem.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. I'd like to conclude this section on ... which involves AAUP by coming back to CUNY. During the fiscal crisis of the 1970's the AUP censured CUNY and also censured SUNY for the way they handled the retrenchment of faculty. The SUNY censure still exists today in 2004--and we are July 15th, 2004, but the CUNY censure was ended in 1983. How did our affiliation with AAUP in 1981 lead to the end of that censure?

POLISHOOK: Well, one of the goals of the affiliation--and I hadn't mentioned this before--was to get rid of the censure. And as I said, if we were going to be affiliated with an organization that was traditionally professional, with certain highlights historically dealing with particularly academic freedom, we had to get rid of the censure. Otherwise, it would diminish our affiliation. So that was a goal. There is a significant difference between the censure of SUNY and the censure of CUNY. The censure of SUNY had to do with a censure for firing faculty members without due process, according to AAUP standards, where it wasn't necessary, and it certainly wasn't necessary to the degree it happened in the '70s. In the case of CUNY, it was clear that it was necessary to reduce the work force. So the issue for CUNY was a question of procedure, notification of Faculty Committees meetings, things of that nature which I



won't try to elaborate at, it's not necessary. But it was largely procedural. But I don't want to diminish what that means because procedural in the case of academic freedom cases is what academic freedom is all about. But there was clearly a recognition on the part of AAUP and its leaders that the CUNY would have to reduce its budget and would have to eliminate faculty people. It was a question of the way it was done. And we worked out in 1981 when we affiliated with them, a new arrangement with respect to notification, for example; how long in the public sector is this required as distinguished from the private sector. Where in the public sector you have annual budgets of the Universities and the experience of the bankruptcy of New York City in 1976, you have an immediate fiscal crisis of a huge dimension that doesn't lend itself to the kind of period of notice that the AAUP requires, which is a year at a minimum. I think, as I remember, we worked out a new arrangement for half a year of notification plus other changes in the procedures that do form a precedent where it could be applied to other public institutions and that's how we got rid of the censure. At that time we had a new Chancellor, although the old Chancellor and the intervening people who acted in place of the Chancellor who was ill, Chancellor Kibby was ill, so there were different people who acted for him, including Seymour Hayman, who was the Deputy Chancellor, and then Acting Deputy Chancellor and acting Chancellor, in effect, Leon Goldstein, and then finally Joe Murphy, who became the Chancellor of CUNY. Joe was the final person to give approval to this on the side of Management. So that's how that happened.

YELLOWITZ: I'd like to now shift away the national organizations and come back to the PSC's activities during the 1980s. And I would say in retrospect that the 1980s looks

like the good old days, if there ever were any. During that period the PSC achieved significant contractual gains. Why was this ... Why did this happen and what was your role in this?

POLISHOOK: Well, I would think that we became an important higher education institution--that is, the Union--and became more powerful in the sense that the people understood that we had clout and could deliver. I could give you a couple of examples of that where legislators, and there were a few of them who voted against us for their own political reasons, and obstructed our political work--we forced NYSUT to refuse to endorse them, even if they were important leaders of the Legislature because of their opposition to things that we wanted. And we sort of developed a program where I would meet with these Legislators, whether .. one on Long Island whom I could identify at some other point if you wanted; one in Hudson .. in the Hudson Valley north of ... south of Albany. I would meet with these people and tell them they voted against us and unless they were willing to promise to be more cooperative, I was going to oppose their endorsement by NYSUT and even tell them that NYSUT would only get to endorse them over my dead body, which the leaders of NYSUT confirmed that that was the case; that they were not wanting to have me as an opponent within the organization over the endorsement even of important local legislators. So that's how we began to discipline, so to speak, for CUNY, many legislators to be supportive of us in the different budget fights and all sorts of fights that we had, contract fights during the years. The same is true of Harrison Golden when he came up for election for a candidacy for a State position. I opposed him because he was making it difficult for us as a Comptroller and as a member

of the Control Board in New York City. This goes even beyond 1976. And we got a meeting together with him and he promised to be more supportive and promised that some of the things that he opposed us on, he would not oppose us: for example, on the reconstruction, finishing the construction of the Manhattan Community College where the Comptroller had the right to say yes or no, almost a unilateral right. We got commitments from him on issues like that, mostly funding issues, that he would be more supportive if he ever took a State position. I don't recall anymore the State position he was campaigning for, whether it was Comptroller or Governor at that time.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. The Union was involved in a number of ancillary activities, it might be described, but very important to our members beyond contract and budget. One of these was the establishment of the Belle Zeller Scholarship Fund in 1979. What was your role in that event?

POLISHOOK: Well, I met with Belle when she left the Presidency. And what she told me, even before I met with her, I met with her frequently, sort of when we had an aside, and she recognized that she was going to leave the Presidency she'd say to me: Don't you have any kind of party for me because I'm not going to come. And if you fool me by having a party when I don't know it's going to happen, a surprise party, I'm going to walk out. So she was insistent on that; that that's what she wanted. By the way, when I left the presidency I could have done without all the retirement parties, as you may remember, Irwin.

YELLOWWITZ: I do.

POLISHOOK: And others do. It became an organizational reason to have these parties rather than for me, because I could have done without them. And she insisted that she would do without them. There wasn't an organizational reason to have a big party for her in the same way, if you will, at least I didn't think of it then. But I told her that I would think of something and try to convince her of something that she couldn't refuse. I would make her an offer, so to speak, she couldn't refuse, and I thought of the scholarship fund for students that we would connect with a dinner for an important politician and we would use that in order to raise money and build a fund and we would then recognize students on the bases of merit; their achievement as undergraduates. At that time it was only for undergraduates. And she accepted that and that was how the Scholarship Fund was founded. It was connected up with a dinner which was partly a fund-raiser and became important to the PSC in terms of recognizing political leaders who helped us. And also it became the most important, while it was still going in this format, political event within the University because the University Management began to come to it. And I convinced the Chancellors, whether we were friendly or unfriendly, to instruct the Presidents to support these dinners. And where a President didn't buy enough tickets I would speak either with the President, sometimes, and if I got a rebuff I would speak to the Chancellor who'd break their arms, so to speak, to make them buy tickets to these dinners. So that's how the Belle Zeller Scholarship Fund started. And Belle, of course, loved it. And it became a wonderful event to see our students who were successful. I always thought that we had these students who never had the full panoply of

opportunities that other students had at other places, and that many of them would achieve great things, undergraduates and later, if they had a chance. CUNY was their chance and our dinner was their recognition.

YELLOWITZ: And Belle, of course, attended many of these dinners, even after her accident in 1987, right up until the time of her death.

Another of these ancillary but important functions of the Union was the Welfare Fund which started as an independent organization, but after 1986 was integrated very closely with the Union. And I want to ask you why in 1986 the PSC chose to reorganize the Welfare Fund and to integrate it very closely with the Union?

POLISHOOK: The Welfare Fund was always a problem until we were able to make the changes we made and even after we made them because we would have structured it differently if we were beginning *di novo*. I think I've mentioned--maybe I haven't--in terms of Union values and professional values it was never my idea that a Union should take away rights from members in order to give rights to other members. So keeping that in mind, the Welfare Fund preexisted the Union and it was a decision made years and years ago by Managements to create a Welfare program for some faculty. And there was a formula for it, for classroom and non-classroom faculty, as it turned out. But there was a formula for it that was restrictive and gave an after retirement health benefit to a limited number of people. So that's where you start. And the Management of CUNY funded that independently by just making a decision to do it. But it didn't involve a large enough group of people that began to grow, particularly after the Unions were formed, the UFCT

and the PSC. So keep in mind that there was a preexisting Union--preexisting the Union Welfare Fund. It gave benefits to a small number of people that increased as the University's faculties increased and people stayed longer. It was a so-called eighty formula, which I won't try to explain if I could remember it at this moment, which was restricted and they operated independently. When the Unions came in, it became more and more apparent that Management was having difficulty getting money for this so we became the funders through collective bargaining, of this operation. And there were other Welfare Funds, by the way, that were attached to other unions in other agencies of the City. I don't recall comparable benefits for the State. Probably they had them in the State, UUP. It was not so common necessarily among different types of educational units throughout the State. They frequently have no Welfare or after-retirement health benefits. So we had a program. We had a leadership. They were independent of the Union. We were beginning to get more and more responsibility for supporting it. and they began to get more and more in trouble because the funding, like everything else, was never sufficient to cover their ....

YELLOWWITZ: I just want to make it clear that the Welfare Fund covered both in-service people and retirees.

POLISHOOK: Yes.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. go ahead.

POLISHOOK: --different benefits. After retirement health benefits and active benefits. So we were left holding the bag, so to speak, in the sense of having to fund this. The program that they had developed ... and it created some tension and difficulty. I would not say that the leaders were people without merit or quality. They certainly were important people at the University, people that I worked with, people frequently who, some of them, played important roles in the Union: not key roles but they played roles in the Union as well so we had a relationship with them. But the funding problems began to become more and more difficult for them and we became more and more responsible for helping them. What triggered the change was a decision they made years and years before in structuring the program, which was a terrible mistake and we were left responsible for their mistake to the point where it became apparent that they could no longer function without making drastic changes in funding and drastic changes in the program. And the Union, I believed, should not make those changes and give them the responsibility. If we were going to make those changes, we had to do it up front.

Let me just give you one example of what was the key issue. There were other issues. They had established a program for disability which also included payments into a Pension Fund until the person became eligible for a pension, even after they were disabled, so that somebody could be disabled, let's say, at the age of forty-five, there were a few, but it would require us to put aside immense reserves because they were also eligible to continue, until age seventy, to receive their pension payments so that at age seventy they would collect their normal pension. So the combination of the need to put these reserves away and also to pay into their pensions while they were disabled, I'm not talking about a lot of people; maybe a hundred or less, but the fiscal consequences of that

were catastrophic at a time where the fund was having difficulty getting money because we were having difficulty getting money for anything, including them. And I met with the leaders of the Fund and told them that unless we had a direct role in operating the Fund and making decisions in some kind of collegial way that we would just take them over completely. And we worked out the arrangement that currently exists where the President of the Union is the head of the Fund and there are other officers involved who are actually more active in the operation. The President of the Union and the Executive Council would nominate the people on the Fund. We agreed to have a Management representative with a vote on the Fund, which I had no problem with since the Managers were also covered by the Welfare Fund, and it resulted in a dramatic turn-around with respect to a structured program that was fiscally responsible. The prior program became fiscally irresponsible, not through any fault of their own, but just bad planning. It should have never allowed people to continue to receive pension payments until they were seventy, after they were disabled because it meant that we would have to withdraw hundreds and hundreds and millions of dollars from the operating budget to put away in reserves. The reserves, by the way, were earning very minimal interest rates so I made a big fuss about that with the leaders of the TIAA which were responsible for this program. They claimed, I think I wouldn't give a lot of credibility to their claims, they claimed that this is what the leaders of the Fund wanted. But I told them: how could they ever have entered into such an agreement with them, even if they wanted it, when it was fiscally irresponsible and clearly should have been indicated to be fiscally irresponsible. So we took over the Fund. We appointed--I did at least-- most of the old leaders with new people. We had a Management representative. We turned the Fund around substantially



to be able to pay for our Welfare program benefits and also our after retirement health benefits, and I've overemphasized that only because of the connection to the one feature of the program that promised to bankrupt it. I think at one point it was drawing down fifty percent of all the income from the Fund to pay for this disability coverage and their pensions.

YELLOWWITZ: On the question of retirees and the Welfare Fund I have two questions which are unrelated to what you have just discussed. In 1982 the PSC, which was securing the funding for the Welfare Fund as you've indicated, was able to achieve per capita payments for retirees that were almost equal to those for in service members, greatly increasing the retiree benefits that existed before. How did that happen? How were you able to achieve that?

POLISHOOK: Well, we insisted in negotiations that I took part in that were coalition based; there were at least, maybe three, sets of contracts where we negotiated with other unions, including, of course, District Council 37, the UFT and the Teamsters, for example; we had coalition agreements. I insisted throughout that we had to get, because some of the Unions already had, Welfare Fund payments and after retirement health coverage payments increase for TIAA members who were not covered.

YELLOWWITZ: We'll get to that in the next question.

POLISHOOK: So one was the welfare Fund and of course, the second was the after retirement health coverage for the people who didn't have it in TIAA, which is another issue. And in 1982, when we were able to negotiate, I think, the last coalition agreement, we insisted that the PSC had to have for its active members, a per capita payment that was similar to the payments that were paid to their Unions, because we had to take it out of our collective bargaining for the University. This would come out of a specific, discrete fund that was set aside for the funding of programs like that, basic health coverage and after-retirement health coverage, and we got it written into our agreement as well as increases for the Unions. The State accepted this. Remember, one thing not to forget, was the State paid for two thirds of all this after the University; after we settled up the new governance structure in the '80s. We also insisted in getting after-retirement health coverage for TIAA members.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. That's the question that I want to come to now. If you have no further comments on the Welfare Fund benefits for retirees we come to the TIAA cref retirees who did not have after retirement health benefits. TIAA cref is a private pension fund and was increasingly for CUNY becoming the majority fund in place of the public Teachers Retirement System. And I think that this was one of the most difficult issues that you were involved with in your entire career. So I'd like to know a little about how you and others were able to achieve this.

POLISHOOK: Well, we demanded that they pay, the city and State, for after a time coverage for TIAA members. It had never been provided when TIAA was put into the

University system for a choice in 1968, I believe. Anybody listening to this tape may think that it's rather confusing, the confusing relationship between the basic health program, the after-retirement program for active members who were in the TRS system and ERS system--we had three systems--and then coverage for TIAA members. I guess it would have been clearer if all this was disentangled as a preliminary statement. I tried to do that. But these are all related. So the first question is why wasn't the after-retirement health benefit which existed for some people with the eighty formula in 1968, why wasn't it applied to TIAA members. Now, I can't answer that authoritatively because I was not there. The LC and the UFCT .... I think the LC may have played a minor role in this. I don't think they played any role. The managers decided to go after the TIAA pension system as a choice because they were facing the implementation at some point of open admissions or some expanded admission and expanded University and they thought it would aid their recruitment of qualified people to get TIAA as a pension choice. That was the reason they argued for it, as I can remember and as we investigated it. But they made no effort to gain the after-retirement health coverage for TIAA members. I remember when we researched this in the University Archive, which they gave us permission to look at including a lot of personal letters and documents: a letter from David Newton who was then the Vice-Chancellor who represented the University in negotiations, collective bargaining. But before that represented the University in a lot of other things and was a Dean previous to that at Baruch. David Newton, I came across a letter that he had sent to the City, I think, something to the effect that they never, previous to 1968 and 1970--or whatever the date was--they never went after the after retirement health benefit because he said in the letter that they never thought anybody would ever

retire in the TIAA system; that by the time the system would have given a benefit to someone in years of service, whatever that might be if it were comparable to the public system, these people would have gone and found other jobs. He never anticipated--I guess nobody did--the cutbacks universally in the whole country with respect to jobs in higher education, in particular full-time positions, and there were very sharp cutbacks in the '70s and into the '80s. So severe that, as I said, one of the ways to keep the enrollments covered was by expanding exponentially the number of part-timers, something that we had eliminated in collective bargaining and now we were back at it.

YELLOWWITZ: Also, the public systems were cut back in the 1970's...

POLISHOOK: Yes. Yes.

YELLOWWITZ: ...which made TIAA more attractive.

POLISHOOK: Yes. But this was universal for all of higher education. We suffered more because of the obvious problem with New York City and the bankruptcy of the City. So the University's original position was they didn't need it; nobody would retire, so far as I could determine what it was. I believe somewhere in my Archives that's at the library there may be a copy of this letter, because I know I made a copy of it. I thought nobody would believe it. I didn't go out and advertise it because there's no point in it. It sounds too stupid to be real. But here we are in the '80s and people are going to retire. It was interesting that some of the people who denounced our basic health plan and the after

retirement health package, once they retired found it the best and most important package in the world for them and for obvious reasons: that it was never as bad as people complained about it. In fact, it was better than they complained about and it was better than anything they could buy in the private sector for themselves if they had no other coverage. They couldn't even buy it, if you wanted to. You could buy a shrunken plan and it would cost you more money. So as we looked at the change over in the components, the cohorts, that went into the public pension system and the private pension system, TIAA, it became obvious that this became a major issue for the University. Management said that it was no longer an issue they could deal with because we now had collective bargaining, blaming us for their failure to begin with, and we had to take this on as an assignment. And I made very clear by the end to the State and City leaders that there was no alternative for us but to demand this and we had to have it and they had to agree to it. And they did. What we did was worked out an interesting funding formula because the City was still loathe to go into new programs that would cost them a lot of money, for obvious reasons, one of which is the kind of exposure that existed because of the operation of the Control Board. This was not something you could hide. And what we worked out was an agreement whereby the City's share of the cost of the TIAA system was calculated--the cash share for a period of time--at what its share would have been only for the community colleges and we took that small proportion because the community college people were going to retire at a rate less than the senior college people for a long time. The senior college people were older, most of them had scholarly credentials which you don't get when you're twenty or twenty-five; you get when you're thirty and thirty-five and forty-five. So the cost of it, as a practical matter, would have

been much greater on an actuarial basis for the senior colleges than for the community colleges. We calculated what the City's share would be based on the actuarial formula, and because of the formula and the length of time people would have to serve in the University on an annual basis, it was not a lot of money. For the State's side it was an awful lot of money but the two sides negotiated contracts differently. The State didn't have to take it out of the wage package whereas the City was compelled by the coalition bargaining to take it out of the wage package. And we worked out that deal. The State would not take it out of the wage package and they would pay, like, more than three quarters of the cost. The City would take it out of the wage package, which would be similar to the wage package of other unions, and we made some refinements on that to our advantage so that it was a very small proportion of the wage package that went to pay for this, and that's how we got it. The City's budget people opposed this and said what the City political leaders were doing and the State leaders were doing was ridiculous. They were denouncing this and they produced a document to show the actual cost over a fifty year period at some hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars which Arnold Cantor, our Executive Director, used to keep in his office as a kind of trophy. And I said to them, I remember the last meeting with the Budget people and the City people and some of the State people, said: I don't care what it costs. We have to have this or we're going to be not working for our members. They've got to have this because other people have it in the City work force and the city had some kind of program which they paid for, by the way, we didn't pay for this. So that's how we got it.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. the last of these ancillary groups is the Credit Union which was established in 1979 and at that time was unusual for a Union like the PSC to sponsor its own credit Union. Why was that established?

POLISHOOK: We established it because our members participated in the Municipal Credit Union which had a severe problem of credibility. I no longer remember the details, and looked like they were going to be in plenty of trouble. And we had members who had accounts in this. And like members do, when the Union became more important, they came to us with this problem. What are we going to do about it? What were we going to do about their participation in the credit union that we had nothing to do with. Why was it our problem if they chose to join this? With, like, going, joining, putting your money in Chase-Manhattan and if something happened why would we have to cure it? It was the same thing. But in conversations... It wasn't member pressure necessarily. In conversations with people we thought it would be a good idea if there was a credit union that our members could participate in. It was helpful to them. And it would also be beneficial to them from a financial point of view. The problem was the Municipal Credit Union was a State funded, State chartered body. We could not possibly get a credit union established at CUNY which was State chartered because of the existence of the charter given to the Municipal Credit Union which included CUNY so there was no way the State would carve us out of that. However, we thought of the idea of putting it in a program credit union that would be Federally chartered. And there were a couple of economists, particularly one at Hunter College, I remember his first name was Bernie; I just for the moment the second name escapes me, a very distinguished economist, not

greatly well-known outside of his field at that time because his field had to do with the fiscal operations of the Federal government and included in that were the operations of Federal credit unions so he had a lot of contacts with people who chartered Federal Credit Unions and a lot of knowledge about how to do that. And he was a pal of one of our members of our Executive Council, David Burkes, who was the Chair of the Chapter at Hunter, so Bernie and David and then later I asked Claude Campbell to take a look at this only because I didn't have enough time. And we had good officers that would be responsible for different things, and I didn't have to interfere in their work because I could depend on their work being of great quality. And Claude, in this case, became the Union in respect to this program and we finally worked out a program where we could make an application for a Federal charter and get the Federal charter approved, which is what happened. I remember subsequently meeting, among others, with Lou Stollar and Al Shanker. Al who was then having a variety of problems with collective bargaining including a strike which he was still trying to figure out what to do with the aftermath of that where they lost the check-off and they needed a way to collect it. They wanted to have a bank do that but the Municipal Credit Union couldn't do it for them. They had to collect it individually rather than through a bank. So I met with him, it came up in the conversation, what we were doing. I said: Al, we've organized the Federal Credit Union, and we've separated out our membership from the Municipal Credit Union. They could join both, but now most of them joined our Federal Credit Union. And he said: That's impossible to get such a thing. I said: It's not impossible. We have it. I said: In fact, if you like we'd be willing to discuss with you a merger with you in terms of the Federal Credit Union which Claude and Bernie and Dave thought was a bad idea because they



said it would totally absorb us and we would lose our decision-making independence to them, even though I knew Al was the kind of person who wanted things done rather than things done only by them. I was confident we could do this and we would run their Credit Union. There were advantages to that by giving us locations throughout the City, secure locations which was a separate very difficult problem, and then later machines that we could use, automated machines for money and we would have places all over the City. But it didn't seem like that was a good idea, just the magnitude of it didn't look like a good idea, although Shanker expressed an interest in this, in connecting up with the Federal Credit Union. But we did include people from FIT. Lou Stollar thought it was not only a good idea but it was very important to him and his members became part of our Credit Union largely to increase the cohort of people that would be making deposits and our ability to function more efficiently with more money coming in from even this group and they disproportionately joined the Credit Union. But I can tell you from the last minute I was President, this was one of the most important successes we ever had for the members who were members of it in terms of getting loans, having places of deposit, a place that was not interested, a bank, in making money on them and a place that created what I always wanted to do for the Union and hope I did do, which is to give a personal touch to things so that you could call up the people who ran the Credit Union and they would know who you were by your voice and could do business with you over the phone. So that was a success.

YELLOWWITZ: One of the other very important developments of the 1980's which actually began in the 1970's, was a lawsuit brought by the CUNY women's Coalition

against the University for discrimination against women. It was known popularly as the Melany Case because the lead in the case was Lilia Melany of Brooklyn College. This ultimately led to a judgment in Federal court and a settlement in 1983. And my question is what role did the PSC play in this whole process?

POLISHOOK: Well, initially the case was one that was independent of the Union although the people who were involved in the case on the women's side were people who were Union activists, not all of them of course, but particularly Lilia Melany who ran for Vice-President with Israel Cougler in the first PSC election. I don't recall whether she ran with him in the second one. In any event, as I indicated earlier in these tapings, one of the things I tried to do always was to develop a consensus around not only the people who should be running the Union, including myself, but the issues. And I remember we had a .. an Executive Council initially with the merger that was equally divided and Lilia ... Lilia was a leading player in that while the women's case was developing. So I think ... remember that some of the people were people who were involved with Cougler and the other group. And of course, by the nature of those political battles it was difficult for us to keep close together, which is not to say that we didn't keep close in terms of the respectful relationship, common values and commitments even while we were having political differences. And Lilia was one of those people. In fact, I would have been happy had she been willing to run on our slate and even run as Vice-President on a slate that I supported and even led 'cause she was a good person and a competent person and properly so, very loyal to Is as an individual while not necessarily terribly antagonistic to the rest of us who were running on the other side. So the case

evolved with the women independently of the Union which raised some questions about why the Union wasn't involved in this, partly because the people who were operating the case didn't want the Union involved in this. And as I remember it, in a meeting I think with Judith Vladek, among others, early on-Steve Vladek was still alive--we were advised that for technical and legal reasons, the Union as an entity could not be part of this case. And in fact, over the years--this case took years--that restriction was eliminated from either the legislation or the administrative process of cases like this and at that point we were able to play a role, and did play a role. But at first we were advised that this had to be handled independently of us and as a Union we couldn't participate. Now, that's not the only reason we didn't participate. As I said, that some of the women wanted to do this for themselves, although there would have been no reason why we couldn't help them other than the legal restriction. As the case developed, I met with Lilia and we discussed the case, as I discussed it with the University, trying to be as helpful as possible, and we did establish a relationship with Lilia as the leader and other women on the case in terms of helping them in ways that they would need, including some financial help by the provision of experts to study some of the demographic statistics having to do with women and appointments, promotions, et cetera, and so forth. I remember one of the experts they hired, they couldn't pay finally and we had to finally find a way to pay them. And the agreement we reached with the women was if they won the case they would pay us back so it was in the nature of a loan. But our relationship was more than a financial one, although that financial help was very important to them at that time. It was more a way of softening up the University to find a way to settle this, even after the judge decided and also to help the women in any way we can with arguments and positions and work

with the counsel, Judith Vladek and others. Of course, she was also the Union counsel so it was easy to work with her. And basically at the end we intervened with the University and the Judge to help the women in some of the positions they took the case which I know they appreciated, particularly Lilia and Judith Vladek and others. I told Lilia it was not the kind of circumstance where we wanted a lot of publicity about this, not because we wanted to hide it.... We didn't hide it from the leadership core: the Delegate Assembly, the Executive council; there were occasional things in the newspaper about the case,--but we didn't play it up as a big thing for the Union partly because I said to her that it was hopeful that people wouldn't think we were doing this only for politics. We were doing this, first, to settle a very difficult issue that the University had that it had to get beyond to be effective as a University, and second, because the women had a claim on the University that was correct and also was finally adjudicated to be correct, that had to be remedied so we were very supportive in a relationship with the leaders of the Co-of the Women's' Coalition in helping to support the case and finally to settle the case.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. That concludes our questions on the 1980's. I'll just ask you if there's anything you'd like to add on the roughly the decade of the 1980's?

POLISHOOK: Well, one issue, if that is the way to put it because it was a monumental subject, was the subject of governance. We've spoken about it in different ways. But we were instrumental, the Union, in securing the governance law that now controls the operation of CUNY and certain provisions of that law that were critical. Now, you have to go back in time to the fiscal crisis to understand this, even, for example, as an

anecdote. When the University closed down because the University ran out of money to pay people and we demanded that people be paid or we would go out and advise people not to work, which would have been a strike, that was the first time the strike issue arose, I met with Kibby and he told me that if we took such a position it would close the University, and I said to him that we had no alternative and we would take such a position. We would demand that people not work if they weren't paid, and since he wasn't going to be able to pay people he'd better figure out what to do. And he said: I'm going to close the University, and he did. The University was closed for a two week period which was a trauma of great magnitude not only for the people who worked here and for the Managers but also a great public issue, the kind of public disgrace that had to be worked out over a two week period. And the reason I raise this is just to indicate the role we played. I remember there finally was a piece of legislation passed for a program to save CUNY and bring the University back together and make the semester end, 'cause this happened at the end of May so we had to extend the semester into June, the actual classroom, to finish up. And there was a complicated bill that had been worked out among the leaders in the Assembly, the Senate and the Governor's office. That bill .... the most important provision of the bill was of course, to get us paid. And what they did is they allegedly deducted from next year's budget money to pay us this year 'cause the budget for this year had already expired at the end of March and the next years' budget hadn't yet been put in because of the fiscal crisis. I remember it was very late in the evening, like twelve o'clock, when we ere in the hallway as lobbyists, the lobby of the Assembly. Assembly leader Steingut came out and said that the bill was ready to be passed but he didn't know whether he had the votes to pass it. And we said, and we were

aided here, of course, by the NYSUT people--we said to him: go head with the vote because we're sure that we've got enough people on the floor to vote for it. It was very late. People had gone out to dinner and some of them never came back to vote. But as it proceeded we were correct and Steingut, who was wondering what to do, decided to go ahead with the vote. The Senate had already passed it, I think, so that the Assembly passed it. And the Governor was committed to sign it. So that's how they reopened the University.

The same process, to an extent, without the same characterize...characterizations and when a situation occurred with the governance legislation subsequently. We were determined throughout the fiscal crisis to change the governance in order to provide more money for the University because the City said it could no longer support, and would no longer support, the senior colleges. And there was no reason for the city to support the senior colleges since the State was giving full support to the senior colleges of SUNY and the University Centers. So that was our claim and our demand. And a piece of legislation was passed subsequently that changed the governance of CUNY. The most important provisions had to do with full funding by the State which had already been achieved in part by the piece of legislation I mentioned earlier, reopening the University. They began to make steps. But this one formally recognized the State commitment to full funding of the senior colleges, full funding of the construction of the senior colleges, a chance in the Board to give the Governor the right to appoint the Chair and the Vice-Chair and to appoint, I think, ten of the fifteen members of the Board. The other five would be appointed by the Mayor. There were other provisions of the governance. I remember

going over the details of this because every word was very important to us, to make sure that no mistakes were made, even mistakes by the Legislators. And one of the final copies arrived at our offices and Claude Campbell and I, and I think Arnold may have come, Cantor, with us. We walked out of the office to discuss this 'cause it was a very sensitive thing. We didn't want this talked around. And we had the piece of legislation with the Legislators saying to us this is what we want to pass, what do you think. And we walked down to Bryant Park and sat down in the park and actually changed some of the provisions of the legislation, in order to strengthen them from the point of view of CUNY and protect the institution and protect collective bargaining and the integrity of what we were about, and then we sent the changes back to them, and the governance was changed in that manner. That governance is still the foundation for the university today.

YELLOWITZ: I'd like to ask you a couple of questions which have to do with the staff and really have no chronological connection, so we might as well put them in at this point. How would you describe the relationship between you and the staff of the PSC, especially the role of Arnold Kantor, who was the executive director from 1970 to 1995.

POLISHOOK: Well to understand this I think you have to go back to the period before the merger and the relationship between the LC and the NEA. When Arnold came to the PSC with the recommendation of the NEA at the time when the collective bargaining law was passed and it was clear that the union would be a union of LC, and we discussed earlier in this interview some of the rivalries of the time. Keep in mind that the LC was an NEA-type local in a respect that I'll describe in a moment. And Arnold was picked by

Belle and others as the best candidate to be the executive director. What that meant--I think I've mentioned before with respect to the national NEA--what that meant for NEA locals was that the executive director in operating the union, and I don't mean by administering the union, and the contracts, I mean by actually proposing policy, developing policy, and I think I've described the presidents of the NEA nationally as factotums, maybe that's too strong of a characterization. But they didn't have the active role that their presidents now have, because they can serve more than one term, and that Belle had, certainly, in the PSC. But basically, you have to think about this as an NEA culture, and NEA structure. And Belle continued as an active president with the right to be continued...elected. But Arnold played a very important role in developing policy, administering policy, almost independent at times of the officers of the union, which didn't mean antagonistic, it simply meant the ability to function like that. So, when the merger took place, even before the merger but particularly when the merger took place, the culture, the political culture of the UFCT was quite different, and the structure, and nature of AFT locals was quite different, and I think I've alluded to that before in these discussions. So, to look at the role that Arnold played, you'd have to look at it from the point of view of this background. When I became president, I was going to be president. I mean, I was going to be the leader of the Union and when I was vice-president, I was going to be vice-president, and where necessary I would be the leader of the union in terms of proposing policy, in relationships with politicians, the whole gamut of things I've described in response to questions before. Now that's not to say that this posed a problem; question: it may have for Arnold Kantor and the staff. But what developed was a relationship of a nature that I'll describe. It seemed to me that Arnold had to continue



to have the responsibility for policy, development, and a participation in the policy role with the officers of the PSC. That I never wanted him to be restrained with respect to what advice he would give, what positions he would take. Excepting once a decision was made, he would be a participant in that decision and conform to it. He was free to play an active role, and I would say that in his life as the executive director, a very creative role, as an executive director of the PSC. He...

[recording stops and restarts]

Now when we had to write the constitution for the PSC, we had to put certain things in. For example, should there be a political role for the staff? The AFT locals had a history of a political role for the staff, particularly the executive director, the treasurers, etc. We decided to keep the NEA pattern and make the staff non-political even though many staff people in NEA were political, particularly the NEA executive directors. We put in a constitutional barrier to the staff in playing a political role, which would have included- which did include Arnold. But we did not in any way bar them from participating, particularly Arnold, in the development of policy, except to require them, by a non-political role, to conform once a policy decision was made by the PSC

[recording stops and restarts]

In the administration of the union and the contract, the supervision of the staff, the latter, the supervision of the staff was specifically given in the constitution to the executive

director- other than himself. That doesn't mean that the president, the vice-president, the officers didn't have something to say about it, even members of the delegate assembly. But that was a responsibility, the administration and supervision of the staff, except for the executive director himself, or herself. That was a responsibility given to the executive director, that's different from certainly the AFT locals and maybe different from NEA locals. That was constitutionally provided in order to give a greater freedom to the officers to assignments and, you know, responsibilities, with the business of the union, which was very difficult right from the beginning. And as I've tried to say in this interview, frequently involved the very survival of the university itself.

[Beginning of Third Interview]

YELLOWWITZ: Today is July 19<sup>th</sup>, this is the third interview with Irwin Polishook. The other two were held on July 15th and July 12th. Irwin, I'd like to cover the 1990's in this session and the 1990's were marked by a continuing series of fiscal crises. How do these compare to the earlier fiscal crises of the '70's and, to some extent, the '80's that you had to face?

POLISHOOK: I would say the fiscal crises in the 1970's was the most severe, not necessarily only because of the magnitude of what the City faced and the State and, of course, the national problem which sometimes is ignored in discussing the New York City fiscal crisis, but because the issues were different and more dangerous. In the 1970's I think I've made clear in the earlier interviews, the fiscal issues, the personnel issues, the

policy issues respecting not only City University but higher education in the State. For City University it involved a question of survival. Nobody was talking about eliminating SUNY and nobody was talking about eliminating community colleges around the State but there was a lot of talk and consideration of substantial changes in the way CUNY operated, to the extent that it would not have been CUNY any more. It would have been something else, probably something smaller and probably something more absorbed within the State orbit in the sense that the State would not only control and deliver fiscal support to the University or its components or some new entity, but the orientation would be away from the City itself. One of our reasons to strongly support, and in retrospect I still would support it, the continuation of CUNY was the feature that the University was an articulated whole which would include connections between the community colleges and the senior colleges, just for example--there's a lot more that could be talked about--that go beyond fiscal arrangements and go into policy arrangements that have more to do with academic policy and public policy of an academic nature. That would have been ignored without question in any of the new forms that CUNY might have. That problem subsided to a large degree that it be--became almost invisible during the period of the '80s, but not ig--not disappeared and there are a number of reasons for that. One is the fact that some of the people involved in decision-making during the '70s continued on into the '80s in the administration of Governor Cuomo and always had in the back of their heads correcting some of the things that they thought were uncorrected in the earlier period, which would have involved substantial changes in the way the University operated beyond the ordinary fiscal issues, remembering that throughout the '80s the State of New York was cutting taxes when the opportunity arose which created deep cuts

later in State funding because of difficulties with the economy. The economy goes up and down, it's not so easy to get back to a steady flow of revenue from State taxes. So it was almost predictable that the pressures politically throughout the State and the nation, for that matter, particularly after Reagan made it necessary for Democrats to propose revenue cuts and tax cuts when it was possible, but when the economy turned down it wasn't so easy to get back. The Universities, because of the size of the budgets, multibillion dollar budgets for both of us, were always targets for cuts and restraints in spending and student aid. I think I've said that before, but that was a continuing problem throughout the '80s even under a Democratic Governor like Cuomo who had the reputation of being anti-CUNY and pro-private sector. I'm not so sure that's a proper characterization of him but he sometimes acted that way. Whether it was with student aid, whether it was with funding for SUNY and CUNY and the community colleges, or whether it was his attitude toward contracts for CUNY he was a tough customer. Some of the people involved, for example, Hank Delay among others, not enemies by the '80s certainly, never enemies, but people who understood what they felt should have been changed in the '70s were not. I'll give you one example, not such a well-known public example; certainly known to our members: the question of pension and support for TIAA pensions became an urgent consideration in the '80s because of changes that took place in the social security law which required then a renewal of the way in which we funded the TIAA pension at SUNY and CUNY and, to some degree, at some of the community colleges, smaller program there, particularly FIT, for example. The changes that might have been possible to equate fully what was the State contribution to the public pension with the private pension, TIAA, would have involved massive cuts in State funding for

the private pension which would have been unjust and unfair. I could explore that at greater length. It was a technical problem which was discovered by the State and then they acted on it by saying to us that either we were going to get the same funding that was going to the public sector pensions, or we were going to have to make other changes in the public ... in the private sector pension, and even the public sector pension if they could get away with it. To ... just ... just to give an idea of what this was about, the public sector pensions are supported by a pension fund by local authorities: in the case of TRS by the City of New York with an independent pension system and two independent Unions. The pensions had massive investments in the stock market which were producing enormous amounts of money with the result that the local education districts, both K through 12 and higher ed throughout the State, were not required to contribute anything because the pension systems were rich with money from the stock market which was going up, up, up, up, up. This ... it is not true in the private pension systems because of one simple reason: the beneficiaries of the up, up, up in the stock market in the private sector were the investors entirely. They took the risk but they also gained the benefit so the State had no access to the money and was still required to put in, as I recall, twelve percent into everybody's pension. A change in the social security system seemed to require that it be the same as the public system. If it had been the same as the public system it would have been zero, which would have meant the private system would have been entirely supported by the three percent that the TIAA pensioners contributed. So I've characterized generally the relationship with Cuomo and the fiscal problems of the '80s. this is one example of an issue that arose where there was a tremendous political battle, not so public. It wouldn't have been a very good public issue for us to go out there

and complain about the fact that our members in the private sector were getting twelve percent on the TIAA pension, three percent they contributed themselves, like other people, in the public pension, but the State was required still to put up twelve percent of everybody's salary, whereas the public sector there was zero going on for quite a number of years. We had to win that issue. The Governor, under pressure from us and also of course with the help of NYSUT and the pressure that could be bought from some politicians who were favorable to us, decided to appoint a Commission to make a recommendation to the Governor. I served on that Commission with Tim Riley. We were helped by financial experts from NYSUT. They hired some and Bill Scott contributed to that. It included from the Univer--

YELLOWWITZ: Bill Scott ...

POLISHOOK: Bill Scott. He was one of the fiscal advisors to the UFT, one of the most important people in the fiscal crisis of 1970 without a question. He had served previously as the second deputy or third deputy Comptroller under Harrison Golden until he came over to the Unions.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay.

POLISHOOK: Bill, by the way, received a Presidential medal from the University, at my recommendation, because of his service to the University. But you get an idea of the kinds of issues that arose for CUNY, the effects of all this were minimized with regard to

the private pension because we saved everyone's pension who was an incumbent and made some changes that modified the pensions for new employees, not very great modifications but nonetheless, modifications, and we made a deal with the State. I was the instrumental party. It's interesting Chancellor Bauker came back to serve on that. He was appointed by Reynolds, the Chancellor, over the objection of Ira Blum and it was what ....

YELLOWITZ: Ira Blum was?

POLISHOOK: ...the Vice-chancellor for Labor Relations and it triggered Ira's resignation because she ignored him and humiliated him. I think there was a lot more going on which I was aware of, but this was the trigger for it. Subsequently, Bauker told me after several of these meetings that he probably shouldn't have been serving on this Commission, it was a waste of his time, because the real power parties, he understood, were the union representatives, and particularly myself. There were people also from the University. As I indicated, Chancellor Bauker plus the team from the University, but they took a second line. The impact of the fiscal problems in the '80s included cutbacks in funding, battles over student funding. Most of the latter we won with the students. The former was a .. an erosion of funding that particularly affected the numbers at different times, of full time employees and the expansion of the part time employees, which was not good in terms of the career interests of the University.

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YELLOWITZ: Did the PSC respond differently in the .... to the problems of the 1990's from the earlier periods that you've just discussed?

POLISHOOK: I'd say that we did, largely because the situation had changed. I indicated in discussing the '70's that one of the results of the political crises and the fiscal crises was a merging of the two clearly, with the decision-making finally falling at the end of the era on three people; the Speaker of the Assembly, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Governor. More and more the responsibility for decision-making, particularly on fiscal issues, fell to them. During the '70s, of course, there were outside parties who played roles that were quite critical, the Federal government, for example, the bankers. By the '80s they had fallen away from decision-making about State affairs but the three leaders that I described became the dominating parties, even among their own constituencies, which would include of course, for the Senate and the Assembly, their conferences became more and more to be dominated by single decision-making, sometimes consensus building. Whatever political process went on there, the final decisions and indeed, less than the final decisions, were made in conferences between the three leaders. This required a change clearly in the way in which we influenced the Legislature and the Governor's office. It meant that instead of public displays, which we continued in different ways, but the kind of things we did in the '70s, the rallies which took place which were very large, probably the largest in the history of CUNY in Albany which included a group of students and faculty members that numbered probably ten thousand went to Albany one day and some others like that, I recall in one of our rallies



around City Hall which were massive rallies, supported by the labor movement and by other public bodies, it became less significant to do that than to be able to get inside and influence the leaders. And that had to be done primarily through leading personalities, myself included, sometimes the assistants of the leaders of NYSUT and our own officers who played a role in this, lobbying key legislators who lobbied their own leaders. I frequently was asked by Republicans to lobby Cuomo and frequently was asked by Democrats to lobby Republicans. This was not uncommon largely because the decision-making, when it kept going back and back to the three, became much more difficult for a lot of reasons. Some of it is politics, which we had no interest in necessarily, and some of it was personality, which we had to keep away from because our interest in that was less than zero. It was like a mine field to get involved in that. So I would say the biggest change was a recognition on my part that the kind of public outreach that we had in the '70s would not work as well in the '80's. And certainly by the '90s clearly the three were in control.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWITZ: Now I'd like to turn to a question within CUNY. Has the increasingly greater power that's been lodged in the CUNY Central Administration as compared to the colleges changes the role being played by the PSC, and this was especially true in the 1990s?

POLISHOOK: I would say that beginning with the '70s, the independence of the colleges in terms of their budgets, sometimes even their curriculum, began to be restricted by the fiscal problems and the dominance of the Central Office. I wouldn't say it was a dominance that was without a limit and frequently it was...they negotiated this and that with the colleges. But given the impact of the fiscal crisis and the new instrumentalities, for example, the Control Board, the way in which the City's budget now operated according to generally accepted accounting principles which affected the way non-budget moneys were collected and spent, the ... what some think is the independence of the colleges, their ability to decide things unilaterally is a better way to put it, that was restricted already by the '70s and continued into the '80s and certainly continued into the '90s. The most interesting... what I would focus on is the role of the Central Office and how their power to act was limited. Certainly the Central Office's power to act in respect to the things it had primary responsibility for, fiscal matters related to the funding of programs, student aid, relationship to the collective bargaining process, just to give some examples, by the end of the '70s we were a counterpart to their power in these areas, certainly more important for us and more dominating for us in bargaining for contracts and then, of course, in helping students and sometimes in- always, in fact, fiscal matters, we became almost a counterpart to the University in terms of influence. And frequently before the budgets we put together for proposals, they would discuss them with us, sometimes negotiate small points of them where there were points where we had some discretion in helping one college or another college without harming any of the colleges in their proposals. So in the '70s that role began to change. Kibby, as I noted earlier, became much more friendly and cooperative, and always was a very

decent, good leader for the University. Even when he was fighting us there was never a question of his decency and his willing--willingness to support things that had, without a question, a common priority even if we didn't fully agree on everything. The other leaders of the University became more willing to work with us and we worked with them cooperatively, particularly the role here of the Vice-Chancellor, Jay Hershinson, who headed up their political operation, we worked very, very closely with him on virtually everything that affected the University that was important and he was the instrumentality of the Chancellor's office. The biggest change is in the '90s and the election of Giuliani, who was an enemy of the University and began, because of his political positions publicly and privately to make it very difficult not only for us, I might add, but for all of the labor unions to continue to support their own objectives, and also to play the kind of role that we were playing in the '70s and '80s in the University itself. The fact that Giuliani was so dominating, he scared many of the Commissioners who were his appointees, and of course, he was able to influence very strongly some of the independent agencies, most dominating in the hospital area but also attempted to be dominating in the Board of Education and also in the Board of... in the Board of Higher Education or the Board of Trustees of CUNY. Once that began to happen we had to use the State influence over Giuliani to restrain him and particularly to get contracts for CUNY and sometimes to get program of support for CUNY. But that became a big difference. He not only...he did ... he weakened us, in some sense it would have been better to have a relationship with him as we had had with previous administrations, some good, some bad, but not as bad as with Giuliani. It made a difference that was very important to us but it was critical to the University. The constraints became so severe that Giuliani began to have trouble

with the Chancellor openly--Reynolds, and demanded that the Board get rid of her and finally they did get rid of her. But whoever came in afterwards, including Goldstein while Giuliani was there, had to be very wary of what Giuliani wanted as well as what the State wanted. The State became more important to us at that time. I think there's been a dramatic change since the election of the new Mayor but that goes beyond my time as a Union leader.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWITZ: I'd like to turn now to the situation within the PSC which is made up of a number of very distinct groups: full time faculty, adjunct faculty, higher education officers who were the professional... professional non-classroom people and college lab technicians, another professional group, dealing with the laboratories. And as President it was your role to keep all of these groups working together. How did you attempt to do this?

POLISHOOK: Well, I would meet with the leaders of the constituencies. Remember, full-time faculty were not really conceptually a constituency except abstractly. We didn't aim at helping full-time faculty as distinguished from part-time faculty, for example. One of the principles of administering a Union, in my opinion, that effects people who work for the University is not to diminish the rights they have through collective bargaining. There may be times where you make modifications or sacrifices but there has to be some equity in that among the different groups. But to go ahead, go forward, with

opportunities to dramatically change, lets say, the terms of employments for full-timers in order to help a group and make it overt, that would have been a great danger to the PSC and it was a danger that we overcame. If you consider the fact that all those years while I was President at the end we still had a strong and powerful Union with all sorts of problems that I think ... problems go with the institution and the responsibility we have, particularly in view of the off the cuff responses I've given to the questions in these interviews. So I would meet with the leaders of the HEO group, with the leaders of the CLT group, the .. less so with the leaders of the adjunct group except we had adjuncts who played active roles in the University's union leadership throughout this period and... aiming at a consensus which would depend on what they thought they needed, what seemed reasonable and possible to achieve during the course of bargaining. And we did achieve very significant things for all of these groups and our main thrust for the full timers was to protect the terms of employment for full-timers but we got things for them too. I can give you some examples quickly. For example, for full timers we got special increments at one point in time. For CLT's...

YELLOWITZ: At the top of the scale.

POLISHOOK: At the top of the scale. For CLT's at one point we dropped one of the titles and increased all the salaries for the people in the remaining two titles. The Chancellors, more than one, later complained to me with a smile over the fact that we had gotten rid of one of the titles and subsequently after years of bargaining, we were

demanding a third title and we got a third title. Why did you want to get rid of one? Now one's back. They were not stupid. They understood that we were responding to constituencies, but we were also, I always believed, responding in a responsible way to things that people needed and we were willing to go ahead even if it seemed strange and embarrassing, as the case of the CLT's going down to two titles and then demanding three titles because it served the fiscal interest of the people who were employed in those titles. Adjuncts we got a health plan, for example, coverage for pensions, there were... coverage for academic freedom. There were a lot of things.

YELLOWWITZ: HEO's?

POLISHOOK: HEO's, we were able to get extended periods of appointment. We were able to get them new benefits in terms of arbitration rights and things of that nature. Frequently there were ... there were efforts to reconsider the HEO title by the City, particularly under Giuliani, but it preceded him and the State. What do we need them for? We could hire different kinds of people in the classified public service as they sometimes did when it overlapped things like accountants who had titles in the classified public service. The advantage of that for them was that they had less rights, less employment payments, less pensions and so forth. We were able to fight those battles for HEO's throughout this period as well as getting other benefits for HEO's. I wouldn't say it was entirely rosy because as the employment situation for higher education changed, our ability to effect it became more limited and I mean by that with less funding for the University, Management was never loathe to have more adjuncts. And because of the

change around the country in the number of full-time positions available, the same transition was taking place, particularly in the public sector, particularly in urban areas, everywhere in the United States so there was an expansion in private and public employment of part-timers. So the part-timers who had, maybe, an opportunity as we developed it in the '70s to become full-timers, and I'd mentioned that earlier, those opportunities began to dry up. So people began to look on part-time employment as their career. And to be very simple, it's very difficult to provide a living wage in a part time job with the expectation that it would go on how long? Make it someone's career and it was very difficult to provide a commensurate job security with .... compared to full-timers, for example, even to CLT's and HEO's in part time employment when the whole purpose of it, at least at the margins, was more flexibility for Management, as they defined it. So that became an increasing problem throughout the '80s and particularly in the '90s.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. at one point the adjuncts, or some of the adjuncts, attempted to withdraw from the PSC and create a separate Union called the Part Time Union. How did you respond to those ....

POLISHOOK: We opposed that. It was more than one time, different points where we received unconditional demands from groups of adjuncts and others, sometimes with outside support. We opposed that. It was not only once. There were .. But one ... you're referring to one later effort including getting cards signed during the course of collective bargaining when the contract expired, to demand a collective bargaining election. That

was unsuccessful because we opposed it and we said that the interests of adjuncts were identified with the interest of the full time faculty and other full time people who are in the University, even though politically it was not in our interest to take a position that helped people that were opposed to it. If politics determined this we would have said good luck to you; good-bye. But politics didn't determine this. We had to make a decision, at least I did, on the basis of what was best for the University. Now, just consider one thing because my memory of this goes back to the beginning of collective bargaining when there were decisions to be made about the nature of the unit to be represented by the PSC and prior to that, by the UFCT and by the LC. adjuncts were teachers like full-timers were teachers. The application, for example, of academic freedom was identical for them as for full-timers. The nature of the classroom experience, once you closed the door, was the same. If there was a prescribed curriculum for a freshman equivalent course it would apply both to full-timers and part-timers generally in the University. So there were arguments to be made for the commonality of interests. I made those arguments, not only to adjuncts and people who wanted to hear it, but also to Managers of the University, politicians ... But certainly with the adjuncts we defeated the idea of separate Union for the adjuncts. It was not a good system, even though the political system in which we operated made it more difficult for us to deal with adjuncts.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWITZ: I just want to add something.



[recording stops and restarts]

POLISHOOK: I could add a word on the AFT and NYSUT: that the same support I gave as a leader to the idea that when you're organizing a collective bargaining unit it would be better to keep adjuncts and full timers together rather than spin off the adjunct group. I took that position very early on with Nassau Community College which probably had the biggest example of a tremendous battle between adjuncts and full-timers. But I took the same position for the NYSUT and for AFT and it was utilized in the state meetings that AFT made on adjunct policy.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWWITZ: ... between them.

POLISHOOK: Okay.

YELLOWWITZ: I'd like to turn to a couple of questions about your ... about you personally. You often said, and said it to me many times, that the leadership of the PSC was not a one-person operation. So would you be able to tell us your leadership style over your long period of leadership and did it change over time?

POLISHOOK: One thing didn't change. I always believed that it was necessary at some point to be able to recommend policy and to try to implement policy; that it wasn't simply

a free floating-you know-decision-making process where you waited to see what was politically feasible as well as feasible in other respects. Adjunct... I've referred to the adjuncts, for example. I took positions there that were best for the Union and for the University even if they adversely affected us politically. Many of our leaders were opposed to that. But on the other side of it, I was able to make a decision and to get people to accept a decision. So it was my belief that where it was necessary, I would lead people and recommend policy. Where it was necessary in every case I would try to get a consensus to get the position that I might have taken or that was developed by a consensus of leadership, usually beginning with the principal officers, but not limited to that, the Chapter leaders and sometimes the Delegate Assembly. But I had no hesitation to recommend things even while I believed that the Union was not a one person show. One of the difficulties in terms of images, what it appeared, was as I've described, when the big decisions were made about fiscal decisions in the State it was by three people. I couldn't bring a crowd to those opportunities where I had to influence the three, either collectively or individually. It was just not possible, just as the three couldn't bring a crowd when they made decisions about fiscal problems of the State of New York in the '70s, '80s and '90s. So it gave the appearance sometimes in the publicity and the public attention given to this, that I was the leader, but some of that was a result of the way politics operated. It wasn't necessarily... for me, critical to be out there all the time before the members. And I asked our Vice-Presidents, sometimes our Treasurer, other officers of the Union, to address meetings of the Chapters, sometimes to be involved with politicians. But there's no question that there was a tilt towards a public role for me or for any President of any Union at that time. It wasn't only me.

YELLOWWITZ: Okay. Were you satisfied with your career as a Union leader which necessarily required you to give up many of the other activities of a Professor such as research and teaching?

POLISHOOK: Yes. I think I've indicated an ambivalence about this and an expectation that I would get out in time to resume my teaching and some scholarly activities at CUNY. That never happened. But I .... it's not a matter of protesting too much that I was ambivalent because though I've said that several times. I was ambivalent. I did enjoy teaching. I did enjoy research and writing in the field of history. The career as a Union leader was to a degree happenstance. And I had a strong feeling of responsibility once I had the job, so to speak; that it .. I wasn't going to give them up in order to make what we had done so far worse. So the fiscal problems, the curriculum problems, the problems with dealing with the State political leaders, the University Trustees, the Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors, Presidents .... Frequently when I had to think about running again there didn't seem much of an opportunity for me to give it up for someone or others who would continue the work, not because I was irreplaceable, at some point no one's irreplaceable,- but at different points it seems to me that I couldn't give it up without defeating what I had tried to do and achieve over a long period of time. I almost decided to get out in 1997 and finally in 2000 I decided that I had had enough. By 2000 I also was aware that I would not resume my academic career. My wife had retired, she was getting out and there was no way I was going to be able to continue while she was out. So 2000 was long enough. It was over, probably well over twenty years of being President of the PSC,

twenty-five years or more if you include prior service in different capacities, including Vice-President of the PSC.

I will say this. I did have opportunities to be a speaker and explain things as I would have done as a professor explaining history. There was frequently lectures in different classrooms and certainly a lot of speaking engagements throughout the country. In fact, in Europe because of the AFT, an international role, I could talk about these things in more than just a simple way, in a way in which a professor would deal with things that a Professor would study. So without patting myself on the back, I think I did have an engagement with the work that went beyond just political or role playing but went into an intellectual understanding of what it was and a presentation of that, and similarly, a good bit of writing in that area. Now, when I wrote about collective bargaining Unions and related subjects, politics, it wasn't the same as when I wrote as a scholar in history. I wouldn't say it gave me the same satisfaction. I frequently depreciated it by calling it journalism of a type. But on the other hand, to tell the truth, there is a satisfaction in that: being able to explain to people what was going on in a way that they not only could understand but understand the full complexity of it, and also to write about it in a way that I think was different from the way the New York Times wrote about things that were going on in labor and in the University.

YELLOWWITZ: You wrote in the PSC's newspaper, *The Clarion* on a regular basis, but you also wrote for the AFT. Would you want to mention something about the series that you did with Bob Neilson for AFT?

POLISHOOK: Yes. We created a series of publications for the AFT over a period of years on higher education, on related subjects of Unionism, and going beyond that, on issues of value and the politics of collective bargaining. And there were some forty-five articles published over a period of years when it was important to explain what was going on in higher ed. And it was supported by the AFT. They paid for this. I similarly wrote articles like that or there were reprints of articles that went into newspapers--Union newspapers, sometimes academic publications, throughout the country, including Unions in Canada and internationally.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWITZ: ... some of the other issues.

[recording stops and restarts]

I now want to turn to the question of internal PSC politics. Why do you believe that there was no opposition caucus in the PSC from 1976, when Israel Cougler disbanded his caucus, until the 1990's when the New Caucus arose?

POLISHOOK: Well, I would say the main reason is that the members were willing to accept the leadership that I provided and other leaders provided in the Caucus that we had created, the City University Union Caucus. Had it been the case that we were not satisfying members in a democratic Union we would have had a democratic opposition. It

would have continued. Either Israel would have continued with his Caucus or something else would have come. So people accepted the leadership and decided if they were opposed to us, that there was no reason to oppose us because the members would support us overwhelmingly. And that went on for a very long period of time. Not to say that there wasn't, within the structures of the Union, lots of issues, lots of difficulties, lots of different personalities. Like the era of good feeling in American history, this was not really the same kind of era of good feeling. There were always variety of tensions and difficulties within the Union which we were able--I was able--to work out politically and I was able to deal with a very wide range of personalities, as you can imagine, among professors.

YELLOWWITZ: What changed in the early 1990's to promote the, first, the appearance of the New Caucus and then a number of victories that they won in Chapter elections?

POLISHOOK: The biggest change that began to undermine our political solidarity, if you will. Keep in mind that the New Caucus leaders were also members of our own caucus but decided at some point to step outside and oppose for whatever reason. The best way to find that out is to go and ask them. They were able to be successful initially where the Chapter leaders retired, and I would say demographically the biggest reasons for the change politically were, first of all the early retirement of people before what might have happened in the past, and there were successive periods of early retirement which included leaders of the PSC as well as voters who would have supported the

incumbent Caucus and who became very strong supporters of the incumbent Caucus, it's reflected in the Retiree votes. So that's one reason.

The second reason demographically is a change in the age of people. You have a new generation of scholars coming in, including part timers, and they had their own perception of their time for leadership. I guess the third thing is, I always believed if you stayed in politics long enough in a top position you were going to be defeated because people get tired of leaders. And I was fortunate. They never really got tired of me, maybe. But I think there was an underlying feeling that there should be a change in the people that operated the union, which was generational and normal, particularly effected at the local level, for obvious reasons, and less effective at the Union wide level.

YELLOWITZ: How did you try to meet this political challenge from the New Caucus during the '90s?

POLISHOOK: One of the things I disliked was politics in the sense. I was successful at it, I guess, so why would I still dislike it? Well, I guess I never swallowed in my head that this was what was best in the world, to be a top notch politician so that was the thing I liked the least. And dealing with the politics became increasingly difficult and getting people to deal with it in terms of successes where people were retiring in terms of outreach to members on the Chapter level was becoming increasingly difficult, and I spurred my thinking that it was about time for new people to take over. But the new people who had been within the Caucus were people who began to organize the New

normal for an opposition party to take the position that they could get it even though we couldn't get it. Time will tell the extent to which they're going to be able to get all these things that they said we couldn't get. For example, taking a position that the contracts didn't come in on time and that was a terrible thing. Well, it was a terrible thing. But somebody's going to have to judge whether they were more successful than we were in getting on time contracts. I'm taking a small issue that's less controversial than bigger issues ideologically and also bigger issues practically than they took. It's not surprising though to me, given the loss of membership, given the loss of leadership, given my own disinterest sometimes in the politics, given the personalities that were operating within the union, that the New Caucus was able to win closely elections in the local level and to win those elections were very difficult. They didn't win all the elections 'cause we won some of them, but they won enough of them to indicate that they were for real. I remember in 1997 asking one of their top leaders,--no, even before that,--what would they be willing to work with us and could we work with them, and could we maybe fix a way to put the Caucuses together, because I said this was not going to work too well for the University and for the union. And I would also ask questions about whether or not they had an interest in opposing me and taking over the top leadership. Up until at least 1997 they expressed clearly an disinterest in that and understood that what they were going to do as a strategy--and it wasn't so secret--was to win as many Chapters as they could until they could mount a challenge. The first challenge came in 1997.



YELLOWITZ: Now, would you say that the New Caucus's position on the Union taking an active role in... in... in an area outside of CUNY's concerns was a major difference from your view and that of the City University Union Caucus?

POLISHOOK: I would say yes. If you think about the time frame from my own history, in the 1970s and certainly in the '60s issues relating to Vietnam and foreign policy were number one for many Unions. On the other hand, there couldn't be a number one that would involve foreign policy at a time when the University itself was, I've said, was threatened with no survival and destruction. That had to be our number one. Collective bargaining frequently had to be our number one. It wasn't very difficult for me to make clear, and I did say it repeatedly and change things, that issues related to foreign policy should not be on our agenda; that there were avenues of activity for people outside of the Union if they wanted that; that the union's ability to effect some of these big issues were limited as best and that, to the extent we involved ourselves in that, we didn't have enough time available to do other things. They ... There are people who think they can do everything and there are people who come up front in political campaigns where they want to win elections and saying they will do everything. My approach was quite different. It's not a lack of value. It's a lack of ideological constructions. There were things I wouldn't do but it wasn't because of an ideology. It was because it was the wrong thing to do. For example, I would never--and never did--advocate the end of free tuition even though I knew it was negative in terms of the policy of the Union. That was not an ideological position. It was a position based on what was best for the city, the State, for the Union, for the students who came to CUNY, for the

people who were citizens of the City and State of New York. Those are value-laden judgments rather than ideological judgments, 'cause it could have been possible for somebody else to take a different position on free tuition for practical reasons and argue as Victor Gotbaum did and Barry did--Barry Feinstein--that-- it was best for CUNY to get rid of it. But it was something that I could never accept and never advocated.

So the other group was ideological. I've given you some examples of what they did--what positions they would take, and of course, they were political in the sense of being a .. an opposition group ready to do whatever we couldn't do. The judgment about how successful they are is going to be a judgment made by somebody else.

And I want to say, too, that now as a retiree and finally realizing the benefit of what I had helped to put together for our members as retirees, one of the things never to forget is that active members earn retirement rights after they retire when they're active. And if you get rid of things for retirees you're getting rid of things for active members as well. They'll never get them if they're not gotten while they're still employed. So my hope is that the new leaders of the Union are successful because it would serve my interests as a retiree and perpetuate the strong Union that they inherited. I used to say to them in the Delegate Assembly sometimes when they would oppose this and that and characterize everything as being horrible, I said: If things are so bad, what do you want to take over for? Well, they took over and I hope they discovered that the union was still as strong a body and it's beginning to get and should get a flavor and character that they can impose on the union and on its activities by vote of the members.

YELLOWWITZ: Alright. In 1997 you ran for the last time in the general election and it was a contested general election with the New Caucus putting up a full slate and running a very vigorous campaign which was met by an equally vigorous campaign from the City University Union caucus. You won that election by a very big margin. How do you explain this in terms of what you've been talking about concerning the New Caucus?

POLISHOOK: I think you have to remember most of the local elections that they won were won by a narrow majority. So if certain things hadn't happened they wouldn't have won and they would have been in a position of not being in a .. not being able to mount a City-wide campaign with a local base. Particularly, as I've emphasized, the loss of people from retirement, the inability to get a succession of leaders who would be able to act effectively, or people who didn't want to continue to play as active a role in the local Union, in the local Chapters because they were planning on retiring and particularly as conditions sometimes worsened, fiscal problems worsened, people were figuring out how long they had to go before they would quit. I was always asked would there be another retirement-early retirement. The reason people asked that is they figured it wasn't their moment but their moment was coming not too long in the future. It's very hard to keep a political group together under those circumstances, particularly in a University as big as ours, particularly since I was growing more and more unhappy and disaffected with the political role, and particularly because we were unable to get enough people active to oppose the New Caucus people on different campuses. And some of the New Caucus people were perfectly fine people with claims to leadership. As I said, younger people. I never was one of an advocate for the ideological types who ... no need to say who they

might have been. The members had to decide, when it came to a central election, who to vote for and it was clear to me that if we were going to continue our leadership despite what was happening at the chapter level, I would have to run again. It was a very difficult decision for me to run again. I would have preferred to leave in 1997 and determined to leave, but was convinced otherwise that I would be the best candidate to run and keep the University and keep the union in the direction and with the leadership that I had given it until now. It became clear during the campaign that I would win the election and it became even clearer during the campaign that our slate stood a good chance of winning in most of the election slots. And as it turned out, we elected everybody that we had on the central slate.

One last word about this is another responsibility that I found very difficult was raising money. The other side was very, very well funded and we had a great deal of difficulty in getting money to support this. Most of the top leaders had to put up whatever they could afford to put up.

YELLOWWITZ: Would you say that the 1997 election was much like 1976 where you also had a contested election, in that it was a vote on the role that you had played as a leader up to that point. In 1976 it was as Vice-President to Belle during the early years of the Union and in '97 it was over your long Presidency.

POLISHOOK: I would say yes. And I guess one of the signs of that to indicate that that's a correct judgment, not just an ego statement on my part, is the fact that some of the people who were elected in 1997 ran in 2000 and didn't win.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWITZ: You mentioned that you're now a retiree and a member of our Retirees Chapter, of course. How has your life changed since your retirement?

POLISHOOK: Well, I've had an opportunity not to return to teaching and research, which I think became impossible, but to pursue intellectual interests, family interests, interests with friends: go to the theater, travel occasionally after the summer. Most of my travel, for example, .... I've traveled much more while I was active in the Union than we do now. On the other hand, the trips are much more satisfying because they're...

YELLOWITZ: Now?

POLISHOOK: ...yeah, because they take place during the academic year and we can go to places that I would never have gone to during the summer. For example, Sicily or Turkey, Peru, just to give some examples. But I travel less but it's much more satisfying. I've found, for example, that traveling always used to be connected up, no matter where it was and no matter how exotic, with some Union activity. There was no way to avoid the Union activity year long so that there was some union activity that I would connect up with and extra time that I would take for a vacation either with my wife and son or sometime just with my wife--rarely by myself--prolonging a period of travel, 'cause I would be anxious to get back. I found that those kind of trips were interesting. When you

had personal time it was quite interesting and enjoyable, but it was more in the way of recreation than an intellectual interest. Now when I travel, there's a lot more that I find of interest in terms of learning about a country, the history, studying it, reading about it, and that's much more satisfying than the previous trips. And I'm able to read more widely than previously. I remember saving over the period of twenty or more years shelves of books that I'd intended to read and couldn't and up to now I've read all of them that I .. that were worth reading. And now, I read whatever I'm interested in. I don't have to concentrate on Union reading, and I certainly am unable to contribute as a scholar because it would have taken too much to get back to where I had been at that time. And similarly, though I had an appointment at the graduate school, it was not my feeling that I could be an effective graduate professor without having command of what I had command of years before. So retirement seemed the best choice for me in 2000. And my wife was going to retire so there really wasn't much of a choice. But I have had no regret about retiring. It's as good as those days when occasionally I didn't go into the office and could read or go to the theater.

YELLOWITZ: If you had the chance would you live your life over as you have lived it?

POLISHOOK: Well, in retrospect, everything is clear so as a historian: the way to make a ... prophesize what's going to happen is to look back and then say it's going to happen. I never intended to stay this long and I did. It was circumstance that held me there. It would be wrong to say that it wasn't a fulfilling commitment and responsibility. It was. And it was an opportunity that isn't often available to people in academic life, and

particularly on the Union side a responsibility to help our members and also to affect the way the University operated, and also to play a role in the AFT and NYSUT and even a larger role respecting different forms of educational policy. That was quite satisfying. But I would say that it wasn't satisfying to the extent that it was something that I looked for, always substituting my role as a professor and teacher. There was always an ambivalence about losing those opportunities which I enjoyed greatly over all these years. So in retrospect,-you know---everything is clear. It was always clear to me that what I was doing was worthwhile. On the other hand, I always felt that I was missing something that I was trained for, educated for and enjoyed.

YELLOWWITZ: That's the ambivalence you're talking about.

POLISHOOK: Yes.

[recording stops and restarts]

YELLOWWITZ: I think we've covered everything. This ends the interview, Irwin, and I want to thank you very much for giving us these many hours and for explaining the role that you played in the history of the PSC. Thanks very much.

POLISHOOK: Now, just remember maybe one thing as a last word. When I was President of the Union I was frequently interviewed and always irritated sometimes when

it went too long. So you don't have to thank me. Now I'm retired and can contribute in a way without feeling irritated or under pressure.

YELLOWITZ: Okay. Thanks again.

12-30