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ORAL HISTORY DEED OF GIFT

The oral history collection of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project includes taped interviews with significant Baltimore-area citizens who can provide first-hand accounts of some aspect of Baltimore history which would otherwise go unrecorded. Our goal is to supplement and enhance the more conventional archival materials held by the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center of the University of Baltimore.

You have been asked to give an interview for this collection. A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer. In some cases a verbatim transcript will be made. In every case an abstract will be made of the tape. All materials connected with your interview will be deposited with the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center and copies will be sent to the Maryland Historical Society. This material may be used for research, education, scholarly publications and other purposes according to the educational and historical objectives of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center and the Maryland Historical Society. Specifically, this material may be used by the Theatre Project in the preparation of dramatic presentations.

I, [Name], have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, I knowingly and voluntarily permit the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center, its Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project and the Maryland Historical Society the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized or contemplated, to the Baltimore Region Institutional Studies Center, the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project and the Maryland Historical Society.

August 10, 1981
Date of Agreement

August 10, 1981
Date(s) of Interview

Signature of Informant Donor

[Signature]

Signature of Interviewer/Collector

[Signature]

Acknowledgement of Maryland Historical to abide by the terms of this agreement:

Date

Signature of Curator/Director

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947 North Howard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Leona Aull
Curator
W. Theodore Doss
Project Director

A project of the University of Baltimore and BRISC
The Northampton County Labor Council in Pennsylvania is comprised of a dozen or so various unions in the area, each of which send delegations to meet every month to discuss different things that are current in the Labor movement. Different political things that come up, different issues that come up. They're starting on the basics as far as programming for community service and politics and what have you, so one of the interesting characteristics of this particular council, is that it's dominated by steelworkers, in Bethlehem, the home office of Bethlehem steel is there, the largest union in the area is steel. About 25% of the work force in Hampton County is steelworkers. They pay their full ( ) to the council as they have complete political power. So they are the force to reckon with, if you will. The officers are, ( ) are dominated by steelworkers. And, there's political factions even within Steel, that transfer themselves into the council, which is supposed to be representative of all unions. But one particular problem that came up was that a cementworker local which went out of business, I'm sorry, the firm that the cementworkers had a contract with went out of business, and the firm went out of business owing the union some money. A good portion of this was dues money, which was never remitted back to the local by the company. The cementworkers could not pay their per capita amount to the council, their dues to the council, for several months, because the funds were tied up in litigation, and there was no definitive sign of an end, as the ( ) normally do. A motion was made at one particular point at this council, suggesting that since the cementworkers can't pay their per capita, they shouldn't be part of the council, and all thier voting and attendance and everything else, in effect it would be coming out of the council. This was... the executive board of the Council made no recommendations as far as what action should be taken, and the executive board is comprised of, predominantly, again, steelworkers... one representative I knew was from the government workers, and another one was from the furniture workers. But it was dominated... president, vice-president, secretary, by steelworkers. But a motion was made on the floor by one of the steelworker leaders that since the cementworkers can't pay
their per capita debt to the Council and they hadn't for several months, we don't know when they're going to be paying it in the future, that they should no longer be part of the Council. A group of labor unionists of a different opinion asked some questions, when it came to a question on the motion. And the question on the motion was, one, how long have the cement workers been with the council? It turned out that nobody could really give an exact amount of time that they were on the council, but at least twenty years. Nobody ( ). It seems to me that anybody who's been involved with the labor movement for twenty years had to have given some support to other unions at any particular point in time, and matter of fact the cement workers, in the Lehi Valley of Pennsylvania, was one of the most formidable unions in that area, because of the way the cement industry ( ) sustained a major portion of the labor force for many, many years, regardless, of the past contributions, which weren't ( ). Regardless of how the labor movement was originally intended to be, where we used to take in people and... who didn't have any money, and we would give them, you know, black tea and bread, just to survive on the picket lines just so we could have a union. But rather than having that spirit of brother and sister and help, that... you know, I'll try and get you through another day, and we appreciate everything you've done, and we're going to stick by you now when you're having a tough time, the motion was passed and carried and the cement workers were expelled from the council, and they have since never heard from them, one way or another. I think it's a sad commentary on the perception of these... and these were rank and file leaders, not the suit and tie staff person, this was the rank and file leader, who made a motion and carried it through by the people that followed him. Again, it's a sad commentary, because it seems that too often we forget our roots and what our whole purpose is supposed to be all about. We have... I'm trying to think who it was... there's a ( ) that's out now, from Gompers... you know, we have too many jails, not enough schoolhouses, there's too much revenge, not enough passion. Those sort of things... just basic humanism. What the unions supposed to be all about. Social uplifting of everybody's spirit of giving each other the support and help that you need to just change something once in a while. Make it a little bit better......
...not to sacrifice liberty....punch a time card. Those are just basic, you know, every day, almost commandments, to true(   ), I think.

My feeling is that unions have changed. Well, maybe I'm romanticizing a bit, you know, in secondary high school you can get alot of formal education in regard to the philosophys of Samuel Gompers, Walter Reuther, or Eugene Debs......ix what you got was, you know, dates and places and all that sort of thing, alot of ingfighting......xix what the CIO was and why did John L Lewis punch somebody and that kind of nonsense. Secondary schools when I was young would struggle to define what a union was....they just....just a union. You know, that was just it. There wasn't no real clarification or real understand of what was the (    ) behind all of this, you know. x why did they sit down at those auto-worker plants....why did they......xixix women's brigade gathered together with thier children and supported them with with bread and take blankets and that sort of thing. Why did they go out to the community and build up community support? These things weren't even mentioned. Matter of fact, I think the brigade wasn't mentioned at all. All these little things. I think, just as much as I was denied the education, alot of people who fell into the labor movement just as the course of their normal workplace......Pennsylvania is not a Right-to-Work state, you go to work in union places if you're union. You didn't have to, you know, break heads or have to see your brothers and sisters all bent out of shape just because of (    ) union. It seems like they forgot all about it just because......and it's remarkable because Bethlehem Steel itself, I think, was (it was) 34 the State constabulary, better known as the state cops, or troopers, they would be on horseback, and during the strike, they would just get on their horses and go through the striker's homes, while they're at their dinner table. They'd just grab k them right out of their homes, and anybody that tried to stop them they'd club them. That sort of thing. Bethlehem steel housed the state police in company k facilities. It was an unbelievable, classic example of a struggle for workers and labor. (    ) part of k this. They weren't going to let these guys come back, and from World War I k k(    ) Wrold War II, thinking that they're heroes and they are so
terrific and they're going to get everything they want. They had to humble them. So, one of the earliest ( ) ( ) ( ) steel, was because of, to get what they had before they left, or to prevent being cut back even more. That was more the inspiring economic thing that the company did. ( ) ( ) ( )

These guys have totally forgotten that...what all these guys had to go through. And it's a shame.

Presently, I'm the Education Director of the Upper South Department of the International Ladie's Garment Worker's Union. I'll explain the Upper South Department first...that's the easiest. The Upper South Department has approximately twelve thousand members in a six-state region. The states are: Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, a major portion of Kentucky, and the eastern tip of Tennessee. It's...has the urban character of Baltimore, membership is predominantly Black, urban, first tier or entry-level jobs are available in the garment industry. That's pretty much how it is in the Urban area of Baltimore. If you start going out into, like the country areas of Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia, you get a lot of, like, small-town, one-company businesses where maybe like the sheriff, the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce are all part of the same family. And that's what we're going to try to break. Without going into too much of the demographics, they make children's wear, women's dresses, sports wear, intimate apparel, housecoats, robes, ( ) labels, various other things that associate with the industry. My job as Education director is, well, the whole idea of this union is a lot more than...of course, the textbooks will tell you the first function of any union is to have a process of collective bargaining, and go forth...which, of course, that's just what it's all about. To some extent. But after collective bargaining, there's a lot more that goes to it. It... the textbooks.....to define a union to me, I'd like them to say that a union is a community within a community. It's an... adjunct to the major population ( ) ( ) ( ). In our community we have schools. As Education Director, I run classes and institutes to help the rank and file understand what their rights and privileges are, and what their responsibilities are as rank and file members, which would help them elect shop stewards and chair people who I would help with their responsibilities
and give them technical assistance and what have you. I would also assist the local officers, president, and vice president, secretary, and treasurer whose functions are totally different and that of the shop representatives, like shop stewards and chair-people. Help them with understanding the basic parliamentary procedure, and just how far they can go on the local level, which is limitless. And help them reach for the highest goals that they possibly can. The local officers, the shop stewards, people and the rank and file are also assisted, not only by myself as Education Director, to give them technical assistance and that sort of thing, but they also have business agents. And business agents make routine visits to the shops, and help enforce the agreement, and to expedite benefits. I would also help train various business agents. All business agents around here planning process. Right now we're comprehensive programs... Also as Education Director I'd be involved with Press releases, commercials, all Public relations with the Upper South Department. Also all the political aspects of it as well. Not so much internal, but the exterior part of it. We can negotiate the greatest contract in the world, but it doesn't mean anything if laws are written that would negate all of our efforts. So we found ourselves in a political field. We try to run effective voter registration, get people out there to vote, we try to have as much democracy as possible in terms of endorsement procedures, and have a rank and file commitment to the extent of volunteers donating time, phone calls, phone banks, car pools, information... passing information along through leaflets and meetings, that sort of thing, also during, aside from the election part of it, we try to educate each other in regard to what issues are important. I can't, as Education director, I say to a bunch of rank and file members, "This is what I think is important. This is what we're going to do." I would say "These are the issues, let's talk about them, and what we might be able to do about it." Of course one of the obvious issues
presently, for the past decade or so, has been imports. Certain political remedies to solve the problems of imports coming in from overseas, taking away domestic jobs. We have a [redacted] Congressperson in our districts [redacted] where we have members, we [redacted] have members visit them, and let those Congresspeople ( [redacted] ). If they are in Washington, and we have an [redacted] organized way...we do develop organized ways of going to Washington. Washington so we can meet all the Congresspeople in our Congressional [redacted] area. We used to do this on the international level, by the way. The International gets together every couple of years in Washington...lobbying, with rank and file members. Of the issues that they have expressed, faced, and asked us to give more information on to them, so we can all be [redacted] a little bit more articulate, about what the particular issue is about. How much, what type of garments ( [redacted] ), how many jobs, for example. ( [redacted] ) ( [redacted] ) ( [redacted] ).

Alright, in terms of education in the community...we also have recreation in our ( [redacted] ) community. We have little league. We have skating rinks...all kinds of different recreation for our families and their friends. Well, the union also participates in that way, too. As I mentioned, there's no limit to what a local can do. If the local wants to sponsor a softball team, bowling league, a [redacted] picnic just for union [redacted] members
a boating trip, whatever they can do this as well so we're also in that part of the community as far as recreation. Well I did mention of course politics there as also internal politics and the labor movement as well in much as we are citizens and we pay taxes registrar to vote and the labor movement you are a member you pay dues and you participate in democratic processes as well in electing people. We have various offices, in our communities we have laws that govern us and in the union we have our constitution to help guide us I think the text book wants to say that a union believes in the principal of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness and that the american citizen do not themselves of those rights and privileges when they punch a time clock. The liberty to to say to your employer I worked hard and I sweat and I stay away from my family for 7, 8, 9, 10, hours a day an I think I have the right to say how much that's worth. To purse the happiness of knowing that you can make your life little bit better that gift that you already wanted to buy your husband for his anniversary. That camp that you know your neighbors go to. Those little things that the kids see when you go shopping and you have to tell them no. The kind of happiness that you want to purse its the mechanics to get to those things and you get some people who like to look at their families they don't want problems they don't want strikes they don't want walkouts and lockouts and all kind of legal ramifications for their actions they just want to have a choice in what kind of life they're going to have, they'll try to pursue happiness through the union that way to do things for their family, they want to sustain life. The liberty to say what kind of life you have the right of happiness in pursuing it sustains that life in the work life, its all comprehensive and a union should also be expressed in terms of those 200 and 5yrs ago of buying for the people. I think that too often union officials can be so far removed that they get isolated and insulated actually. From the real problems of rank and file they have to be reminded the rank and file members of the labor movement are militant progressive and give a damn about the bill of workers, sure they might of voted for Ronald Reagan, or Richard Nixon or whoever but that's their own perception. When it comes to like the work place I might sound very idealistic I really feel that when push comes to shove the rank and file union members knows that they have to stand by their union if all those other its a lot easier for them to make that assessment if a union is acting responsibly to the community in general that isn't and all those other areas if the union is acting responsibly in giving the proper training and guidance and help you know supporting them in all the different activities its a lot easier to say look the company is pushing us to the wall they don't want to induce your hours they don't want to increase your pay what do you want to do how much does it really mean to you and they know that unions
really behind them for the people they are paying to represent them are behind them they are there all the time.

If we lose American unions we might want to look at it from the perspective of what was without and what kinds of problems that the union have addressed with themselves over the years and what kind of issues they have to look at in the future, and if they weren't there they would be ignored. During the days of the 1890's to 1870's with the Rockefellers the where there was unrestricted law and unrestricted ability for a innovative capitalist to exploit and actually subvert things that are intrinsically American like liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Talk about the sweat shops which are still here today and from all that with child labor and the exploited workers the free enterprise is being unaccountable. The labor movement is taken upon itself the responsibility of speaking for society on these issues that are important in being how many hours can a human being work without running the life's being cut down in half which was the case. How far, how little can somebody live on? Where not talking about.

How much can they work how little can they earn? That was the whole bases of it it wasn't like how little can I work and how much can I make that has turned to some sort of process and it only 1976 when we got occupational and safety and health administration people forget that it want there forever but it wasn't. People were dying in coal mines today in and have been dying that way for decades you only had occupational safety and health since 76 so we contribute that to the labor movement federal minimum wage we contribute that to labor movement child labor laws were they use to have young people 9 and 10 years old working in grapers stooping over truing to get the slag and the shale out of the coal you have girls working next to their mother getting TB they weren't going to school because they should work to earn those few pennies to help them eat you might as well be ignorant because you not going to survive if you dont work to eat, these sort of things safety standards labor minimum wage law child safety labor laws public school course you know your labor movement is not going to going around saying they started public school but what they are going to say is that they've always maintained and its important to the point were no human mind should go unwholesome to its fullest potential the society can gain allot more by paying for person to go to school from the age of 5 to the age of whatever they want to go to by the return that individual is going to give back to the community services and knowledge of the people if the society pays for a doctor to go to school that doctor has to be responsible for that shool through the society thats makes a few more people healthier. If you have a few more healthy people walking around then you don't have to pay for the hospital, THINGS like this is what the labor movement is all about. Legitamizing the right for people to speak up is what when it comes
to the whole election process, the voting rights act, I think it was in 66 where Blacks and other minorities would have to literacy test all kind of residential requirements land ownership for example. All these things hall tax they move to file in changing all of these things in bring all parts of the community together into the electoral process to make it a legitimate representative government. These are the types of things that labor are involved with and have changed and have gone forwarded with. American labor if we know it could stop what would we have. I don't think we'd have the social conscious in this country I don't think that Exxon is going to be the champion of on food stamps I don't think that Mobile oil gives a damn whether Jon Jones from Baltimore is going to be able to get to Jr. college on a 4 year institution I don't think that the major corporations are going to take upon itself the responsibility it always had and never did anything with until they were forced into it. The option is open to working people would be shot. I see it would be horrifying. You don't have the grievance procedure. You don't get the respect of having to look at a situation or problem and say this is a problem in the company and maybe we make it a little better for everybody in the long run even more profitability if a person knows you have good morality and relationships in the factory. To have all that kind of too important and I think it would be close to anarchy. I've had employers who have said to me I'm all for unions these are profit makers there whole idea is to make money but I've actually had employers who have said to me I wouldn't do this without a union. I wouldn't be in business without a union. If I would open up another factory I could and would call the union and tell them so that to make sure they are there, they wouldn't have to go through card checks or anything like that and the reason is because of stability. You don't have 100 people in the factory all thinking 100 different things. In fact, there's nothing wrong with that but eventually it has to come to a consensus and there has to be a vehicle to get it there and unions do that they work together to get the kind of contract to get the grievance procedure to get the process of the literary benefits to get the process of stability. That management is saying about the unions and taking upon themselves to promote in a lot of ways.
When I was describing what a union is or what a text book should say about what a union is you should understand that it isn't always that way I might have my own opinions about what union is but some other might not, there has been union officials who have said to me the members are of the union but the members don't control the union the union comes first but doesn't necessarily mean that the member its a whole like chauvinistic attitude beyond what the rank and file is all about. I'm speaking in general my experience I've been through several conferences conventions and what have you I got and institute different learning format where I've had an opportunity to meet a lot of people on a lot of different views and picked their brains about democracy within the union I find it incontrollable if a union should negotiate a contract and just hand it members and say this is what it is and walk away without any input from the beginning by the members for any ratification by the members thereafter. I find it hard to

I'm talking in regards to major union officials ... the smoked full room the 3 piece suit the chauffer driven limousine is not what a person working behind a sewing machine or behind a drill press gives a damn about and isn't impressed with it anyway, matter of fact it just plain makes them suspicious and why we have to identify ourselves in such a flashy terms with the other side is beyond me if you can't just respect a person for being a representative of working people there should be some problem at it. There shouldn't have to be well I'm a representative of working people but I drive chauffer driven limousine and I can go the White house and I can go hobnob with major corporations and they can respect more by traveling around with that much more dignity .

When we talk about what's wrong with unions we have to talk about union democracy and the respect for it. there are such things as elected delegates to the convention who don't elect anything once it gets through a convention. The teamsters , a union the labor's union for example they both have groups in their unions. Now I'm not saying that dissenting groups are right or wrong one way or another or what the issues they are presenting are the best issues or what have you. In a major point of what to bring up that when it comes to dissenting points and view that it has to be heard and it has to be reconed with as a legitimate concern of the rank and file and they do have a right to organize within their own organization and to make a change if its necessary to subvert that purpose under parliamentary procedure and all kinds of niceties and other 3 piece ways of doing it.
is not what the labor movement is all about. A lot of things would make people like John L. 
Debbs. We can get too big for our britches, we can get too fat for our own good. We can be 
too successful. I think what we're going to be seeing because of that attitude 
by too many officials. The corporate interest in this country has gotten rather 
cocky. They've taken things that we've been successful at and 
the organizer. You know employer organize into associations now. 
Workers organizing with the unions employer groups in the same particular will organize 
into associations. It might be a loose association. They have a lot of basic things 
in common. Of course, probability of course keeping unions out or if they are in get 
them out and they have been rather successful. You have union free environment 
move you have the national right to work committee on the political side of 
the national political action committee. 

not to mention the Black society, and the Ku Klux Klan, but all of which 

founded upon workers joining together to make some choices about their life. 
These organizations get much more sophisticated the net pack and the 
national right to work union free environment are very sophisticated with their targeting 
for fund raising dollars and backing candidates are going to stick with right to 
work laws who are going to abolish. OSHA who will try to implement subminimum wage 
where you can discriminate against somebody just because of their age, they'll try 
to have the secretary of labor like we have recommends that industrial homework ban 
should be recinded so that mothers and children who work in their homes now rather 
than work in a sweatshop doing the same thing in either case you can't force labor 
law child labor laws, safety standards minimum wage standards or any thing else 
these are the things that we're giving away by not being and sticking close 
together by not truly identifying with the rank and file, these things we are 
sacrificing. The other side is The labor movement only has less than 
25% of the work force in organized labor. The other 75% is unorganized labor 
and its growing desertification elections have increased over the last 10 years 
and we're losing them. Unfair labor practices laws are being violated by the 100's 
by companies in organizing campaigns in desertification elections and the NLRA 
NLRA is being attacted by the present administration to have it lowered in terms of 
the number of people working in the caseload and all that sort of thing. 
Also I think one of the problems with the unions is that of the rank and file. 
When you look at presidential election less than 50% of the people who are eligible 
to vote don't think it's shameful. It's almost like what came first the chicken or 
the egg. Well if you don't vote they are going to feel that you don't care if you 
get screwed over that rational is just beyond me. Same things in terms of the labor 

movement as the union should exemplify the principals on which this country was form.
the rank and file member should exemplify the citizen in terms of what their rights and responsibilities are, voting, participating go to your local meetings if you don't like what the union official is saying tell him don't go into the mens room or the ladies room at work on Monday morning and complain about it its not the time for you to do it. When it comes to the labor press the labor pressmen absolutely apologize whatsoever for being the spokesman for labor. The other side of the coin is you can read the new york times, washington post you can watch nbc or cbs abc or anything else like that and they won't apologize for anything and they'll tell you that they object which is a bunch of crap because they are corporate in their own right regional labor press we don't make any apologies for it we are labor oriented we give a damn about people read it learn it understand it and even disagree with it but at least read it. Participate as a citizen educate yourself think when you watch the news well how does that relate to me we know that small and can effect our lives.

We know what a corporation 300 hundred miles away at the beginning of the Chesapeake system can one of most bountiful areas as far as food and health and nutrition down here we know that all these different parts of our community are doing things affect us directly and all you have to do is stop and think for 2 minutes and say well... just participate become involved, give a damn and if you don't as far as I'm concerned you don't have a right to complain. If you give it your best shot then you can get madder and do more if you haven't tried then well try anyway, ill listen anyways. There has to be alot of listening, alot of talking alot of communicating even to those people who I say that don't have a right to complain which ofcourse is not true., so I've contradicted myself. I'm so damn parochial when it comes to unions I cant see, there's no other organization that I know of that or group of organizations that teach citizenship that a.... t I don't know Mandy I guess push is going to come to shove. I think within 3 years easy rioting the loitering burning, I think that your going to see crime is going to go up unemployment is going to go up hunger health is going to deteriorate all those things can happen with unions existing and beaten on the way they are without them its going to be there's alot of people determined not to let that happen xx The american worker will fight back.