1984

Oral History Interview: Betty Chafin, Joe Chafin, Opal Mann, & Vivian Sansom

Betty Chafin

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Note: There are also transcripts for tapes 3 & 6, but they contain other interviewees who did not sign transcripts and are closed.
Death notices

Death Notices are paid announcements arranged by local funeral directors and complied by the Obituary Clerk, 528-2753, after noon.

Opal G. Mann

OPAL G. MANN, 88, of Huntington, W.Va., died Saturday, December 27, 1997 at her residence. She was a retired employee of Owens Illinois Glass Co. in Huntington, W.Va. Funeral services will be conducted 2 p.m. Tuesday at Klingel-Carpenter Mortuary with the Rev. Douglas Shepherd officiating. Burial will follow in Woodmere Memorial Burial Park. She was born November 3, 1909 in Kanawha County, W.Va., the daughter of the late Howard Pauley and Mamie Pennington Pauley. Mrs. Mann served her community, state, and nation unselfishly. She served on the Tri-State O.L.C. Board, was a past member of the Consumer’s Association, the Governor’s Private Industrial Council, the Cabell County Planning Commission, and the Silver Haired Legislature. She was nominated by the State Democratic Convention as one of the Party’s Presidential Electoral College members in 1980. She was the first recipient of the Susan B. Anthony award ever given in Huntington, and the Corina A. Mowery Award from the West Virginia Education Association. She was a charter member of the Democratic Women’s Club of Cabell County and served on its Executive Board for 14 years. She received a Distinguished West Virginian Award in 1989 and was active for many years in the AFL-CIO. In 1989 she was made a member of the West Virginia Labor Hall of Fame. She was preceded in death by her husband, Frank B. Mann. She was survived by a nephew, Paul Mers of Chesapeake, Ohio. Flowers will be welcomed, as well as memorial contributions to Hospice of Huntington. Friends may call from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday at Klingel-Carpenter Mortuary.
ORAL HISTORY
GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Opal Mann, the undersigned, of 925 Charles Court, Huntington, County of Cabell, State of West Virginia, grant, convey, and transfer to the James E. Morrow Library Associates, a division of The Marshall University Foundation, Inc., an educational and eleemosynary institution, all my right, title, interest, and literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on ALL INTERVIEWS, 1983, to be used for scholarly purposes, including study and rights to reproduction.

Opal Mann
(Signature - Interviewee)

925 Charles Court
Address

Huntington, WV 25701

Date October 30, 1983

Betty June Chopin
(Signature - Witness)

Date November 6, 1983

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Date 11-6-83

Betty Jean Chafin
(Signature - Interviewee)

296 Oakland Ave.
Address

Huntington, W. Va. 25701

Date November 1, 1983

Opal Mann
(Signature - Witness)
ORAL HISTORY

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I, ________________, the undersigned, of 296 OAKLAND AVE, County of CABELL, State of WEST VIRGINIA, grant, convey, and transfer to the James E. Morrow Library Associates, a division of The Marshall University Foundation, Inc., an educational and eleemosynary institution, all my right, title, interest, and literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on JANUARY 15, 1984, to be used for scholarly purposes, including study and rights to reproduction.

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Date 1/15/84

(Signature - Interviewee)

Address

Date 1/15/84

(Signature - Witness)
ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, Vivian F. Sanson, the undersigned, of 2110-12 Ave., County of Cabell, State of W. Va., grant, convey, and transfer to the James E. Morrow Library Associates, a division of The Marshall University Foundation, Inc., an educational and eleemosynary institution, all my right, title, interest, and literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on Oct. 7, 1983, to be used for scholarly purposes, including study and rights to reproduction.

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Date 6-22-84  Vivian F. Sanson  (Signature - Interviewee)

Address 2110-12 Ave.

Huntington, W. Va. 25

Date 6-22-84  Frances A. Hensley  (Signature - Witness)
OPAL MANN, JOE CHAFIN, BETTY CHAFIN & VIVIAN SANSOM

This interview was conducted by Dr.'s Barbara Matz and Francis Hensley, a series entitled “Our Working Lives.” It is conducted with members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union. Items discussed are current issues for women in the labor movement in West Virginia, piece work, wages, quality of clothing, and the DeCasper Corporation and the Huntington Dress Factory.
Copy of transcript given to Dr. Hensley on April 25, 1984.
AN INTERVIEW WITH: Betty Chafin
                         Joe Chafin
                         Opal Mann
                         Vivian Sansom

CONDUCTED BY: Frances Hensley
             Barbra Matz

DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 15, 1984

TRANSCRIBED BY: Sally M. Keaton
TYPED BY: Sally M. Keaton

TAPE 4
LABOR UNION WOMEN

TOPIC: "Our Working Lives"
FH: This is tape four, ah, Our Working Lives Interviews, ah, with Huntington area labor union women. This is January 15, 1984. Continuing our discussion with Betty Chafin on the current problems, current status with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

BC: Well, I was identifying Richard Wilks, ah, President of the Southwestern District, District Council that had also been, ah, instrumental in, ah, the DeCasper Corporation obtaining the city and state funds to, ah, operate the new business. And, ah, I would thing that there could be a certain amount of pressure put on the DeCasper Corporation by these various agencies or organizations to possibly persuade them to accept the ILGWU (mic or recorder being moved, lot of noise) as their, as the bargaining representatives, and I think that will be their biggest asset, ah, I know at one time, while I was still working, we even, at times, had government orders. Ah, we made, ah, shirtwaist dresses for, ah, the Airforce and I believe also for the Army and, ah, it's possible that they may, you know, from time to time, ah, get government orders, and there are ways that, you know, pressure can be put on companies to conform, you know, to accept, not fight the union and I think that that may be the line they have to take, eventually, ah, once it becomes a sound company, you know, financially. Ah, it's, I've heard that, ah, Mr. DeCasper has said that he has everybody back
to work that wants to come back and that is not true, by no means at this point, ah, because he has handpicked the people that he wants back in there.

FH: Have any of the, ah, let's say the Executive Board Members of the ILG, have any of those women been called back?

BC: None of the strong union women, ah, any that served on the executive board, ah, none has been approached about coming back to work which includes me that's Vice-President of Local 420 and was also Shop Steward in the shop, ah, this also includes Mabel Hayes the President of our local and, ah, she was also shop chairlady that handled all the shop problems, and of course we had our share of run-ins with Mr. DeCasper from time to time, ah, just upholding our rights. And, ah, we've remained on good terms with him as a person but apparently as an employee we must rank at the bottom of the list and, ah, this is obvious, ah, what his attitude, I think his actions speaks louder than anything. I mean, what he has done must show that he is not for the union or probably does not wish to have the union back in the plant. To me there is no other way I can describe it. It has to be that way, ah, we have one, one girl Beverly McNeely that, ah, is working part-time now, ah, she is continuing to keep her dues paid and, ah, serves on the executive board from Huntington Industries, ah, she had, ah, got elected to the board shortly before the plant, before
Huntington Industries went bankrupt. She still serves on the executive board, ah, we don't know how much longer this will be but she does desire her job back. Recently I think there was an ad in the paper, I didn't see it, ah, but saying that, ah, anyone that wished a job with the DeCasper Corporation was to go to a job placement agency, not the West Virginia placement agency but a private concern, fill out an application if they wanted to come back to work or wished a job and, ah, Beverly McNeely did this. But she has yet to be called back and she did tell the woman when she filled out the application that she thought it would be a waste of her time to fill it out and the woman said, "You fill it out anyway and I will give it to Mr. DeCasper." But as yet, and this has been probably a month ago, and as yet she hasn't been called back and she was strong union, ah, she stood up for her rights and for the rights of her co-workers, and, ah, most of the people that, that were strong union I guess you would say or, ah, that made themselves aware of the contract and what, you know, what, what was right and what was wrong and the proper way of doing something, ah, none of those, very few of those people have been called back.

OM: Ah, Betty, did you tell me that, ah, they had hired someone from out of the plant?

BC: They have hired from off the street, so to speak, people with, ah, no prior employment with either Huntington Industries or
whatever. Ah, I had heard that they hired an oriental girl that had never ever worked there before and I don't know if they've hired any since then, ah, I haven't heard, but I do know for sure that, that one had been hired with, you know, with not having ever worked there before. So, ah, I would say as far as Sam DeCasper's attitude toward the union, I would say regardless of what he says it, it must be obvious what his feelings are and, ah, I think this, ah, our, our ILG representatives are, you know I mean they have the same, pretty much the same attitude. Now how Mr. George feels I don't know. I've been told that he's, ah, for unions and that he had said that he would not keep the union out. But this remains to be seen at this point, you know, what will happen.

BM: Well maybe he doesn't have to do anything as long as DeCasper is taking care of it.

BC: Well, I know they are in touch periodically, you know, our union representatives and, ah, Mr. DeCasper as well as Mr. George. Now what has been done that I'm not aware of at this point, I don't know, ah, everyone certainly hopes that the union will go back in.

FH: But you are waiting right now for the company to become more stable before the union takes any kind of action?

BC: Yes, financially, ah, because it does involve, ah, when you negotiate, ah, the company does have to pay into the Health &
Welfare fund to provide these benefits for the people such as their drug card, ah, their weekly health benefits as well as entitling them, ah, to, ah, use our, ah, health clinic, our doctor located here in Huntington, ah, and, ah, they also provide optical centers throughout areas and, ah, the company does have to pay and they have to negotiate, you know, for a percentage of the pay, well it's based on your payroll or your number of employees or whatever. (JC: Payroll.) But, ah, so you can't, you can't expect a company that's not financially stable to, you know, to do all these things. Ah, and, ah, as far as, you know, the state money that was supposed to help them get on their feet you know, and continue to operate and provide jobs.

BM: What kind of a time frame are you thinking that this will take, Betty, you assume that this is going to take 6 months or

BC: I would say 6 months to a year probably.

BM: What's happening to those union women in the meantime?

BC: Ah, some of them are continuing, I don't know the percentage but are continuing to keep their dues paid with the hope, ah, which they can do this, ah, the, ah, the union has had to withdraw benefits available to these people, ah, because the funds are becoming depleted.

JC: Some we go by the amount of years of service in the union shop from, well say around 10 years of service we'll allow them to
pay their dues up to a year and still receive all their benefits.
If you have 10 years built up we allow, you can go as much as
2 years but after that that's about as far as we can carry
them, and that's put a big drain on our resources. But it's only
fair. As long as we can afford to do it we'll continue doing
it because the people, like for example in Huntington Industry
I think the average age there in that shop was 54 years old.

BC: No, around 45 I'd say, the average age.

JC: I heard it was in the 50s. But here's people 55 or older to
young for social security or any benefits from the government
and too old to get a job. (BM: Right.) So we carry them as
far as up to 2 years. That's as far as we can carry them.
Ah, unfortunately it's happened all over the country and that's
one thing that's put a drain on our funds. But, as it is
today we still continue doing it.

FH: Are, are these women eligible for unemployment benefits still?

BC: Ah,

JC: It's getting close, she's about to run out.

BC: It, ah, I think, most, you know, a year. Now it will be a year
in April and with your extended benefits or your Federal
Supplemental Income, ah, most, most of them can go for a year,
ah, following the shutdown of Huntington Industries and, ah,
that's why, ah, I think, you know, Mr. DeCasper had said he
wanted to get everybody back, you know, before their benefits
expired. You know, their state benefits and so on. But, ah, with these women that had put in so many years, I mean we had some women there that had been there 30 years. In fact I think Mabel had been there 30 or 33 or something like that, and, ah, you know, women that's been there 20 or 30 years and, ah, maybe 58 years old and if, if the union can go back in then they're they can continue with their retirement and at age 62, you know, or 65 pick up their ILGWU retirement because the retirement was, I mean it's strictly with, you know, with the union. It comes out of the Health & Welfare package that they get, you know, that they collect, the percentage from employees.

BM: But if they don't get back and there, carry them because of their seniority for 2 years and they're like 69 at that point, I mean 59 at that point or 60, do they lose their possibility of getting their, their pension?

JC: No, no. How that works, how that works the retirement is supposed to be have at least 20 years (BM: Yeah.) and be working (BM: Yeah.) when you come of age to retire and you get full benefits. Now you know you have the ___(205)___, which is a Federal law. If for some reason you're not working when you come of age, you get so much for each year you work.

BM: O.K.

BC: (She makes a comment which is inaudible)

JC: Ah, Mabel's case she's got over 30 years she would probably get just about the full amount anyway. But some, they might not,
they might have went to work there at just about 35 or 40
(FH: Mmm hmm) and they went out so he didn't have the 20 years
in, he wouldn't get the full retirement, which is a standard
retirement. So to get the standard retirement you're supposed
to be working when you come of retirement age. These people
won't be working so they get so much for each year they put in
in the union shop. And in some cases it could amount to quite
a few dollars each month. So it's very important some of them
get back and be working when they retire.

BM: Is there any kind of, ah, of assistance available, you know
they don't qualify for Dislocated Workers, ah, Retraining Funds
is there any kind of help to, to find another job or get some
other kind of training?

JC: Well, that was TRA and it's not available if, if they could
prove the company went out of business due to imports,

BC: Strictly due to imports.

JC: Ah, which wasn't the case with Huntington Industries, in their
case it was bad management. And he had a history of it he did
it from day one. He borrowed from Paul to pay Peter since 1945.
Ah, they'd get good and sound and he'd venture into something
else and lose their tail and take it out of the factory, ah,
unfortunately enough for the people in Huntington Industries.
Now if it was due to imports they have the TRA which is a
government sponsored program and he would have put us into that
kind of program but it wasn't available to people then.

BC: I just, I hope they can make a success of the company so that these women that can't get another job for building retirement that don't have that much working time left to, to you know, build a retirement anywhere else, ah, that for their sake, ah, but a lot of the employees do resent the fact that some are in there working and they aren't, and, ah, I know they have, ah, they've went to the unemployment office because they did let these people when they were doing the volunteer work continue to draw their unemployment because they weren't receiving pay. And, ah, they, they resented that, you know, and, ah, they tried to get, to create problems for the DeCasper Corporation and my feelings was that they're just going to hurt their fellow union members, you know. The ones that you really want to hurt, which would be management, they're, you know, they're going to make out. You know, it was just, you know, and, ah, so I hop they can make a success of it, you know, for the sake of jobs, but, ah,

JC: While we're still in the garment industry there are a couple of things I'd like to point out then we move on over to the other ones. There's 3 or 4 main things I think that's facing our industry which is really bad not only our industry but several others. One for example where companies compete state to state. I think that's a very bad practice that states compete for business. For example we had, what's the men's clothing here
in town?

BM: Corbin.

JC: Corbin, for example, they were fighting for funds for 3 different states - Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia. Kentucky gets it. The first proposal made in West Virginia said look we'll lend you the 12 million dollars you need at 2% interest--this is just figured off the top of my head, I don't really know exactly what the figures are--and we'll give you tax free status for 10 years, if you put the shop here and put our people to work. Well then, Ohio says, well look we'll give you the 12 million dollars and no interest and won't charge you no state taxes for 20 years you can put here. That's what's going on today. Not just here but all over. And who pays for it, the poor people working in these shops making $3.35 an hour. They got to pay more taxes because big business is not paying their share, cause these states are competing for the business. That's one thing that's bad. Number two, we have garment shops well we can use J.P. Stevens for example, which is a textile giant in this country which broke more laws in the history of the United States Government or the United States as a whole and during the whole time all these laws were broken they were still getting government contracts. Better than 50% of their business is government contracts. They make all the clothing and the sheets and towels and you name it, tents, whatever you
can think of for the military, they continue getting them. We got a shop, ah, we're working, several shops in our district we're working on which is constantly breaking labor laws and ignoring the Federal Laws of this land but yet they still get government contracts and making money and we spend 10 years in court fighting them but yet the government still gives them contracts. I think that stuff is wrong, it's hurting the labor movement and hurting everyone in the whole and the imports is killing everybody. To me that's the 3 biggest things that we have as a labor movement right now is killing all the

OM: But don't you think, Joe, too, that that easing up on that bankruptcy law is another?

JC: I know something has definitely got to be done. Like for example Huntington Industries you know, if I get hungry and my wife and my children don't have nothing to eat I'm going to get them some food. I'm not going to hurt nobody but I'm going to get them something to eat one way or another. Ah, but if I go steal 4 or 5 loaves of bread you're going to put me in jail for 10 years. Now you take the owner of Huntington Industry, he stole our union dues, he stole our cancer money, he stole the Blue Cross & Blue Shield money, he even stole our tax money they took out of our checks, claims chapter 11 and goes out and doesn't get one day in jail. Talking about millions of dollars he stole. This is happening not just in Huntington
Industry but all over the country and they're all scott-free. Definitely something's got to be done with the laws. There's a big article in the paper about it. Congress had the whole year last year, nobody wanted to touch it.

OM: No, there was an election year coming up.

JC: Yeah, no one wanted to touch it and it, it's sad. It makes it too easy. Of course I'm sure individuals are taking advantage of it too and it's hurt collection agencies, or Sears, or big stores which get a charge card, run up big bills and sell them all off and go on a Caribbean Cruise and come back and claim bankruptcy. You can get nothing you ain't got nothing see. So you sell what little bit you got and once they got their slates wiped clean they start out new. That's definitely wrong. I think it was set up to protect the people, really tried. But it's been abused and if something's abused it should be changed.

FH: What do you think the, this is really for all of you, ah, the fact that the government continued to give these contracts to J. P. Stevens, the fact that, ah, the import quotas ah, not just in the garment industry but in other industries as well, ah, are having such a difficult time, ah, getting those quotas raised, what does this say about the status of the labor union movement in this country today? What is happening with the labor movement of which you all are a part?

BC: I think just apathy on the, on the, the part of the members where you don't have the strong unity and the dedication. I think they've
lost the grass roots, that feeling.

JC: They have no clout. Labor movement years ago had clout. You go in a shop, you endorse a candidate and your, your members would go out and back you up vocally as a candidate. Today they don't register and if they register they don't go out and vote so that loses all the clout you have. You can't raise money for them and that's one thing that's, we can talk about briefly. Years ago we was going to take money out of the treasury of the unions, internationals, and spend it on candidates. Ah, big business has roamed around now they got that against the law, we can't do it. We can't take no money out of the union treasury and use it for contributions toward political things. So you have to be, go around for COPE committees, sell cakes, and whatever you can to raise money, so the money is not there. They made a law you could give 10 thousand dollars but who's going to work in a garment factory and give 10 thousand dollars except everyone in the factory that belongs to management. It's a very unfair advantage. Ah, the clout is lacking and that's why you're not getting anything done for your, for your cause and to help your industry.

FH: You see the clout then as or the lack of clout being traced back to the membership rather than to outside kinds of things?

OM: Well, I think a whole lot of it is, ah, a loss of our political clout. Ah, and, ah, to me that's one of the most important
things that we had going for us, was, ah, being able to elect people that were favorable, ah, to our cause. Ah, but, ah, ah, we've lost that political clout that we did have and ah, I've got a feeling that we have a little bit of hopes of maybe coming back, ah, this year because so many of our people are out of jobs and surely to goodness those people won't vote the same people back in office that have sole us down the river. But, ah, who knows they, ah, they may do it.

FH: What do you think happened to the political clout, Opal?

OM: Well, ah, my views is this, you take a banker that abscons with a lot of money and they'll bill that article somewhere over in a page somewhere and it's not very well publicized. But you take a union leader that, ah, that makes a mis-step and boy it'll make banner headlines. And people like, ah, the president of the Teamsters, you know, that went to prison, and people like that. They've hurt the labor movement, ah, and without a doubt, ah, ah, some of the union has been infiltrated by the Mafia and, ah, criminal elements ah so it gives all of labor a bad name and, ah, ah, it's just that, ah, I think that labor movement got to a place that they were trying to be, ah, decent people, the majority of them. But, ah, some of these groups have hurt the movement, the labor movement and, ah, well I think there's a lot of things that happened. Of course the economy right now is, ah, the most destructive thing for the union because, ah,
ah, when people need jobs, ah, and they get desperate enough, they're going to cross the picket line regardless because they're going to feed their families one way or another. And of course, the economy and such and you know you don't hear them talking about it getting better for, ah, a lot of these people, ah, at the lower, ah, level, the blue collar workers and so on. Ah, it doesn't appear that, that this is going to get any better. Ah, it looks to me like all these people are going to have to be retrained and all of this, and we don't have the people in Washington that will, ah, ah, that are willing to, ah, help do that. And, ah, so I, I feel like until we get a complete change of administration in Washington, we're not going, ah, to be able to make it because I, ah, this Gail Vandercrass from, ah, our County Commission down here that's on GTA, ah, he was telling me that right here in Cabell County that, ah, he was pretty sure that the unemployment was running as high as 25 or 30 percent. And I don't doubt it when you look around and see how many of these plants is laid off and shut down and retooled and laid off people who do the retooling and so on, ah, I, I don't doubt those figures at all, ah, because, ah, I doubt the figures that come out of Washington because you look around at all the plants that shut down and, ah, these people have been used to living at a certain level and they're having to cut back and, ah, ah, the stores, you go in stores and, ah, you
hardly get waited on because they've cut back on their sales people, ah, and I suppose because they're not making enough money to hire a lot of salespeople maybe but I don't know what it is but I know I, I get kind of unhappy when I go to the store sometimes because you can't find anybody to tell you where things are. I think there's a lot of things that's brought this on.

BC: Well I think it's, as far as the political doubt, ah, labor can't deliver the botes it promises because the, the, ah, I think people have become so disillusioned with politics, ah, I don't think a lot of politicians even care anymore whether they get the labor endorsement because they don't, labor doesn't deliver the votes. I know that Bidon that spoke at the convention

JC: Senator Bidon from Delaware. (BM: Mmm hmm)

BC: Ah, he said labor is going to have to get off its duff and start working again and I think it proves that, ah, when Reagan took so many in the last general election that he took so many of the industrial states, ah, that, ah, labor endorses that they can't deliver the votes. I know I worked, ah, have been active politically, ah, when I was still in the shop, ah, I've taken our local politicians in, you know, the labor endorsed candidates. I escorted a lot of them through our plant and, ah, the women for the most part, ah, could care less, ah, it was just, ah, their, their reaction to politics is leave it to someone else, you know, who cares, and, ah, as far as recruiting workers out
of the shops to work for candidates that were endorsed by labor, ah, we couldn't, I mean it was just nill, we couldn't get any, you know, women they work, they work their 7 hours they got to go home and feed their kids or feed their husband, their husband is jealous, they don't want them out at night, they don't want them involved in anything and, ah, as far as the women, you know, in the garment shops there's very little political participation and

BM: Did you, excuse me, did you talk with the younger people, the newer people?

BC: Ah, you mean the, ah,

BM: The new people that came in to work that wouldn't participate in the political

BC: Well, no not really, ah, it, you know, course we are as we said before, the average wage, I mean age of the workers was around 45 and these were older women and, ah, we've had difficulties is raising, ah, COPE monies which there again if the women are, ah, ah, self supporting you know or widows or for whatever reason, ah, 3 bucks is 3 bucks or whatever they were asking for or hoping to get per member. You know, ah, we have always found it very difficult to raise political funds within the shop, I mean within the garment shops and, ah, they were just totally not interested in politics at all or, ah, or the union's, you know, part in politics and you try to educate
them you know at local meetings and stuff but, ah, look we need people in there that are for our causes, you know, that will see that these necessary bills are passed or the laws are changed you know, to help us and, ah, they, they just could care less, and I think it's the apathy. I know that's the way it was in my shop.

FH: Do you think that will have changed now with, ah, that the recession and the high unemployment will have, when the economy unemployment will have, when the economy begins its upwarswing, I hope, I hope?

BC: I don't know, I, probably most of them blame it on, on the politicians, ah, you know, ah, the, it may, it may have a real good affect, you know, in turning their attitude around or it could be just completely, I mean you know, just, ah, make them more, make them more, ah, ah, you know, against, against the politicians.

OM: I think everybody ought to read the book I'm reading. It's the, ah, "Devil's Advocate". Have you all read, read that? Ah, it scared me to death and it talks about these kind of things. You know, people being apathetic and letting, ah, people grab power and, a h, ah, I think that's exactly what's happened.

BC: Well people, I think you know, what I found they were just so disillusioned with politicians I had, ah, I took, ah, I believe it was, ah, Representative Nick Joe Rahal through the plant, ah, one year when he was up for re-election and, ah, one of my
coworkers got real smart with me and, ah, she just refused to talk to him and, ah, some of them would say in the bathroom "Well I pay their salaries now", you know, when we would be trying to raise, ah, COPE monies to support our endorsed candidates, and ah, "Well I pay their salaries now" you know; and so many of them weren't even registered to vote, you know, ah, that, I think as far as women workers, or the ones I worked with, ah, they were just, ah, absolutely (END OF SIDE 1).

(START SIDE 2).

JC: As I was saying I think probably the biggest problem we have with organized labor is that their members are not educated, changing times. I think one of the biggest problems that organized labor has today is due to success, that we've had for 40 straight years, 30 years, 1940 to 1970. We made great gains got just about everything possible to get, then we got to the point where we couldn't get no more so you go up for a new contract and just keeping what you got, maybe a cost of living raise, that's it and the people was saying "The union's no good. You didn't get me nothing." They got 13 weeks paid vacation, you got health funds, welfare and they got this and that and everything going. There was nothing left and the people weren't educated about what a union's selling them after they didn't get them anything else. We got them too much, in my opinion. And it got to the point there was nothing left to get them and they started saying, "Well the union is selling us out. They're
not doing their job." We should have started training the people years ago, "Look you can only get so much, so many apples in a barrel and when you get that last one out there's nothing left in there to get, just hold what we got. But people were never educated to it. Same way with politics, they're not educated to it. COPE, which is, I got involved in back in the 50s and the reason I got involved in it, I was working at the steel mill at the time and they had a strike out in Indiana or Illinois, I forget now which one it was, it was Buckland Steel, I mean they were out something like 20 some weeks. They finally got a good contract and they had something in that contract that's what everybody stayed out for and after they went back to work and the State Legislature convened and they made it against the law for these people to receive this in this contract so that knocked that out. That's when we started COPE in the steel industry, ah,

VS: What is COPE?

JC: Political education.

OM: Committee on Political Education.

JC: Committee on Political Education. If you don't spend your monies wisely, whatever you get at the bargain table you can lose in laws. So you have to work hard at it and spend, spend a few dollars. Ah, we never educated our people. I had just last week, I'm in an area that's practically all Republicans.

I think that's a mistake that unions have done throughout the
years, strictly backing Democrats. We've had some good Republicans throughout the times that I've run into personally. But we were backing Democrat because he was a Democrat. We had one in Maryland, I lived in Maryland years ago, and his name is Senator Bell and he had the best voting record in the history of the State of Maryland for labor. Had a Joseph Tideing come in, a young Kennedy copycat of some sort. He was from the Dupont family and labor all backed him. But Senator Bell had the best voting records in the history of Maryland for labor. So they backed Tideing, Tideing was elected. Course that was back in the 50s when the unions had some clout. Anyway he didn't last long. He got, he only lasted one term. He was against, ah, ah, the Rifle Association so they got rid of him. He only lasted one term. But the thing we really need to do is educate the people. Like for example, I just started to say was, I was down in the southwest corner of Virginia last week and it's all Republicans in the area. And as soon as they hear that ILG or labor is, ah, endorsing Mondale, you know, they're all upset because they're Republicans. Now I preach at them on the level, the state level of government and I had them just right last week. Which is, probably what happened to them is only fair but throughout the years the people's been there, and this is an old organized shop and they have some fine benefits. If you get 3 or 4 weeks paid vacation, they pay you in July, when they shut down in July. Then come Christmastime
they're off with their families. Throughout the past they could draw unemployment while they're off. This year the State stopped it. Said, "You're double dipping." Which really they are. But they were really mad. I said, "Well that's one of the reasons we need COPE." I said, "Just the State of West Virginia they put a ____________ on it. You had it, you fought it, you got rid of it. But they're fighting to get it back now. Not only that you're paying taxes on your unemployment, you never have before. _(_94-95)____________ they're taxing it now." I said, "That's the things we need COPE monies for, to fight." So that opened their eyes just by not drawing unemployment for that one week, so little things like that help a lot. But we have to educate the people and, you know, you can go on and on and on you know take, educating is one thing, getting money from them is one thing, like I tell them; but if you don't go out and vote you lose everything. I don't want your 3 dollars and then you don't vote. I'd just as soon you keep your 3 dollars. Give an example like McGovern County, Maryland, which is the richest county in the country. It's right outside of D. C. That's where all your senators live and all your big backers and so forth and so on. And they have a 98% registered in the county and they have about a 95% vote. The rich people vote and the poor people stay home and cry.

FH: Is labor making, ah, an effort in, in this election to register members?
JC: Yes.

BC: Yes.

FH: A real effort to register and then to, ah, facilitate voting like the League of Women Voters goes and picks up people and takes them to the polls?

OM: Well now

BC: Yeah, you're talking about busing them to the polls.

OM: The League of Women Voters didn't do the picking up; it was our labor group that the League of Women Voters would give, ah, our telephone number and our labor people went and picked up people. Ah, so the League of Women Voters took credit for something, ah, that they only took the calls and then they called us, ah, so, ah, ah, really (chuckles) they didn't do, didn't put their money where their mouth was. And, ah, ah,

FH: You mean there was a relationship between the League of Women Voters and what labor group?

OM: Ah, the Huntington District Labor Council at that time was what it was called but now it's Southwester, ah, Council, and, ah, now, ah, I think that a lot of groups are really, ah, like, ah, the Democrat Committee, is really, ah, some of them, since this postcard registration came in, they're making a big effort to, ah, get people registered. Ah, our Democrat Women's Club has got, ah, a woman that's over boters registration and we're going to try, ah, to get people registered. The fact of the matter is I registered the girl next door and contacted the
people across the street because they're not registered and, ah, I'm a notary and, ah, so, ah, I've got some cards and I'm trying to register everybody that I can find that's not registered. But, ah, and I've offered my services to, ah, any group that wants to, to, ah, help get people registered. So, ah, you know, ah, as a notary. A lot of us really feel strongly about the, ah, ah, political situation and, ah, we feel strongly that, ah, as Joe said, that anything that's negotiated in a union contract can be taken away by law overnight. And, ah, although I'm retired I still want to see the people have an opportunity to work and I want to see them have, ah, ah, decent working conditions.

JC: I'm waiting for the day because the women are majority in this country. The women own the majority of wealth in this country but they always take a back seat. I hope I live long enough that they get out and vote and use the power that they have, cause they should be running this country, really.

BM: What would describe our, certainly problems that affect women in terms of the union, but they aren't, they certainly aren't exclusively women's problems, you know, do you see anything that is a particular problem for women in the union or a particular opportunity for women in the union?

JC: Well there's plenty of opportunities for women in the union. I think it still goes back to grass roots that you're still in
your minds I think they get it, from day one you start to school, the school system has got to be changed. I know the whole time I went through public schools, high school, not one thing did I read about labor unions. I read about the history of Russia and the history of England and the history of Germany and France. Nothing about the history of the labor movement in this country. And I don't think today I asked my son who's graduated from High School if he's had anything about it. You might get some in college if you take that course. There is nothing about the history of the labor movement in this country in public schools, which it definitely should be in there cause I think the labor union made this country what it is today. Ah, same way with women, they get put in a stereotype position and they sit back and their husbands are put in a stereotype of she's supposed to do what he tells her to do and so on. They've got a very important role to play and so if they get off that apron and get out in the street and start playing it, we're going to stay like we are cause they do have the majority of the people in this country are women and they own the majority of the money. They outlive men and everything else and there's, it's proven they've got just as much smarts if not more than the men do and they should be doing the job and they're not cause they're not getting out in the street. Now whose fault it is I don't know.
BC: Why I think it goes back to the fact that, ah, if, in most all cases a working woman is holding down 2 jobs. She, she's getting paid for one but she's holding down 2 jobs. Her spare time is so limited that, ah, they can't participate and alot of times and things they would like to participate in that are good worthy causes but they don't have the time because they have husbands and children and, ah, housework and, ah, all these other things to do that they don't have the time to devote to caused that they, I know that's what I found that, ah, ah, when they get off work they go home. That's it. And ah, they just don't have the time to devote.

FH: Now if, if you had to describe a typical woman activist in the labor movement, say for instance what would her marital status be, what would her age be, from what you said

BC: Ah, I would say probably around 40 years old, ah, with, ah, a sympathetic husband say that would be either, ah, a union person himself or also involved, of course as Joe and I both are, ah, a husband that would be sympathetic to her spending time away from the home, ah, and, ah, a husband that would be willing to share the home chores to enable her to participate in these things, and, ah, ah, that doesn't exist in very many cases. A lot of, ah, most of the women that, ah, that we had on the executive board, ah, I'd say 3 of them are single and, ah, the ones that were married are so limited to, ah, say if participating in something that would require a trip, say to
participate in a convention which are necessary, withing your own union as well as, ah, State Federation, ah, functions, conventions, and things and, ah, very often that, ah, it, nobody wanted to go because their husbands would object or they couldn't you know, take the time away from home to be away from home 2 or 3 days or the time required and, ah, I think to have all these things, like I said, is very seldom that, that the ideal situation exists and, ah, we're, you know, it, a woman feels guilty too if she, you know, if she takes time away from home, you know, where she should be at home doing this or away from her children or whatever.

JC: Well that gets back to education again. If she's started out in school that she should have the same opportunities that a man does and she should follow her concious or whatever as she's going through life, she should be able to do it just like a man. But they don't pursue it because they're not trained that way (BC & JC talking at once)

BC: ...well the men aren't trained that way either.

JC: ...down everything else.

BC: I mean the, the most often the husband even, ah, I'm sure Joe had run up against it, even though the husbands are actually, ah, union members themselves they still resent their wives being active in anything. And so often, ah, a family will determine even whether, ah, one would run for an office within the local or whatever. That, if it requires time away from the
home, you know, and this, say even we would need to elect a shop stuart or whatever and we would stress, you know, that, ah, her duties would be confined to the shop and working hours that it wouldn't require anything, you know, any, any outside time that, that wouldn't involve her leisure time.

FH: What about young women? Ah, Vivian and I were talking about this the other day, ah, ah, the attitude of just, of women just entering the shop or just entering the, ah, the job. What's their attitude as, as union members or as political union members?

JC: Well my experience they're completely oblivious to what's going on. They don't know nothing about politics. They don't know nothing about the union. They come in here as a new worker and they don't know nothing.

VS: They just have their own gripes and they want that settled regardless of anything else.

JC: That goes back to education. They don't get it. They're not getting it. Not only the female, the male's not either. I've made house calls when I was organizing the union and the woman said, "Oh God, please leave before my husband gets here. I'll sign a card. I'll sign it in the shop. I definitely want to belong to the union but if my husband finds out about it he'll beat the heck out of me." I've had people on my committee and I'd feel real bad. I was up in Martinsburg, West Virginia a few years back. I had the labor board in because we
had some child charges filed against the company so you had to give a statement to the labor board and of course we had so many people in it takes time to get affidavids and she called her house said, "It's running a little bit later. I'll be home as soon as possible." Anyway next day she doesn't work and she doesn't come in the next day, say she's sick. Three days later I seen her she's still black and blue, and that's some of the conditions that, you know, women find; and it's a shame. That really, it tore my heart apart to see her. Her eye was black and her lips were still swollen, you know, and it's awful that still happens so much. You don't think it exists anymore, same as it was back in the 40s. You get back in the rural areas and you'll see it cause it's lack of education in those parts. (PAUSE)

BC: But as far as the young people I think, ah, I think there again is where unions are, or the labor movement is losing. It is because the young people are not dedicated.

BM: They take it for granted?

BC: Yeah, ah, that's the apathy I talked about or if, ah, let someone else do the work as long as I get my, ah, you know, as long as I'm taken care of, you know, I don't have to do anything. And I heard this in the shop too, "Well I pay dues", you know. And, ah

BM: It's "I pay my dues"?

BC: Yeah, right.
FH: Well, I, I'm just baseing on some of the things you said, Betty, ah, I'm curious about what all of you think the relationship is between women unionists and the women's movement. If you think if you, if you, if it's been your experience that women who are active in, ah, in the labor movement see themselves as, as, ah, related to the women's movement or as feminists or, have you, have you noticed that link or is there a link?

BC: Yeah, I think so. I've had the ERA come up to me, by my ex-husband Ollie and he threw it up to me that, ah, ah, and he was active in the labor movement too. And, ah, I had it thrown up to me that, that, ah, and I resented, you know, the, because I haven't gone out for, you know, I don't fight for ERA. I'm certainly sympathetic, you know, but simply because I was becoming active, you know, and had a voice in things and participated in things, you know, and you become a little independent or, ah, stand up for yourself more I guess, you know, and you question things or whatever, the more involved you get, you know, the freer you get or, you know, you feel like that you have a right to, ah, stand up for something or stand up for yourself or whatever, you know. And I see a definite link.

OM: I feel the same way, ah, ah, I, ah, ah, I think that, ah, due to the fact that I became so involved in the union was, ah, sort of opened my eyes and I started looking around and really saw, ah, what was happening. And I think that you have to have a little bit of age on you before you really begin to, to, ah,
see these things. I think that, ah, in young women, ah, in all probabilities their love affairs blind them (laughter in background) to, ah, what is really happening to them, I really feel that way. And after that newness wears off well then they begin looking around and begin seeing that they have, ah, (chuckles) they've lost something. And, ah, I think that they have to go through that stage.

BC: Well I think it's like, ah, I preached to a step-daughter I had, ah, that so often with, ah, say you're a child and you're under the rule of your parents and then you go to school and you're under the rule of your teachers, you know, or you still have to go to school, you know, you have rules to abide by and say especially in a girl, ah, then she gets married, you know, shortly after school or immediately after school, then she comes under the rule of her husband and she never really knows independence as a person should or doesn't, wouldn't appreciate it, you know, ah, and, ah, so you, you go, you know, from somebody else, belonging to someone else and being ruled by someone else and then, of course like Opal said, you have to get a certain age on you and a certain amount of experience behind you before you become independent and I think that, that, ah, the, as far as the labor movement it has given women more independence as you know, ah, I'd say all of our members that were strong union members was strong women to start with.
I mean it was, you know, that they weren't afraid to speak out or, ah, you know, try to seek independence or recognition to say 'Hi, I'm a person, I may be female', you know, 'the weaker sex but I still have a right to be heard', you know, 'to do my thing'.

VS: Yeah but didn't you feel that the, ah, ah, person was more outspoken and more involved out of your local union and gave of their time, were the people that you could depend on, on anything that came up on the political issue or what have you than the younger people that you couldn't even talk to that wanted to get paid for everything that they did?

BC: Oh yeah, or expecting something for nothing.

VS: I think that's what's ruined the COPE program as such, you know, back for a few years because us older ones, we did our volunteer work, never even thought about getting paid and all these younger ones come in and they want, they want to get paid for it. And I, you were talking about getting involved, when I went to work, ah, I, the first thing I did was start going to the union meetings, and then, ah, I went to school at Morgantown under the Labor Institute and, ah, Opal was in the group and that was back in 59, early 60s (OM: Fifty-nine, early 60s) and that first year I went to school, which was in June or July, I put in a hundred volunteer hours working on card files. My husband never said anything. The only thing that he ever told me during the years that I put volunteer hours in was,
"Get your rest". He said you, he never did say you can't go to this or you can't go to that because I'd defy him (laughter) I would have, because I just felt, you know, cause I didn't get paid for all this and I did it because I wanted to do it.

OM: I think that, ah, that you and I are the two (laughingly) volunteeringest volunteers in the country. (Laughter)

BC: Maybe you all were just trying to get away from something (OM: No) or to hide form something, you know.

VS: No, no we were always busy, always doing somehting.

OM: I used to get odf from work and I wouldn't even go home. I'd go down to the labor council and work till, ah,

VS: Mmm hmm, I've done that lots of times.

OM: Ten or eleven o'clock at night.

BC: Well see, there again it goes back that when you have, ah, young people coming in to the shops or factories or whatever, they are more likely to have small children and be confined even more to the home place. Rather than, than say your middleaged or on, you know, and they don't have, they don't, ah, their mind is so busy taking care of necessities, you know, that there isn't any time left. I know when my children was small and I was working, ah, I was lucky if I read the newspaper. You know, I mean it was things I had to make priorities and, ah, it, my priorities was my home and children and my job. And I didn't become active in the, I had worked for several years, ah, probably 10 or 12 years before I became active in the union.
OM: Well I, ah, see I didn't have any family and, ah, my husband was in service and, ah, gone most of the time, ah, so I, I, you know, I didn't have that kind of a problem. Vivian had a husband that was, ah, agreeable, ah, to her working and he, he was very helpful, I think. Ah, Vivian told me he used to do a lot of the cooking and these kind of things, ah, in other words he was a man to be, ah, praised. So, ah, ah, we had an advantage over the majority of the women I think and, ah,

VS: And my mother-in-law took care of my baby, a boy.

OM: And most of our women, ah, from, ah, that was active in the union was either women like me that had no, ah, practically had no husbands or, ah, or widows, ah, I think that, ah, Emma Lou was the only one that was, ah, very active in the union that did have a husband. Ah, and of course I had Frank until he died but he died in the early part of the 60s so I didn't have him after that. So, ah

VS: So it does, that bears out what I said that, ah

OM: That makes, ah, that makes, ah, what, you know, give you more of an opportunity. (pause)

FH: Well I'm still, I'm still, ah, back on this idea again because it, it is striking that, that all of you, ah, come across as very strong, determined women and, ah, again, ah, I'm curious about what you, when the women's movement did come along, how you felt about it, if you saw yourself in the movement or if it was outside you if it spoke to you at all as women workers?
OM: Well I was, ah, very much interested in it. There was a few things, you know, early on like burning their bras and some of these (VS: (laughingly) I didn't go for that either) ah, silly things you know, there was one or two things I didn't agree with them on, ah, like quotas, you know, ah, in other words, ah, the first, the last hired the first out, you know, and some of those things. I've got to much union in me to, ah, see them destroy my seniority. Ah, and, ah, but on the whole I thought it was great. I thought it was great to see the women, ah, ah, starting to, ah, realize, ah, what was happening to them and, ah, ah, I think I was very happy about it. (chuckles)

BC: I've always felt positive about it, especially where there's such discrimination in, ah, wages, ah, for same jobs performed, ah, same capabilities, ah, same, ah, ah, smarts if you want to call it, you know. But where there has been such discrimination and, ah, I would say I am a feminist or whatever. You know, ah, ah, that doesn't show (laughs) but I've always been sympathetic too, some of the stuff was ridiculous. Now I certainly don't want to be a man, I enjoy the contrast, you know, in certain areas. (laughter) But, ah, if I was performing a job alongside a man and, ah, doing the same type of work, I would certainly expect the same type pay and I think where they've come in that possibly the only thing is hurting dependant women with children that, they've caused some of the laws to be
changed that, ah, I think cases, it should be where, cases should be, ah, lawsuits in case of divorces or whatever, you know where exceptions can be made, ah, with laws or rules you know, that, ah, where women can, where they carry, you know, ERA has carried so far that, ah, like, ah, child support you know and different areas that, I think they have hurt women in some areas is what I'm trying to say. But the overall picture I'd say is good. It's been the best thing of my, ah, lifetime anyway. I still think they have a lot of work to do. (pause) And I'll help. (chuckles)

VS: I think the best thing that they could do is to have their own group to have, I don't know how I can say this, have lawyers that could go in and help people instead of this ERA and Human Rights because they are so slow and 9 times out of 10 they won't help anyway. They should have their own lawyers to help people. Somebody that you could go to and talk to.

OM: Are you speaking of the women's groups?

VS: Mmm hmm.

OM: Ah, (lengthy pause)

FH: I think Vivian is talking specifically about some experiences that she's had with the ERA and, ah, the Human Rights Commission trying to file suits after the grievance procedure have been inadequate within the plant. Trying to file, ah, a suit, which is, which can be very time consuming.
JC: Like filing charges with the labor board.

BC: It becomes so dragged out.

JC: Filing charges with the labor board it takes you an average now of 5 years to get it taken care of. (End of side 2)

(End of TAPE 4)
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Date 1/15/84
Joe Chafin
(Signature - Interviewee)

Address
296 Oakland Ave.
Huntington, WV

Date 1/15/84
Opal Mann
(Signature - Witness)
MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25701

ORAL HISTORY

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Date 11-6-83

Betty Jean Chafin
(Signature - Interviewee)
Address
296 Oakland Ave.
Huntington, W. Va. 25701

Date November 1, 1983
Opal Mann
(Signature - Witness)
ORAL HISTORY

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Date 6-22-84

Vivian P. Sampson
(Signature - Interviewee)

Address
2110 - 12th Ave.

Huntington, W. Va.

Date 6-22-84

Francis P. Nelson
(Signature - Witness)
ORAL HISTORY

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From:
Date: October 30, 1983
Opal Mann
(Signature - Interviewee)
Address: 925 Charles Court
Huntington, WV 25701
Date: November 6, 1983
Sylvia Lynne Chipman
(Signature - Witness)
Ms. Chafin begins the interview giving an overview of the current problems and current status with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Mentioned is the DeCasper Corporation and its management of the Huntington Dress Factory. She speaks about the labor movement, working wages and the garment industry competition. She concludes the interview discussing the Human Rights Commission, ERA and lawsuits and discrimination cases.
AN INTERVIEW WITH: Betty Chafin
Joe Chafin
Opal Mann
Vivian Sansom

CONDUCTED BY: Frances Hensley
Barbra Matz

DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 15, 1984

TRANSCRIBED BY: Sally M. Keaton
TYPED BY: Sally M. Keaton

TAPE 4

LABOR UNION WOMEN

TOPIC: "Our Working Lives"
FH: This is tape four, ah, Our Working Lives Interviews, ah, with Huntington area labor union women. This is January 15, 1984. Continuing our discussion with Betty Chafin on the current problems, current status with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

BC: Well, I was identifying Richard Wilks, ah, President of the Southwestern District, District Council that had also been, ah, instrumental in, ah, the DeCasper Corporation obtaining the city and state funds to, ah, operate the new business. And, ah, I would thing that there could be a certain amount of pressure put on the DeCasper Corporation by these various agencies or organizations to possibly persuade them to accept the ILGWU (mic or recorder being moved, lot of noise) as their, as the bargaining representatives, and I think that will be their biggest asset, ah, I know at one time, while I was still working, we even, at times, had government orders. Ah, we made, ah, shirtwaist dresses for, ah, the Airforce and I believe also for the Army and, ah, it's possible that they may, you know, from time to time, ah, get government orders, and there are ways that, you know, pressure can be put on companies to conform, you know, to accept, not fight the union and I think that that may be the line they have to take, eventually, ah, once it becomes a sound company, you know, financially. Ah, it's, I've heard that, ah, Mr. DeCasper has said that he has everybody back
to work that wants to come back and that is not true, by no means at this point, ah, because he has handpicked the people that he wants back in there.

FH: Have any of the, ah, let's say the Executive Board Members of the ILG, have any of those women been called back?

BC: None of the strong union women, ah, any that served on the executive board, ah, none has been approached about coming back to work which includes me that's Vice-President of Local 420 and was also Shop Stewart in the shop, ah, this also includes Mabel Hayes the President of our local and, ah, she was also shop chairlady that handled all the shop problems, and of course we had our share of run-ins with Mr. DeCasper from time to time, ah, just upholding our rights. And, ah, we've remained on good terms with him as a person but apparently as an employee we must rank at the bottom of the list and, ah, this is obvious, ah, what his attitude, I think his actions speaks louder than anything. I mean, what he has done must show that he is not for the union or probably does not wish to have the union back in the plant. To me there is no other way I can describe it. It has to be that way, ah, we have one, one girl Beverly McNeely that, ah, is working part-time now, ah, she is continuing to keep her dues paid and, ah, serves on the executive board from Huntington Industries, ah, she had, ah, got elected to the board shortly before the plant, before
Huntington Industries went bankrupt. She still serves on the executive board, ah, we don't know how much longer this will be but she does desire her job back. Recently I think there was an ad in the paper, I didn't see it, ah, but saying that, ah, anyone that wished a job with the DeCasper Corporation was to go to a job placement agency, not the West Virginia placement agency but a private concern, fill out an application if they wanted to come back to work or wished a job and, ah, Beverly McNeely did this. But she has yet to be called back and she did tell the woman when she filled out the application that she thought it would be a waste of her time to fill it out and the woman said, "You fill it out anyway and I will give it to Mr. DeCasper." But as yet, and this has been probably a month ago, and as yet she hasn't been called back and she was strong union, ah, she stood up for her rights and for the rights of her co-workers, and, ah, most of the people that, that were strong union I guess you would say or, ah, that made themselves aware of the contract and what, you know, what, what was right and what was wrong and the proper way of doing something, ah, none of those, very few of those people have been called back.

OM: Ah, Betty, did you tell me that, ah, they had hired someone from out of the plant?

BC: They have hired from off the street, so to speak, people with, ah, no prior employment with either Huntington Industries or
whatever. Ah, I had heard that they hired an oriental girl that had never ever worked there before and I don't know if they've hired any since then, ah, I haven't heard, but I do know for sure that, that one had been hired with, you know, with not having ever worked there before. So, ah, I would say as far as Sam DeCasper's attitude toward the union, I would say regardless of what he says it, it must be obvious what his feelings are and, ah, I think this, ah, our, our ILG representatives are, you know I mean they have the sa, pretty much the same attitude. Now how Mr. George feels I don't know. I've been told that he's, ah, for unions and that he had said that he would not keep the union out. But this remains to be seen at this point, you know, what will happen.

BM: Well maybe he doesn't have to do anything as long as DeCasper is taking care of it.

BC: Well, I know they are in touch periodically, you know, our union representatives and, ah, Mr. DeCasper as well as Mr. George. Now what has been done that I'm not aware of at this point, I don't know, ah, everyone certainly hopes that the union will go back in.

FH: But you are waiting right now for the company to become more stable before the union takes any kind of action?

BC: Yes, financially, ah, because it does involve, ah, when you negotiate, ah, the company does have to pay into the Health &
Welfare fund to provide these benefits for the people such as their drug card, ah, their weekly health benefits as well as entitling them, ah, to, ah, use our, ah, health clinic, our doctor located here in Huntington, ah, and, ah, they also provide optical centers throughout areas and, ah, the company does have to pay and they have to negotiate, you know, for a percentage of the pay, well it's based on your payroll or your number of employees or whatever. (JC: Payroll.) But, ah, so you can't, you can't expect a company that's not financially stable to, you know, to do all these things. Ah, and, ah, as far as, you know, the state money that was supposed to help them get on their feet you know, and continue to operate and provide jobs.

BM: What kind of a time frame are you thinking that this will take, Betty, you assume that this is going to take 6 months or

BC: I would say 6 months to a year probably.

BM: What's happening to those union women in the meantime?

BC: Ah, some of them are continuing, I don't know the percentage but are continuing to keep their dues paid with the hope, ah, which they can do this, ah, the, ah, the union has had to withdraw benefits available to these people, ah, because the funds are becoming depleted.

JC: Some we go by the amount of years of service in the union shop from, well say around 10 years of service we'll allow them to
pay their dues up to a year and still receive all their benefits. If you have 10 years built up we allow, you can go as much as 2 years but after that that's about as far as we can carry them, and that's put a big drain on our resources. But it's only fair. As long as we can afford to do it we'll continue doing it because the people, like for example in Huntington Industry I think the average age there in that shop was 54 years old.

BC: No, around 45 I'd say, the average age.

JC: I heard it was in the 50s. But here's people 55 or older too young for social security or any benefits from the government and too old to get a job. (BM: Right.) So we carry them as far as up to 2 years. That's as far as we can carry them. Ah, unfortunately it's happened all over the country and that's one thing that's put a drain on our funds. But, as it is today we still continue doing it.

FH: Are these women eligible for unemployment benefits still?

BC: Ah,

JC: It's getting close, she's about to run out.

BC: It, ah, I think, most, you know, a year. Now it will be a year in April and with your extended benefits or your Federal Supplemental Income, ah, most, most of them can go for a year, ah, following the shutdown of Huntington Industries and, ah, that's why, ah, I think, you know, Mr. DeCasper had said he wanted to get everybody back, you know, before their benefits
expired. You know, their state benefits and so on. But, ah, with these women that had put in so many years, I mean we had some women there that had been there 30 years. In fact I think Mabel had been there 30 or 33 or something like that, and, ah, you know, women that's been there 20 or 30 years and, ah, maybe 58 years old and if, if the union can go back in then they're they can continue with their retirement and at age 62, you know, or 65 pick up their ILGWU retirement because the retire­ment was, I mean it's strictly with, you know, with the union. It comes out of the Health & Welfare package that they get, you know, that they collect, the percentage from employees.

BM: But if they don't get back and there, carry them because of their seniority for 2 years and they're like 69 at that point, I mean 59 at that point or 60, do they lose their possibility of getting their, their pension?

JC: No, no. How that works, how that works the retirement is supposed to be have at least 20 years (BM: Yeah.) and be working (BM: Yeah.) when you come of age to retire and you get full benefits. Now you know you have the (205), which is a Federal law. If for some reason you're not working when you come of age, you get so much for each year you work.

BM: O.K.

BC: (She makes a comment which is inaudible)

JC: Ah, Mabel's case she's got over 30 years she would probably get just about the full amount anyway. But some, they might not,
they might have went to work there at just about 35 or 40
(FH: Mmm hmm) and they went out so he didn't have the 20 years
in, he wouldn't get the full retirement, which is a standard
retirement. So to get the standard retirement you're supposed
to be working when you come of retirement age. These people
won't be working so they get so much for each year they put in
in the union shop. And in some cases it could amount to quite
a few dollars each month. So it's very important some of them
get back and be working when they retire.

BM: Is there any kind of, ah, of assistance available, you know
they don't qualify for Dislocated Workers, ah, Retraining Funds
is there any kind of help to, to find another job or get some
other kind of training?

JC: Well, that was TRA and it's not available if, if they could
prove the company went out of business due to imports,

BC: Strictly due to imports.

JC: Ah, which wasn't the case with Huntington Industries, in their
case it was bad management. And he had a history of it he did
it from day one. He borrowed from Paul to pay Peter since 1945.
Ah, they'd get good and sound and he'd venture into something
else and lose their tail and take it out of the factory, ah,
unfortunately enoughtfor the people in Huntington Industries.
Now if it was due to imports they have the TRA which is a
government sponsored program and he would have put us into that
kind of program but it wasn't available to people then.

BC: I just, I hope they can make a success of the company so that these women that can't get another job for building retirement that don't have that much working time left to, to you know, build a retirement anywhere else, ah, that for their sake, ah, but a lot of the employees do resent the fact that some are in there working and they aren't, and, ah, I know they have, ah, they've went to the unemployment office because they did let these people when they were doing the volunteer work continue to draw their unemployment because they weren't receiving pay. And, ah, they, they resented that, you know, and, ah, they tried to get, to create problems for the DeCasper Corporation and my feelings was that they're just going to hurt their fellow union members, you know. The ones that you really want to hurt, which would be management, they're, you know, they're going to make out. You know, it was just, you know, and, ah, so I hop they can make a success of it, you know, for the sake of jobs, but, ah,

JC: While we're still in the garment industry there are a couple of things I'd like to point out then we move on over to the other ones. There's 3 or 4 main things I think that's facing our industry which is really bad not only our industry but several others. One for example where companies compete state to state. I think that's a very bad practice that states compete for business. For example we had, what's the men's clothing here
BM: Corbin.

JC: Corbin, for example, they were fighting for funds for 3 different states - Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia. Kentucky gets it. The first proposal made in West Virginia said look we'll lend you the 12 million dollars you need at 2% interest--this is just figured off the top of my head, I don't really know exactly what the figures are--and we'll give you tax free status for 10 years, if you put the shop here and put our people to work. Well then, Ohio says, well look we'll give you the 12 million dollars and no interest and won't charge you no state taxes for 20 years you can put here. That's what's going on today. Not just here but all over. And who pays for it, the poor people working in these shops making $3.35 an hour. They got to pay more taxes because big business is not paying their share, cause these states are competing for the business. That's one thing that's bad. Number two, we have garment shops well we can use J.P. Stevens for example, which is a textile giant in this country which broke more laws in the history of the United States Government or the United States as a whole and during the whole time all these laws were broken they were still getting government contracts. Better than 50% of their business is government contracts. They make all the clothing and the sheets and towels and you name it, tents, whatever you
can think of for the military, they continue getting them. We got a shop, ah, we're working, several shops in our district we're working on which is constantly breaking labor laws and ignoring the Federal Laws of this land but yet they still get government contracts and making money and we spend 10 years in court fighting them but yet the government still gives them contracts. I think that stuff is wrong, it's hurting the labor movement and hurting everyone in the whole and the imports is killing everybody. To me that's the 3 biggest things that we have as a labor movement right now is killing all the

OM: But don't you think, Joe, too, that that easing up on that bankruptcy law is another?

JC: I know something has definitely got to be done. Like for example Huntington Industries you know, if I get hungry and my wife and my children don't have nothing to eat I'm going to get them some food. I'm not going to hurt nobody but I'm going to get them something to eat one way or another. Ah, but if I go steal 4 or 5 loaves of bread you're going to put me in jail for 10 years. Now you take the owner of Huntington Industry, he stole our union dues, he stole our cancer money, he stole the Blue Cross & Blue Shield money, he even stole our tax money they took out of our checks, claims chapter 11 and goes out and doesn't get one day in jail. Talking about millions of dollars he stole. This is happening not just in Huntington
Industry but all over the country and they're all scott-free. Definitely something's got to be done with the laws. There's a big article in the paper about it. Congress had the whole year last year, nobody wanted to touch it.

OM: No, there was an election year coming up.

JC: Yeah, no one wanted to touch it and it, it's sad. It makes it too easy. Of course I'm sure individuals are taking advantage of it too and it's hurt collection agencies, or Sears, or big stores which get a charge card, run up big bills and sell them all off and go on a Caribbean Cruise and come back and claim bankruptcy. You can get nothing you ain't got nothing see. So you sell what little bit you got and once they got their slates wiped clean they start out new. That's definitely wrong. I think it was set up to protect the people, really tried. But it's been abused and if something's abused it should be changed.

FH: What do you think the, this is really for all of you, ah, the fact that the government continued to give these contracts to J. P. Stevens, the fact that, ah, the import quotas ah, not just in the garment industry but in other industries as well, ah, are having such a difficult time, ah, getting those quotas raised, what does this say about the status of the labor union movement in this country today? What is happening with the labor movement of which you all are a part?

BC: I think just apathy on the, on the, the part of the members where you don't have the strong unity and the dedication. I think they've
lost the grass roots, that feeling.

JC: They have no clout. Labor movement years ago had clout. You go in a shop, you endorse a candidate and your, your members would go out and back you up vocally as a candidate. Today they don't register and if they register they don't go out and vote so that loses all the clout you have. You can't raise money for them and that's one thing that's, we can talk about briefly. Years ago we was going to take money out of the treasury of the unions, internationals, and spend it on candidates. Ah, big business has roamed around now they got that against the law, we can't do it. We can't take no money out of the union treasury and use it for contributions toward political things. So you have to be, go around for COPE committees, sell cakes, and whatever you can to raise money, so the money is not there. They made a law you could give 10 thousand dollars but who's going to work in a garment factory and give 10 thousand dollars except everyone in the factory that belongs to management. It's a very unfair advantage. Ah, the clout is lacking and that's why you're not getting anything done for your, for your cause and to help your industry.

FH: You see the clout then as or the lack of clout being traced back to the membership rather than to outside kinds of things?

OM: Well, I think a whole lot of it is, ah, a loss of our political clout. Ah, and, ah, to me that's one of the most important
things that we had going for us, was, ah, being able to elect people that were favorable, ah, to our cause. Ah, but, ah, ah, we've lost that political clout that we did have and ah, I've got a feeling that we have a little bit of hopes of maybe coming back, ah, this year because so many of our people are out of jobs and surely to goodness those people won't vote the same people back in office that have sold us down the river. But, ah, who knows they, ah, they may do it.

FH: What do you think happened to the political clout, Opal?

OM: Well, ah, my views is this, you take a banker that abscons with a lot of money and they'll bill that article somewhere over in a page somewhere and it's not very well publicized. But you take a union leader that, ah, that makes a mis-step and boy it'll make banner headlines. And people like, ah, the president of the Teamsters, you know, that went to prison, and people like that. They've hurt the labor movement, ah, and without a doubt, ah, ah, some of the union has been infiltrated by the Mafia and, ah, criminal elements ah so it gives all of labor a bad name and, ah, ah, it's just that, ah, I think that labor movement got to a place that they were trying to be, ah, decent people, the majority of them. But, ah, some of these groups have hurt the movement, the labor movement and, ah, well I think there's a lot of things that happened. Of course the economy right now is, ah, the most destructive thing for the union because, ah,
ah, when people need jobs, ah, and they get desperate enough, they're going to cross the picket line regardless because they're going to feed their families one way or another. And of course, the economy and such and you know you don't hear them talking about it getting better for, ah, a lot of these people, ah, at the lower, ah, level, the blue collar workers and so on. Ah, it doesn't appear that, that this is going to get any better. Ah, it looks to me like all these people are going to have to be retrained and all of this, and we don't have the people in Washington that will, ah, ah, that are willing to, ah, help do that. And, ah, so I, I feel like until we get a complete change of administration in Washington, we're not going, ah, to be able to make it because I, ah, this Gail Vandercrass from, ah, our County Commission down here that's on GTA, ah, he was telling me that right here in Cabell County that, ah, he was pretty sure that the unemployment was running as high as 25 or 30 percent. And I don't doubt it when you look around and see how many of these plants is laid off and shut down and retooled and laid off people who do the retooling and so on, ah, I, I don't doubt these figures at all, ah, because, ah, I doubt the figures that come out of Washington because you look around at all the plants that shut down and, ah, these people have been used to living at a certain level and they're having to cut back and, ah, ah, the stores, you go in stores and, ah, you
hardly get waited on because they've cut back on their sales people, ah, and I suppose because they're not making enough money to hire a lot of salespeople maybe but I don't know what it is but I know I, I get kind of unhappy when I go to the store sometimes because you can't find anybody to tell you where things are. I think there's a lot of things that's brought this on.

BC: Well I think it's, as far as the political doubt, ah, labor can't deliver the votes it promises because the, the, ah, I think people have become so disillusioned with politics, ah, I don't think a lot of politicians even care anymore whether they get the labor endorsement because they don't, labor doesn't deliver the votes. I know that Bidon that spoke at the convention

JC: Senator Bidon from Delaware. (BM: Mmm hmm)

BC: Ah, he said labor is going to have to get off its duff and start working again and I think it proves that, ah, when Reagan took so many in the last general election that he took so many of the industrial states, ah, that, ah, labor endorses that they can't deliver the votes. I know I worked, ah, have been active politically, ah, when I was still in the shop, ah, I've taken our local politicians in, you know, the labor endorsed candidates. I escorted a lot of them through our plant and, ah, the women for the most part, ah, could care less, ah, it was just, ah, their, their reaction to politics is leave it to someone else, you know, who cares, and, ah, as far as recruiting workers out
of the shops to work for candidates that were endorsed by labor, ah, we couldn't, I mean it was just nill, we couldn't get any, you know, women they work, they work their 7 hours they got to go home and feed their kids or feed their husband, their husband is jealous, they don't want them out at night, they don't want them involved in anything and, ah, as far as the women, you know, in the garment shops there's very little political participation and

BM: Did you, excuse me, did you talk with the younger people, the newer people?

BC: Ah, you mean the, ah,

BM: The new people that came in to work that wouldn't participate in the political

BC: Well, no not really, ah, it, you know, course we are as we said before, the average wage, I mean age of the workers was around 45 and these were older women and, ah, we've had difficulties is raising, ah, COPE monies which there again if the women are, ah, ah, self supporting you know or widows or for whatever reason, ah, 3 bucks is 3 bucks or whatever they were asking for or hoping to get per member. You know, ah, we have always found it very difficult to raise political funds within the shop, I mean within the garment shops and, ah, they were just totally not interested in politics at all or, ah, or the union's, you know, part in politics and you try to educate
them you know at local meetings and stuff but, ah, look we need
people in there that are for our causes, you know, that will
see that these necessary bills are passed or the laws are changed
you know, to help us and, ah, they, they just could care less,
and I think it's the apathy. I know that's the way it was in
my shop.

FH: Do you think that will have changed now with, ah, that the
recession and the high unemployment will have, when the economy
unemployment will have, when the economy begins its upwarswing,
I hope, I hope?

BC: I don't know, I, probably most of them blame it on, on the
politicians, ah, you know, ah, the, it may, it may have a real
good affect, you know, in turning their attitude around or it
could be just completely, I mean you know, just, ah, make
them more, make them more, ah, ah, you know, against, against
the politicians.

OM: I think everybody ought to read the book I'm reading. It's
the, ah, "Devil's Advocate". Have you all read, read that? Ah,
it scared me to death and it talks about these kind of things.
You know, people being apathetic and letting, ah, people grab
power and, ah, ah, I think that's exactly what's happened.

BC: Well people, I think you know, what I found they were just so
disillusioned with politicians I had, ah, I took, ah, I believe
it was, ah, Representative Nick Joe Rahal through the plant, ah,
one year when he was up for re-election and, ah, one of my
coworkers got real smart with me and, ah, she just refused to talk to him and, ah, some of them would say in the bathroom "Well I pay their salaries now", you know, when we would be trying to raise, ah, COPE monies to support our endorsed candidates, and ah, "Well I pay their salaries now" you know; and so many of them weren't even registered to vote, you know, ah, that, I think as far as women workers, or the ones I worked with, ah, they were just, ah, absolutely (END OF SIDE 1).

(START SIDE 2).

JC: As I was saying I think probably the biggest problem we have with organized labor is that their members are not educated, changing times. I think one of the biggest problems that organized labor has today is due to success, that we've had for 40 straight years, 30 years, 1940 to 1970. We made great gains got just about everything possible to get, then we got to the point where we couldn't get no more so you go up for a new contract and just keeping what you got, maybe a cost of living raise, that's it and the people was saying "The union's no good. You didn't get me nothing." They got 13 weeks paid vacation, you got health funds, welfare and they got this and that and everything going. There was nothing left and the people weren't educated about what a union's selling them after they didn't get them anything else. We got them too much, in my opinion. And it got to the point there was nothing left to get them and they started saying, "Well the union is selling us out. They're
not doing their job." We should have started training the people years ago, "Look you can only get so much, so many apples in a barrel and when you get that last one out there's nothing left in there to get, just hold what we got. But people were never educated to it. Same way with politics, they're not educated to it. COPE, which is, I got involved in back in the 50s and the reason I got involved in it, I was working at the steel mill at the time and they had a strike out in Indiana or Illinois, I forget now which one it was, it was Buckland Steel, I mean they were out something like 20 some weeks. They finally got a good contract and they had something in that contract that's what everybody stayed out for and after they went back to work and the State Legislature convened and they made it against the law for these people to receive this in this contract so that knocked that out. That's when we started COPE in the steel industry, ah,

VS: What is COPE?

JC: Political education.

OM: Committee on Political Education.

JC: Committee on Political Education. If you don't spend your monies wisely, whatever you get at the bargain table you can lose in laws. So you have to work hard at it and spend, spend a few dollars. Ah, we never educated our people. I had just last week, I'm in an area that's practically all Republicans.

I think that's a mistake that unions have done throughout the
years, strictly backing Democrats. We've had some good Republicans throughout the times that I've run into personally. But we were backing Democrat because he was a Democrat. We had one in Maryland, I lived in Maryland years ago, and his name is Senator Bell and he had the best voting record in the history of the State of Maryland for labor. Had a Joseph Tideing come in, a young Kennedy copycat of some sort. He was from the Dupont family and labor all backed him. But Senator Bell had the best voting records in the history of Maryland for labor. So they backed Tideing, Tideing was elected. Course that was back in the 50s when the unions had some clout. Anyway he didn't last long. He got, he only lasted one term. He was against, ah, ah, the Rifle Association so they got rid of him. He only lasted one term. But the thing we really need to do is educate the people. Like for example, I just started to say was, I was down in the southwest corner of Virginia last week and it's all Republicans in the area. And as soon as they hear that ILG or labor is, ah, endorsing Mondale, you know, they're all upset because they're Republicans. Now I preach at them on the level, the state level of government and I had them just right last week. Which is, probably what happened to them is only fair but throughout the years the people's been there, and this is an old organized shop and they have some fine benefits. If you get 3 or 4 weeks paid vacation, they pay you in July, when they shut down in July. Then come Christmastime
they're off with their families. Throughout the past they could draw unemployment while they're off. This year the State stopped it. Said, "You're double dipping." Which really they are. But they were really mad. I said, "Well that's one of the reasons we need COPE." I said, "Just the State of West Virginia they put a _______________ on it. You had it, you fought it, you got rid of it. But they're fighting to get it back now. Not only that you're paying taxes on your unemployment, you never have before. (94-95)_________ they're taxing it now." I said, "That's the things we need COPE monies for, to fight." So that opened their eyes just by not drawing unemployment for that one week, so little things like that help a lot. But we have to educate the people and, you know, you can go on and on and on you know take, educating is one thing, getting money from them is one thing, like I tell them; but if you don't go out and vote you lose everything. I don't want your 3 dollars and then you don't vote. I'd just as soon you keep your 3 dollars. Give an example like McGovern County, Maryland, which is the richest county in the country. It's right outside of D. C. That's where all your senators live and all your big backers and so forth and so on. And they have a 98% registered in the county and they have about a 95% vote. The rich people vote and the poor people stay home and cry.

FH: Is labor making, ah, an effort in, in this election to register members?
JC: Yes.

BC: Yes.

FH: A real effort to register and then to, ah, facilitate voting like the League of Women Voters goes and picks up people and takes them to the polls?

OM: Well now

BC: Yeah, you're talking about busing them to the polls.

OM: The League of Women Voters didn't do the picking up it was our labor group that the League of Women Voters would give, ah, our telephone number and our labor people went and picked up people. Ah, so the League of Women Voters took credit for something, ah, that they only took the calls and then they called us, ah, so, ah, ah, really (chuckles) they didn't do, didn't put their money where their mouth was. And, ah, ah,

FH: You mean there was a relationship between the League of Women Voters and what labor group?

OM: Ah, the Huntington District Labor Council at that time was what it was called but now it's Southwester, ah, (128) Council, and, ah, now, ah, I think that a lot of groups are really, ah, like, ah, the Democrat Committee, is really, ah, some of them, since this postcard registration came in, they're making a big effort to, ah, get people registered. Ah, our Democrat Women's Club has got, ah, a woman that's over voters registration and we're going to try, ah, to get people registered. The fact of the matter is I registered the girl next door and contacted the
people across the street because they're not registered and, ah, I'm a notary and, ah, so, ah, I've got some cards and I'm trying to register everybody that I can find that's not registered. But, ah, and I've offered my services to, ah, any group that wants to, to, ah, help get people registered. So, ah, you know, ah, as a notary. A lot of us really feel strongly about the, ah, ah, political situation and, ah, we feel strongly that, ah, as Joe said, that anything that's negotiated in a union contract can be taken away by law overnight. And, ah, although I'm retired I still want to see the people have an opportunity to work and I want to see them have, ah, ah, decent working conditions.

JC: I'm waiting for the day (154-155 (lot of noise)) because the women are majority in this country. The women own the majority of wealth in this country but they always take a back seat. I hope I live long enough that they get out and vote and use the power that they have, cause they should be running this country, really.

BM: What would describe our, certainly problems that affect women in terms of the union, but they aren't, they certainly aren't exclusively women's problems, you know, do you see anything that is a particular problem for women in the union or a particular opportunity for women in the union?

JC: Well there's plenty of opportunities for women in the union. I think it still goes back to grass roots that you're still in
your minds I think they get it, from day one you start to
school, the school system has got to be changed. I know the
whole time I went through public schools, high school, not one
thing did I read about labor unions. I read about the history
of Russia and the history of England and the history of Germany
and France. Nothing about the history of the labor movement in
this country. And I don't think today I asked my son who's
graduated from High School if he's had anything about it. You
might get some in college if you take that course. There is
nothing about the history of the labor movement in this country
in public schools, which it definitely should be in there cause
I think the labor union made this country what it is today. Ah,
same way with women, they get put in a stereotype position and
they sit back and their husbands are put in a stereotype of she's
supposed to do what he tells her to do and so on. They've got
a very important role to play and so if they get off that apron
and get out in the street and start playing it, we're going to
stay like we are cause they do have the majority of the people
in this country are women and they own the majority of the
money. They outlive men and everything else and there's, it's
proven they've got just as much smarts if not more than the
men do and they should be doing the job and they're not cause
they're not getting out in the street. Now whose fault it is
I don't know.
BC: Why I think it goes back to the fact that, ah, if, in most all cases a working woman is holding down 2 jobs. She, she's getting paid for one but she's holding down 2 jobs. Her spare time is so limited that, ah, they can't participate and alot of times and things they would like to participate in that are good worthy causes but they don't have the time because they have husbands and children and, ah, housework and, ah, all these other things to do that they don't have the time to devote to cause that they, I know that's what I found that, ah, ah, when they get off work they go home. That's it. And ah, they just don't have the time to devote.

FH: Now if, if you had to describe a typical woman activist in the labor movement, say for instance what would her marital status be, what would her age be, from what you said

BC: Ah, I would say probably around 40 years old, ah, with, ah, a sympathetic husband say that would be either, ah, a union person himself or also involved, of course as Joe and I both are, ah, a husband that would be sympathetic to her spending time away from the home, ah, and, ah, a husband that would be willing to share the home chores to enable her to participate in these things, and, ah, ah, that doesn't exist in very many cases. A lot of, ah, most of the women that, ah, that we had on the executive board, ah, I'd say 3 of them are single and, ah, the ones that were married are so limited to, ah, say if participating in something that would require a trip, say to
participate in a convention which are necessary, within your own union as well as, ah, State Federation, ah, functions, conventions, and things and, ah, very often that, ah, it, nobody wanted to go because their husbands would object or they couldn't you know, take the time away from home to be away from home 2 or 3 days or the time required and, ah, I think to have all these things, like I said, is very seldom that, that the ideal situation exists and, ah, we're, you know, it, a woman feels guilty too if she, you know, if she takes time away from home, you know, where she should be at home doing this or away from her children or whatever.

JC: Well that gets back to education again. If she's started out in school that she should have the same opportunities that a man does and she should follow her conscious or whatever as she's going through life, she should be able to do it just like a man. But they don't pursue it because they're not trained that way (BC & JC talking at once)

BC: ...well the men aren't trained that way either.

JC: ...down everything else.

BC: I mean the, the most often the husband even, ah, I'm sure Joe had run up against it, even though the husbands are actually, ah, union members themselves they still resent their wives being active in anything. And so often, ah, a family will determine even whether, ah, one would run for an office within the local or whatever. That, if it requires time away from the
home, you know, and this, say even we would need to elect a shop stuart or whatever and we would stress, you know, that, ah, her duties would be confined to the shop and working hours that it wouldn't require anything, you know, any, any outside time that, that wouldn't involve her leisure time.

FH: What about young women? Ah, Vivian and I were talking about this the other day, ah, ah, the attitude of just, of women just entering the shop or just entering the, ah, the job. What's their attitude as, as union members or as political union members?

JC: Well my experience they're completely oblivious to what's going on. They don't know nothing about politics. They don't know nothing about the union. They come in here as a new worker and they don't know nothing.

VS: They just have their own gripes and they want that settled regardless of anything else.

JC: That goes back to education. They don't get it. They're not getting it. Not only the female, the male's not either. I've made house calls when I was organizing the union and the woman said, "Oh God, please leave before my husband gets here. I'll sign a card. I'll sign it in the shop. I definitely want to belong to the union but if my husband finds out about it he'll beat the heck out of me." I've had people on my committee and I'd feel real bad. I was up in Martinsburg, West Virginia a few years back. I had the labor board in because we
had some child charges filed against the company so you had to
give a statement to the labor board and of course we had so
many people in it takes time to get affidavids and she called
her house said, "It's running a little bit later. I'll be
home as soon as possible." Anyway next day she doesn't
work and she doesn't come in the next day, say she's sick.
Three days later I seen her she's still black and blue, and
that's some of the conditions that, you know, women find; and
it's a shame. That really, it tore my heart apart to see her.
Her eye was black and her lips were still swollen, you know,
and it's awful that still happens so much. You don't think it
exists anymore, same as it was back in the 40s. You get back
in the rural areas and you'll see it cause it's lack of
education in those parts. (PAUSE)

BC: But as far as the young people I think, ah, I think there again
is where unions are, or the labor movement is losing. It is
because the young people are not dedicated.

BM: They take it for granted?

BC: Yeah, ah, that's the apathy I talked about or if, ah, let
someone else do the work as long as I get my, ah, you know, as
long as I'm taken care of, you know, I don't have to do
anything. And I heard this in the shop too, "Well I pay dues",
you know. And, ah

BM: It's "I pay my dues"?

BC: Yeah, right.
FH: Well, I, I'm just baseing on some of the things you said, Betty, ah, I'm curious about what all of you think the relationship is between women unionists and the women's movement. If you think if you, if you, if it's been your experience that women who are active in, ah, in the labor movement see themselves as, as, ah, related to the women's movement or as feminists or, have you, have you noticed that link or is there a link?

BC: Yeah, I think so. I've had the ERA come up to me, by my ex-husband Ollie and he threw it up to me that, ah, ah, and he was active in the labor movement too. And, ah, I had it thrown up to me that, that, ah, and I resented, you know, the, because I haven't gone out for, you know, I don't fight for ERA. I'm certainly sympathetic, you know, but simply because I was becoming active, you know, and had a voice in things and participated in things, you know, and you become a little independent or, ah, stand up for yourself more I guess, you know, and you question things or whatever, the more involved you get, you know, the freer you get or, you know, you feel like that you have a right to, ah, stand up for something or stand up for yourself or whatever, you know. And I see a definite link.

OM: I feel the same way, ah, ah, I, ah, ah, I think that, ah, due to the fact that I became so involved in the union was, ah, sort of opened my eyes and I started looking around and really saw, ah, what was happening. And I think that you have to have a little bit of age on you before you really begin to, to, ah,
see these things. I think that, ah, in young women, ah, in all probabilities their love affairs blind them (laughter in background) to, ah, what is really happening to them, I really feel that way. And after that newness wears off well then they begin looking around and begin seeing that they have, ah, (chuckles) they've lost something. And, ah, I think that they have to go through that stage.

BC: Well I think it's like, ah, I preached to a step-daughter I had, ah, that so often with, ah, ay you're a child and you're under the rule of your parents and then you go to school and you're under the rule of your teachers, you know, or you still have to go to school, you know, you have rules to abide by and say especially in a girl, ah, then she gets married, you know, shortly after school or immediately after school, then she comes under the rule of her husband and she never really knows independence as a person should or doesn't, wouldn't appreciate it, you know, ah, and, ah, so you, you go, you know, from somebody else, belonging to someone else and being ruled by someone else and then, of course like Opal said, you have to get a certain age on you and a certain amount of experience behind you before you become independent and I think that, that, ah, the, as far as the labor movement it has given women more independence, you know, ah, I'd say all of our members that were strong union members was strong women to start with.
I mean it was, you know, that they weren't afraid to speak out or, ah, you know, try to seek independence or recognition to say 'Hi, I'm a person, I may be female', you know, 'the weaker sex but I still have a right to be heard', you know, 'to do my thing'.

VS: Yeah but didn't you feel that the, ah, ah, person was more outspoken and more involved out of your local union and gave of their time, were the people that you could depend on, on anything that came up on the political issue or what have you than the younger people that you couldn't even talk to that wanted to get paid for everything that they did?

BC: Oh yeah, or expecting something for nothing.

VS: I think that's what's ruined the COPE program as such, you know, back for a few years because us older ones, we did our volunteer work, never even thought about getting paid and all these younger ones come in and they want, they want to get paid for it. And I, you were talking about getting involved, when I went to work, ah, I, the first thing I did was start going to the union meetings, and then, ah, I went to school at Morgantown under the Labor Institute and, ah, Opal was in the group and that was back in 59, early 60s (OM: Fifty-nine, early 60s) and that first year I went to school, which was in June or July, I put in a hundred volunteer hours working on card files. My husband never said anything. The only thing that he ever told me during the years that I put volunteer hours in was,
"Get your rest". He said you, he never did say you can't go to this or you can't go to that because I'd defy him (laughter) I would have, because I just felt, you know, cause I didn't get paid for all this and I did it because I wanted to do it.

OM: I think that, ah, that you and I are the two (laughingly) volunteeringest volunteers in the country. (Laughter)

BC: Maybe you all were just trying to get away from something (OM: No) or to hide form something, you know.

VS: No, no we were always busy, always doing something.

OM: I used to get off from work and I wouldn't even go home. I'd go down to the labor council and work till, ah,

VS: Mmm hmm, I've done that lots of times.

OM: Ten or eleven o'clock at night.

BC: Well see, there again it goes back that when you have, ah, young people coming in to the shops or factories or whatever, they are more likely to have small children and be confined even more to the home place. Rather than, than say your middleaged or on, you know, and they don't have, they don't, ah, their mind is so busy taking care of necessities, you know, that there isn't any time left. I know when my children was small and I was working, ah, I was lucky if I read the newspaper. You know, I mean it was things I had to make priorities and, ah, it, my priorities was my home and children and my job. And I didn't become active in the, I had worked for several years, ah, probably 10 or 12 years before I became active in the union.
OM: Well I, ah, see I didn't have any family and, ah, my husband was in service and, ah, gone most of the time, ah, so I, I, you know, I didn't have that kind of a problem. Vivian had a husband that was, ah, agreeable, ah, to her working and he, he was very helpful, I think. Ah, Vivian told me he used to do a lot of the cooking and these kind of things, ah, in other words he was a man to be, ah, praised. So, ah, ah, we had an advantage over the majority of the women I think and, ah,

VS: And my mother-in-law took care of my baby, a boy.

OM: And most of our women, ah, from, ah, that was active in the union was either women like me that had no, ah, practically had no husbands or, ah, or widows, ah, I think that, ah, Emma Lou was the only one that was, ah, very active in the union that did have a husband. Ah, and of course I had Frank until he died but he died in the early part of the 60s so I didn't have him after that. So, ah

VS: So it does, that bears out what I said that, ah

OM: That makes, ah, that makes, ah, what, you know, give you more of an opportunity. (pause)

FH: Well I'm still, I'm still, ah, back on this idea again because it, it is striking that, that all of you, ah, come across as very strong, determined women and, ah, again, ah, I'm curious about what you, when the women's movement did come along, how you felt about it, if you saw yourself in the movement or if it was outside you if it spoke to you at all as women workers?
OM: Well I was, ah, very much interested in it. There was a few things, you know, early on like burning their bras and some of these (VS: (laughingly) I didn't go for that either) ah, silly things you know, there was one or two things I didn't agree with them on, ah, like quotas, you know, ah, in other words, ah, the first, the last hired the first out, you know, and some of those things. I've got to much union in me to, ah, see them destroy my seniority. Ah, and, ah, but on the whole I thought it was great. I thought it was great to see the women, ah, ah, starting to, ah, realize, ah, what was happening to them and, ah, ah, I think I was very happy about it. (chuckles)

BC: I've always felt positive about it, especially where there's such discrimination in, ah, wages, ah, for same jobs performed, ah, same capabilities, ah, same, ah, ah, smarts if you want to call it, you know. But where there has been such discrimination and, ah, I would say I am a feminist or whatever. You know, ah, ah, that doesn't show (laughs) but I've always been sympathetic too, some of the stuff was ridiculous. Now I certainly don't want to be a man, I enjoy the contrast, you know, in certain areas. (laughter) But, ah, if I was performing a job alongside a man and, ah, doing the same type of work, I would certainly expect the same type pay and I think where they've come in that possibly the only thing is hurting dependant women with children that, they've caused some of the laws to be
changed that, ah, I think cases, it should be where, cases should be, ah, lawsuits in case of divorces or whatever, you know where exceptions can be made, ah, with laws or rules you know, that, ah, where women can, where they carry, you know, ERA has carried so far that, ah, like, ah, child support you know and different areas that, I think they have hurt women in some areas is what I'm trying to say. But the overall picture I'd say is good. It's been the best thing of my, ah, lifetime anyway. I still think they have a lot of work to do. (pause) And I'll help. (chuckles)

VS: I think the best thing that they could do is to have their own group to have, I don't know how I can say this, have lawyers that could go in and help people instead of this ERA and Human Rights because they are so slow and 9 times out of 10 they won't help anyway. They should have their own lawyers to help people. Somebody that you could go to and talk to.

OM: Are you speaking of the women's groups?

VS: Mmm hmm.

OM: Ah, (lengthy pause)

FH: I think Vivian is talking specifically about some experiences that she's had with the ERA and, ah, the Human Rights Commission trying to file suits after the grievence procedure have been inadequate within the plant. Trying to file, ah, a suit, which is, which can be very time consuming.
JC: Like filing charges with the labor board.

BC: It becomes so dragged out.

JC: Filing charges with the labor board it takes you an average now of 5 years to get it taken care of. (End of side 2)

(End of TAPE 4)