

## Gladys McKenzie

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## **Interview with Gladys McKenzie**

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers  
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on October 11, 1995  
University of Minnesota Campus**

Gladys McKenzie           - GM  
Clarke A. Chambers       - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers and I'm interviewing this morning Gladys McKenzie who had a career at the University of Minnesota as a student, as a civil servant in admissions for some time in the early 1980s, and then came to be a chief organizer for the AFSCME . I will spell that out because I was as ignorant as others. That's a terrible name. It is the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. The date is October 11. It is a Wednesday and we're doing it in my office in the Social Science Tower starting at 9:15 in the morning. We have October's bright blue weather outside; so, our conversation should be as clear and beautiful as the day is beyond the windows here.

I've found from doing many, many different interviews that it's really valuable for the person listening to get a sense of who you are, whoever it is being interviewed; so, we'll just do a little career autobiography, to put it that way. You had a checkered career as a student, which is very typical for Minnesota students?

GM: Yes.

CAC: You came from here from another state and you had to learn us. You did different kinds of union work ,and your own motives, and how you got involved in that would be an interesting part of the story. Then, we'll get to the University of Minnesota. But you start the story where you want.

GM: First of all, I'll start by saying, "Happy Birthday" to my Mom who turns eighty today.

CAC: Ahhh.

GM: That's an exciting event in our lives. I was actually born on the West Coast in California, and that's where my mother comes from, and my father is Hungarian and came to this country

after World War II; so, I grew up with sort of an international perspective on the world. I'm really happy for that.

CAC: Where in California?

GM: I was born in Oakland, lived in Berkeley, Van Nuys . . .

CAC: Can I dare ask when you were born?

GM: In 1951.

CAC: That's the year I got my Ph.D. from Berkeley.

GM: Really?

CAC: [laughter]

GM: That's great. It's a beautiful place. That's where my parents met.

CAC: We think still think of the Bay Area as home.

GM: Yes. I went back there in my early twenties and loved the place. It's wonderful.

CAC: It's a good place to hang out . . . Berkeley.

GM: It is. It's a great place to hang out, drink coffee, read books, be active, and go to school. [laughter]

CAC: You bet . . . all of the above.

GM: Yes. When I was eleven, my parents moved to Iowa City, Iowa, and I have grown up in and around universities my whole life and consider myself sort of a university brat.

CAC: Good. Your father was an academic?

GM: He was an academic. He actually had an M.D. and also a Ph.D., was not allowed to practice his M.D. in this country. That was always a source of anger and frustration for him.

CAC: Sure.

GM: But he refused to take the test in this country. He thought that his work should be valuable and good anywhere in the world that he went. Yes, because of his work, I grew up around universities. My mother was a social worker and she worked for the University of Iowa as well.

I was anxious to leave Iowa City when I turned seventeen and graduated from high school in 1969. There was a lot going on in the world at that time.

CAC: Isn't that the truth?

GM: I decided to go as far away as I could and ended up in Tucson, Arizona, and very quickly was involved in the anti-war movement there, as were hundreds of thousands of other students across the country. It was a period of time where the world really opened up for me and I began to think about the world in a larger sense than I ever had before and was very interested in what made it go 'round, how it worked. Because of that, I became interested also in other social activist groups and, in the early 1970s, became involved in the United Farmer Workers support work.

CAC: In the Southwest, in Arizona?

GM: In the Southwest and then, eventually, back in Iowa City.

CAC: Although you'd never been an active worker in the fields yourself?

GM: No, I've never been an active worker but at some point during all this time, in the early 1970s, I suddenly realized that it was really working people, that in large part, made the world go 'round. I had grown up in a small town where there weren't many factories and it was somewhat of a revelation to me—although, it probably shouldn't have been—that everything that I had ever touched used, smelled, eaten, in my life had also touched some working person's hands and would not exist if it hadn't been for the labor of other people.

CAC: Sure. Well, the Southwest, that meant Hispanic, Mexican-Americans, Chicanos, whatever.

GM: Right. That's right. So, that was my first introduction to the labor movement. I was highly inspired by the organizing effort of the United Farm Workers Movement.

CAC: Did Cesar Chavez come over that far into Arizona?

GM: I don't know. I think that he was mainly based in California but certainly had an impact and, also I think, had an impact on the Farm Workers Movement in the Midwest, in Minnesota, in Illinois.

CAC: Sure.

GM: I don't know whether there were Farm Workers in Iowa but there was certainly a support movement among students there. The lettuce boycott and grape boycott was a big thing. I can remember picketing in front of, I think it was, Hamburg Inn in Iowa City that was still using the wrong kind of lettuce on their salads and on their Hamburgers . . .

CAC: [laughter]

GM: . . . and in front of a couple of bars that were still serving Gallo wine, I think, was the focus.

CAC: Oh, yes. It's not only nonunion wine, it's bad wine.

GM: Yes, that's right.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: Actually, they do a little better these days, I think, than they did back then.

CAC: Yes.

GM: So, I was probably more of a social activist in the early 1970s than I was a student. I met my husband through the Farm Workers support group, married, moved to Chicago. He was involved with the United Auto Workers and that was another early connection for me to the labor movement. He worked in an auto assembly plant in south Chicago. We had our first child in 1977 and decided that Chicago was not the place that we wanted to raise kids. We liked being there but we didn't want to raise our kids there and learned that there was a Ford assembly plant in St. Paul, Minnesota; so, we decided to move here. I went to work at Honeywell, which was one of the better paying jobs at that time in the [Twin] Cities.

CAC: This was after the Vietnam?

GM: That's right. This was in 1977.

CAC: Were they still making anti-personnel bombs?

GM: Well, they were and actually I worked in the land mine division . . .

CAC: Ohhh, sister.

GM: . . . which was really an interesting experience.

CAC: Yes, say a bit about that . . . because Minnesota students were part of that Honeywell . . .

GM: That's right, the Honeywell project. I, in fact, knew Marv Davidoff, personally.

CAC: I've interviewed him.

GM: I had been active in the anti-apartheid movement on campus but it wasn't a contradiction for me, somehow. I worked with a really wonderful group of people at Honeywell and we used to joke about these dysfunctional land mines that we were probably producing. I mean, there wasn't an aura of patriotism or very much even dedication to the product. People came to work, did their jobs—not necessarily very carefully—and went home.

CAC: Well, we all learn to compartmentalize our lives, don't we, in one way or another?

GM: That's right. There was sort of some sense about what we were producing there but it was interesting to me that nobody was very committed to the product . . .

CAC: It is.

GM: . . . and consciously so.

CAC: It's known as evasion.

GM: Yes, yes, that's right. What was interesting about that experience was the difference at Honeywell between the areas that were under government contract and the areas that were not. The working conditions were like night and day for the workers.

CAC: And which was night?

GM: Well, in the government contract areas of the company, it was very clean. The working conditions were good. The cafeterias were clean—in fact, we had cafeterias. There wasn't the intense supervision.

CAC: And the basic wage was better?

GM: No, the wage was similar.

CAC: So, it's the conditions?

GM: It was the working conditions.

CAC: All right.

GM: There seemed to be more respect in the workplace. The factory sparkled. There was light. The bathrooms were clean. The hallways had fish tanks and plants.

CAC: God! that's interesting.

GM: When the government contract came to a close, I was laid off; and then, I was recalled to the downtown plant, which was housed in the old Ford assembly plant, the original Minneapolis Ford assembly plant, eleven stories tall with a big, huge elevator that went up and down. That used to be the elevator . . . They would start on the top floor, and then they would bring the car down to the next floor, and by the time it was at the bottom, it would be completed. Well, we worked in this factory, and it was very dirty, and bad lighting, and the bathrooms were not very clean, and there was a lot of bad stuff that was being breathed by the people that worked there.

CAC: Was there a union?

GM: Yes, the same union . . .

CAC: Same union for both?

GM: . . . across . . . the teamsters. Again there, not a lot of, I would say, care in terms of the product but the difference between the two places was stark for me. I was eventually laid off from that job as well.

CAC: That's an observation, I'm sure, that people who worked there would know but it wouldn't be available generally to the public.

GM: Right. Yes, absolutely. People have been surprised when I told them this.

CAC: Yes, that's an engaging story.

GM: I had the experience there also . . . I have a small fracture in my pinkie on my right hand. I was working with a needle nosed pliers putting together circuit boards and, eventually, I couldn't do it anymore because of the way you had to hold the pliers and work. I went to the union. I was taken off that job but the job that I was put on was known as a punishment job in which I worked all day with fiberglass tubing.

CAC: Oh, my!

GM: Because of that punishment job, I was praying to get laid off. [laughter] Eventually, I was and went to work at the University of Minnesota.

CAC: Now, why did you come to the university then to seek employment.

GM: I came to the university because I had been laid off two times at Honeywell, and I was looking for job security, and I think I was also looking for sort of a sense of security. The university, because I'd spent my whole life around universities, seemed like home, in a way. I also had left my education off somewhere back in the early 1970s and had an interest in picking back up on that, at least on a part time basis.

CAC: So, you had some undergraduate work in Arizona?

GM: Right, Arizona, and Berkeley, and at the University of Iowa.

CAC: I see.

GM: I had kind of kept my education going to some degree.

CAC: All right.

GM: I figured that I could work and also pick back up on school at the university. [sigh] I was hired into an entry level position. It was an office assistant in the files department. It was a position that later became a student position. It was incredibly boring. They would call for files from the admissions area, and we would go and retrieve them out of the files in the back of this large office, and we would put them in pneumatic tubes, and sign them out, and send them over to the admissions.

CAC: This is 1980 and still being hand worked? I mean, it's not computerized yet?

GM: That's right, not computerized.

CAC: Okay.

GM: Huge, massive paper files.

CAC: You're still just twenty-nine years old if I subtract correctly?

GM: That's right. I had my thirtieth birthday in the files department of the University of Minnesota.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: I had two kids by now, Abbie and Kevin. So, I went to work and very quickly became involved in an organization called Concerned University Employees, which was an organization of clerical workers, professional workers, technical workers, supervisors . . .

CAC: From all over the university?

GM: From across the university.

CAC: From Agriculture, Health, and Arts, and . . . ?



GM: Right, even the hospital. It was a group of about . . . there was probably a core of about fifty very active people and then a network of maybe 300 or 400 more. It was an organization of people who wanted more of a voice for civil service workers. It was an organization that met monthly, had had rallies, had done petitioning, had built up sort of a newsletter structure, went to regents' meetings, went to civil service committee meetings. It was very active and had tried to impact the university through all of the sort of proper channels that existed at that time.

CAC: I'm going to interrupt. What kinds of issues? What range of issues?

GM: Everything from sort of general respect issues to salary . . . was also a key issue.

CAC: And what in between?

GM: In between . . . I think that there was sort of a general sense at that time that people were beginning to do more work and that there was a leveling off of respect for civil service workers within this institution, that it was difficult to move within the institution, it was difficult to promote, it was harder to get away to take classes, that there was a lot of favoritism, that there was unfairness that went along with that favoritism, that some people were promoted easily, that some people got to go to meetings and classes, that you could hire in to a job and have that job re-organized out from under you. These were things that were starting to kind of creep into the workplace in the early 1980s.

CAC: Okay, the early 1980s. Do you have a sense that the 1980s then represented a decline in all of the issues you're talking about now, that there were better conditions and more respect in the 1960s and 1970s?

GM: Yes.

CAC: As a young person, how do you account for that, you and your colleagues as you observed that?

GM: I think that there were a number of things happening. There had been organizing in the 1970s at the university; the grounds workers, the food service workers, the hospital workers had organized successfully. Our union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and the teamsters both had been successful at organizing groups of workers at the university.

CAC: But only small groups, not the whole university?

GM: Well, the teamsters had organized and we had organized across the university in terms of the grounds workers, food service. At the same time that that was going on, there was also the social ferment at the University of Minnesota, the women's movement, the anti-war movement, the development of the minority programs.

CAC: Excuse me. Those made, in the 1970s, the climate more generous or more hospitable to civil service workers, those allied movements?

GM: I think that it had an impact on the expectation of civil service workers as to issues of respect and fairness. There was more dignity in being part of a social movement, I think, as we moved from the mid 1960s into the mid 1970s. There was more legitimacy for people who wanted to stand up and say, "Hey! I want to be recognized." Collective action, I think, was more legitimate by then. So, you had that going on and, then at the same time, you had the beginning of a decline in terms of the economy in this country.

CAC: Oh, you bet. It sets in early in the 1970s.

GM: Post Vietnam.

CAC: You get the inflation of the late 1970s.

GM: That's right and you begin to see a reluctance to put the same amount of money into higher education and education generally and you begin to see budget cuts; and the staff at this institution is very aware that the brunt of the budget cuts are falling on them, even in the early 1980s. The biggest thing that happened in the early 1980s was that suddenly university workers were not being treated like their counterparts at the state. State workers had been organized for a decade. There was a huge growth in the organization of state workers in 1981. There was a law change for public sector workers. There were bargaining units established in 1981.

CAC: But not for the university?

GM: At the university as well.

CAC: Okay.

GM: But because there wasn't union organization within those bargaining units already at the university, they remained nonunion.

CAC: How can you have bargaining without a union?

GM: Well, what happened was that there was a law passed that was called The Public Employee Labor Relations Act that established bargaining units for all public employees whether they were unionized or not. What the law said was that if you want to unionize, you must unionize along these bargaining unit lines that we've established. So, the way that that impacted us, as workers at the "U", was that we had the civil service workers organization where we just considered ourselves all workers across the university. Suddenly, people were telling us, "You're compartmentalized, don't you know that?" [laughter] "You have to organize as clerical workers, as technical workers . . ."

CAC: Ohhh, I see.

GM: . . . as professional workers across the university, statewide. That was news to us.

CAC: So, it's craft or trade but it's across all the colleges of the university?

GM: It's across all of the colleges.

CAC: I see. Well, that's engaging.

GM: That was new. The key thing was that the union for state workers, in state agencies, was growing at that time. Because of this law, large numbers of people who were not part of the union previously became part of the union automatically. Those people were then brought in under the contracts that the union had negotiated. There were step increases for state workers. There were annual across the board increases. There was a way for people to move from the bottom of their pay range to the top of their pay range and that had been true at the university, too.

CAC: In the 1970s?

GM: In the 1970s. In the early 1980s . . . I think it was in 1981, the university decided that they were no longer going to do step increases. That was a huge hit for workers at the university.

CAC: They did so on grounds of retrenchment?

GM: Yes. They said, "We don't have enough money to do both steps and an across the board this year."

CAC: I see.

GM: "So, we are only going to put the money into the across the board." From that point forward, until we had actually organized a union for the nonunion workers at the university, the university's administration abandoned the step progression system on salary. That was a big change.

CAC: I'm going to interpose.

GM: Sure.

CAC: You don't mind my interruptions once in awhile?

GM: No, not at all.

CAC: You used lots of words but two jumped out at me because I've heard them from faculty. I've heard them from P and A [Professional and Administrative] folks. I've heard them from deans. The two words are respect and dignity.

GM: Right.

CAC: One doesn't hear these words . . . but my tapes are . . .

GM: Filled with those two words?

CAC: A lot of people talk about that. Can you define this ambiguous but clearly important aspect of respect?

GM: Oh, absolutely.

CAC: All right. Do you have some for instances?

GM: Sure.

CAC: Okay, go ahead.

GM: I'll give you one for instance which I think is a pretty stark example. There's a building on the St. Paul campus and it has a lot of indoor air quality problems; in fact, it's McNeal Hall. Right next door to this building, two summers ago, a new building was constructed and there were lots of fumes were coming into McNeal Hall.

CAC: From the construction?

GM: From the construction and it had bad air quality to begin with. On the, I think it was, second floor, all the way up and down, people had headaches, very, very bad headaches. In fact, we had one person that, the whole time she worked in that area, had migraines and as soon as she left, they stopped. There was a day that was particularly bad and all of the administrators and the faculty left; and as they left, they walked past the clerical staff and said, "I can't take this. I'm leaving. Please, if anybody calls, take a message." That's . . .

CAC: A good example.

GM: . . . the kind of issue that people mean when they say respect.

CAC: Those who have to stay behind know what that is pretty fast.

GM: Right, that's right.

CAC: But respect also in work routine, for example . . . in responsibility and relationship of civil servant to manager? Can you say a bit more about that?

GM: Sure.

CAC: You see, we're really talking about working conditions.

GM: Well, we're talking about working conditions but we're also talking about whether you have a voice in your work life. Another example—this has happened a lot with the budget cuts—a department is told you have to cut a certain amount; so, they begin the process of reorganization. Eventually, this all trickles down to the support staff and the support staff are told, "This is what your job is going to be like going forward." It makes absolutely no sense many, many times to the person who is going to have to go forward with that work. The support staff are professionals in the work that they do, in the work that we do.

CAC: Sure.

GM: We know more than anybody else what it takes to support a program, a particular program, yet nobody is ever asked, when these reorganization decisions are being made, "What do you think it's going to take in terms of support to keep this going? What are the key aspects?" We see somebody five times removed from the work . . .

CAC: Ah, of course.

GM: . . . deciding, well, we want to configure this area so that it has two senior secretaries and an accounts person . . . and currently you have three principal secretaries or three principal secretaries and an executive secretary. Suddenly, they're told, "Either you're going to be laid off or your positions are going to be demoted."

CAC: So, a person occupying that position can be demoted just because of the change in job description?

GM: That's right.

CAC: Okay.

GM: They know full well that in order to keep that program functioning, they're going to have to do probably the same work that they'd always been doing and, yet, they've just been told, "You're going to do it with a demotion," and in many cases with loss of pay as well. Another example is in the way that the university is carved up. A person, in 1981, could have worked for the university for twenty-five, thirty years, have their position be eliminated, move to another department, and been the least senior person in that new department, even though they'd worked for this institution for thirty years. It translates into lots of . . .

CAC: Civil servants are bucked, so to speak, out of their jobs or into lower . . .

GM: Yes, right. If you've given thirty years of your life to an institution, you want those thirty years recognized, no matter where you go within the institution.

CAC: Yes.

GM: What it would mean is that you'd go to a new department, and be the least senior person there, and be vulnerable right away to another lay off even though you'd worked in the institution that long and even though you had a wealth of experience. Students tell us all the time, "We know who it is that can fix something that we need fixed."

CAC: So, does some of the faculty. We know whom to call. [laughter]

GM: Right, faculty tell us, too. Yes. If somebody has worked at the university for twenty years, they know a lot, and they know who to call, and they know how to get things fixed. That isn't recognized within this institution by the people who have the major decision making authority.

CAC: This is the focus of our conversation. Was there a sense in the 1970s and 1980s, just to stick to those periods, that some colleges, or some divisions, or some kinds of work enjoyed larger respect and dignity, more security, more rights than others? Is there a folklore on that, that you're better to work for *this* college?

GM: Sure. In fact, one of the things that the union has done is sort of provide a clearinghouse of information. We get calls all the time now, "I'm thinking of transferring to such and such a place, what do you know about it?"

CAC: I see.

GM: Lots of times we say, "Frying pan into the fire!" [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

GM: "Don't do that." I think that there are two things. One is that, yes, there is an understanding that there are some places where, because of the faculty or because of the kind of program, it's a good place to work, and that's there's actually longevity of service, and that's it's a hard place to probably get into. Then, there's also a sense—and I think this has increased with the budget cuts—that there are certain places that you can work where you're not going to have to worry as much about job security, places that have money. You know, the Carlson School, for instance, is thought of as a fairly secure place to work. You might have the reorganization problems happening. This year they want a secretarial pull and, next year, people get assigned back out to the faculty . . . those kinds of things. There's that sense, too.

CAC: Do you think the primary differential in defining these conditions is the relative affluence of a given division or are there other things operating?

GM: I think there are other things operating, too, but I think more and more that people look to affluence in relation to job security.

CAC: How about these other matters of respect, and how you're treated, and whether you're consulted in changing office routine, and those matters? Can you share with me—in the 1970s or 1980—when you came, what divisions of the university had a better reputation?

GM: Well . . . I'm trying to . . .

CAC: What was a the frying pan and what was a fire?

GM: The production units, which is a term the university has used—Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, Disbursement Services, Personnel—were looked at as places that were more difficult, that people had less of a say in those areas than in academic areas generally. I think that was the sense.

CAC: And that's systemic and if so, how does that happen?

GM: I think it happens because there is more of a sort of factory atmosphere in those places. There's a lot of paper. There is sort of an atmosphere of you have to turn over a lot of paper in a short period of time.

CAC: And establish procedures?

GM: Establish procedures. You see more of people keeping track of how much work they're doing in those areas. We had to fill out time sheets weekly in the files area, for instance, keeping track of what we had worked on. There are, perhaps, more deadlines, or different kinds of deadlines in those areas. There are greater quantities of the same kind of work, more repetition, those kinds of things. You don't establish the kind of working relationship that you do when you're a support staff for one or two faculty members, for instance, where you have some sense—in a good working relationship—that you're working as a team to accomplish something. In those departments, the big production departments, you didn't have that.

CAC: In the latter instance—I'm guessing . . . I was chair for awhile and I did other things—it depends upon who the executive officer is from there and there's a high turnover of those folks?

GM: Right.

CAC: Three and three, and sometimes it's just three years, and then it's somebody else, and somebody else.

GM: Right. So, what that created in the best of times and in the best of circumstances, I think, for the executive secretary, for instance, who worked through several department chairs, was sort of a sense that that person was the glue, holding things together, the continuity. They kept the department going. In recent years, I would say that I've seen situations where it's become very difficult for the secretary in that situation if you get somebody in who doesn't respect that continuity at all and boom! wants to make a huge number of changes without any consultation. Then, you really come up against that respect and dignity issue because this person has a huge emotional investment in what they've built up over years and through many department chairs. Suddenly, you get somebody who is saying, "It's not going to be that way anymore and I'm don't care what you think."

CAC: I'm going to ask another leading question . . . you don't mind leading questions?

GM: No, I don't.

CAC: You can say, "No, you've got it all wrong!"

GM: Sure.

CAC: I'm just imagining on the other hand that in the latter systems you describe—in a small support staff in a departmental setting, for example, there may be twenty faculty, the chairman, an assistant chair, so on and so forth—that those support staff persons are more isolated. They don't see their fellow civil servant workers to the same degree as if you're working in a large office, or in files, or in registration, or what have you? That's a question.

GM: That's true depending on where you work.

CAC: Okay.

GM: That is absolutely true in the Medical School and in the whole Health Sciences area.

CAC: You mean that they're isolated?

GM: They're isolated. We go into Mayo and it's a confusing building to begin with . . .

CAC: It's awful, yes.

GM: . . . with all of those wings. You never know where you are.

CAC: I'm glad you can't figure it out. I can't either.



GM: Right. We will talk to a secretary in one wing and ask for directions and she or he will not be able to give you directions to the other side of that building. It's true. People don't know their co-worker down the hall. One of the wonderful things about the union has been that we've started to break down that isolation—it was a goal of our organizing—but it's a very difficult thing to do. In some of the smaller academic units . . . you go to Appleby General College, everybody knows everybody in that building and there's more a sense of community; so, it kind of depends on where you are. Yes, you get into the big, huge, gaping, black hole of the Medical School and you find a lot of isolation.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: The subject of our conversation at the moment—it is developing into a very interesting account—deals with different work sites, and different managerial expectations, and strategies, and so forth.

GM: Right.

CAC: So, we really are a big sprawling institution.

GM: Absolutely.

CAC: Yes! And things differ from one place to another. I'm going to pick this up by asking another leading question. Are the grievances deeper in some areas than in the 1980s when the union begins to think of organizing?

GM: They are. They absolutely are.

CAC: You speak of this informal group of Concerned University Employees. How long does that group last by that name?

GM: It lasted for about four years.

CAC: You were co-chair of that group?

GM: I was co-chair along with a woman named Paula Moyer, who worked in the College of Liberal Arts.

CAC: In what capacity, do you know?

GM: She was a secretary.

CAC: You mean in the central administration of the Arts College?

GM: No, she worked . . . actually, I can't remember. There was another woman who still works there by the name of Judy Burton, who was also instrumental in Concerned University Employees and Judy has worked in the Honors Division . . .

CAC: Oh, yes, of course. I've worked with Judy.

GM: . . . in the College of Liberal Arts for years. I think the grievances have deepened but I want to talk about the organizing effort.

CAC: Please, do . . . which grows out of this concerned group?

GM: It grows out of Concerned University Employees.

CAC: Okay.

GM: What happened was that that was a group that had tried everything to obtain a voice within this institution; and we, finally, felt that we had been listened to, sometimes for hours, but we had never been heard. I think Paula, actually, walked in one day and said, "We should think about organizing a union." For some of us, that was a natural.

CAC: Because you brought to it your other experience?

GM: Right, that's right. For other people, it was a somewhat scary proposition. Paula had been talking to the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and her proposal was just to begin organizing with that group. I said, "Let's take some time, and let's interview a number of unions, and through that process figure out what we think a union is about, form our own sort of sense of what we want." So, in the best traditions of universities, we formed a search committee.

CAC: [sound of clapping] [laughter]

GM: I chaired that search committee and we talked to four unions.

CAC: Heavens.

GM: We talked to AFSCME. We talked to the teamsters because they already had an organization . . .

CAC: On campus?

GM: . . . on campus.

CAC: With what . . .

GM: With the grounds workers . . .

CAC: Grounds and custodial?

GM: . . .custodial and food service.

CAC: And they had a contract?

GM: They did, as did AFSCME and the hospital.

CAC: All right.

GM: And the two unions had been, literally, at war for a number of years here. That's a whole other story and we can talk about it later if you want to but it's not terribly important.

CAC: Okay.

GM: We also talked to the Service Employees International Union, which had just set up a new organizing division called Nine to Five. They had affiliated a national organization called Working Women - Nine to Five, which was an office workers organization.

CAC: Ahhh.

GM: I don't know if you remember the movie?

CAC: Yes.

GM: That was sort of a spinoff of all of that.

CAC: Except here, it's Eight to Four-thirty. [laughter]

GM: That's right, here at the "U". [laughter] Yes. Nine . . . I don't know anybody who comes in a nine, unless it's nine o'clock at night. Then, we also talked to a small organization in Minnesota called the Minnesota School Employees Association.

CAC: You and your cohorts had to do this off hour . . . evening, weekends?

GM: That's right. Weekends, after work. We had meetings with the officers and organizers of these unions. We held brown bag lunches at the university and invited our coworkers to come and listen and ask questions. We did a lot of research, contracts, constitutions, interviewing members of the unions. We did way too much. Then, we put it altogether.

CAC: Well, that would be typically university, academic, too.

GM: That's right. [laughter] We put it all together in a report and we recommended that we work with AFSCME. There were a number of reasons for that. They were the largest public employees' union in the state of Minnesota and nationally. They represented workers at universities. They had an incredible track record at the legislature here in Minnesota. They already represented University of Minnesota workers.

CAC: In the Health Sciences?

GM: Yes, in the hospital.

CAC: Yes, yes, the hospital.

GM: They also seemed to us to be a union that would allow us to do something that was meaningful to us here, that they weren't going to make us be a blueprint of what somebody else thought should happen here.

CAC: Now, partly this is structural but partly also, it must be the leadership of AFSCME? Were there individuals who really were appreciative and sensitive to the things you're talking about?

GM: I think so. There were. There were a couple of people that seemed that way to us. The kinds of things that they talked about were impressive to us. We had a vote, internal to Concerned University Employees.

CAC: Was it an official vote?

GM: It was an official vote—it wasn't recognized by any body outside of our own organization.

CAC: Who administered the vote then?

GM: We actually set up an external body of people that was headed by a recognized clergy person. I even can't remember his name at this point.

CAC: A clergy who had had experience with unions?

GM: Well, at least was recognized as somebody who was ethical.

CAC: But there is no legal structure? This isn't NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] or ...

GM: No, it's just that we didn't want to count our own ballots and conduct our own vote.

CAC: I see; so, you turned to the clergy. That's a nice . . .

GM: This was strictly an issue of which union are we going to work with.

CAC: Yes, I see.

GM: It wasn't a vote as to whether we would be unionized or not. It was just, Who are we going to do this organizing project with? The vote was overwhelmingly in agreement with the recommendation.

CAC: By what numbers? How many people participated? [unclear] voluntary?

GM: I think that there were about 300 people that voted.

CAC: Out of a universe of how many?

GM: This was for the clerical unit now because we, at this point, had been told we were a bargaining unit. [laughter]

CAC: How many employees?

GM: There were at that time, I believe 3,000 clerical workers.

CAC: So, it was about 10 percent?

GM: Ten percent made this decision, sort of the most active group.

CAC: Sure.

GM: We, then, proceeded into an organizing drive with the union.

CAC: And you're still working full time in files?

GM: I was still working full time in files, that's right. And Paula and Judy and others were all still working. Now, the first thing that the union attempted to do was to take three of us off on a union leave and they were successful. The College of Liberal Arts agreed to . . .

CAC: Even though there was no contract?

GM: Right . . . agreed to let Judy and Paul off on a six month leave.

CAC: How interesting.

GM: Admissions said, "No."

CAC: [laughter]

GM: So, this goes back to that academic versus production department.

CAC: Right.

GM: We filed a grievance, and we didn't prevail on the grievance, and decided—and I think rightly—that we would not try to arbitrate because by the time we would have been through the arbitration process, it would have been a moot point anyway. So, I stayed in the workplace and I'm—in hindsight—very, very happy that the university refused to let me go. [laughter] Because I think that I learned a tremendous amount more being in the workplace during that first organizing effort than I would have . . .

CAC: Would it give you more credibility?

GM: It gave me more insight into what it was like, number one, to try to organize while working. I had my ear to the ground. I knew what people were thinking. It gave me more of a sense of what the campaign felt like to people sort of on the receiving end, you know, the union's campaign. All of that was really valuable later on as I tried to figure out why that first effort was such a dismal failure. What we didn't ask the unions about—because we just figured they would know . . . when we did that search process—was, How are you going to organize? That was probably the most important question that we might have asked. I believe that the union really didn't know very much about organizing at that point.

CAC: In this kind of a setting?

GM: Well, maybe in any kind of setting, I don't know. At that point in time, in the early 1980s, most unions looked at organizing as just simply winning a union election . . . period. The way that's set up is that you have six months to collect authorization cards in a workplace to show that 30 percent of the work force is interested in having an election.

CAC: But you had only 10 percent; so, you had to build from that?

GM: So, we had to build from that. That's right. The unions typically, in the early 1980s, would file for an election with 30 percent cards; and they would try to collect those as fast as possible and they would say things to workers like, "You don't really have to believe in the union to sign this card. It's just for a democratic vote." So, the expectation was, you could sign the card and vote "No," which I don't think is a very good way to organize.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: The other thing that the union did was to do lots of mailings. They did TV and radio ads. They did some pretty glossy looking stuff and they made a decision to mail our newsletter rather than hand distributing it, which is what we had done previous to the campaign. We had built up this little network of people that handed out the newsletter in their buildings. We didn't even get to an election; we didn't get the 30 percent cards in the six months, and the union then walked away from the organizing effort.

CAC: I have to ask a question. You didn't get the 30 percent in part because the process was not appropriate for the setting?

GM: Right.

CAC: And (b) because there was still a residual resistance to the idea of unionization among your fellow workers or not?

GM: Oh, sure. I think that exists everywhere, especially, you know with the bad rap that unions have and have had for . . .

CAC: Within the academic setting or with any setting?

GM: Everywhere. Everywhere.

CAC: But I've got to ask you, Is it different within the academic setting?

GM: I think that it may be. I'm not sure to tell you the truth. I think that there are certainly differences. When I talk about the second organizing drive, it might become clearer.

CAC: Okay.

GM: For instance, I don't know whether you know Mary Ann Beneke who is a thirty-five year employee in the College of Liberal Arts? She was not in favor of the union in 1981. She is on the Council Executive Board now of AFSCME. She is chair of the current clerical organizing committee and from day one of the campaign in 1989, has been one of *the* most active people in our union. I think, that she could talk to you about what the difference was from her perspective, a long term employee.

CAC: I'm just going to interpose one thing here to let you know why I'm asking this question. You know there was a move, somewhat at the same time, for the faculty union.

GM: Right.

CAC: The resistance of faculty to any notion of union . . . we're professional persons, you see. I didn't know how much that atmosphere kind of soaks around. I don't know.

GM: I think it's there. We sort of proceed now from two notions. One, that nobody is born pro-union except for one person I know and it's not me but he swears he was born pro-union; so, that's okay.

CAC: We used to call them red-diaper kids, right?

GM: [laughter] And second, that you can't treat people as though they're anti-union and will be forever, that people change, and that it's a process, and that there's been a lot of work in this country—and the unions aren't completely blameless in this—to make unions bad in people's eyes. We'll never know if we had conducted a different organizing campaign in the early 1980s whether we would have prevailed.

CAC: Fair enough.

GM: I tend to think we might have. I think that resources and time are the precious commodities in organizing . . . and respect for the people that you're organizing. What I learned in that first campaign is that you can't organize 3,000 people across a huge monstrosity like this in six months—not if you want to build an organization, which was my goal. The election is an important day in the life of the organization but the organization is more important than the election. That's my view of it.

CAC: So, your first election was in . . . ?

GM: In 1991.

CAC: That late? That was your first election?

GM: Yes.

CAC: That's the one you lost?

GM: And we won.

CAC: No, I'm sorry . . .

GM: We didn't have an election. We never got there.

CAC: That's right, you didn't get the 30 percent.

GM: And the union walked away.

CAC: So, then you had to start from . . . that's what I was going to ask then. When you didn't get certified to have an election, that's a pretty big let down?



GM: It was. It was very hard on the active people. We continued to do some work around pay equity issues, comparable worth issues, which were big in the early 1980s. A couple of people made their way onto the Civil Service Committee; so, people tried to find ways to continue to be active. I left in 1985, made a decision to go back to school. It was a very, very hard decision to leave but the union didn't seem to be of a mind at that point to organize. I had maintained contact; in fact, I maintained contact all the way through to 1989 with the union, talking to them about, this is doable and it should be done. Yes, it was very devastating for us.

CAC: I have to interrupt you again. Okay? [laughter]

GM: Yes. Go ahead.

CAC: You've named three persons, all of them are women. What would be the gender distribution of persons who are really interested in this Concerned University Employees? Were they 98 percent women?

GM: Mostly women. I would say that there were more men involved in Concerned University Employees disproportionate to the workplace.

CAC: I see.

GM: The clerical unit, for instance, is 93 percent female in 1989. It was probably more like 96 percent in 1981.

CAC: In the meantime, the men who were in grounds and custodial work . . . there, there are a number of men . . .

GM: Yes.

CAC: . . . men would predominate; although, our custodian here for a long time was a woman.

GM: Yes, there are both women and men but predominately men. That was one of the reasons that we didn't go with the teamsters among others.

CAC: I've got to ask you another leading question and that is, the women's movement is really barreling along in the 1980s; and we get Women's Studies, then we get a Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, and then we get more women on faculty. Is there any correspondence to these women? Do they provide sympathy? Do they provide any kind of support, that is the faculty, academic folks?

GM: No, not in any measurable way.

CAC: When you go back to school, you take Women's Studies and what was the other?

GM: Legal Studies. I'll tell you, I think that the women's movement had a measurable impact on clerical workers at the university.

CAC: In what way?

GM: Raising those issues of dignity, and respect, and what we do with our lives is important and should be worthy of praise, and all kinds of other things.

CAC: But that's an environment. That isn't specific one on one.

GM: No, we didn't get one on one measurable encouragement, support, etcetera.

CAC: But you know that that climate is out there? You're learning; so there is a feminist impulse in forming this?

GM: Yes, yes. I'll tell you a story from Harvard University, where our sister local exists, and that goes to this issue. When they started organizing there, they started with an organization that bridged faculty and support staff. The faculty women said to the support staff women, "We should focus our efforts on salary increases for the female faculty first and then when we get ours, it will trickle down to you."

CAC: That doesn't surprise me but that's interesting.

GM: The union leaders out there say that they learned about the trickle down theory way before [President Ronald] Reagan ever started talking about it. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

GM: That's sort of been the general experience between faculty women and support staff with some exceptions.

CAC: You would have found middle managers throughout this sprawling institution, some of whom would be sympathetic to organization and some who would be indifferent?

GM: Yes.

CAC: And, perhaps, a few who were hostile?

GM: Right. In fact, in Concerned University Employees, we had supervisors. They were our co-workers, front line supervisors who have, a lot of them, terrible jobs within this institution because of what they have to do.

CAC: I don't need to tell you—again, I'm coming back to conditions, the general environment, the work environment—that there is an enormous chasm between faculty—it isn't one of hostility—and support staff . . .

GM: That's right.

CAC: . . . unless it's in the laboratory of a laboratory assistant, then the working is pretty close.

GM: When we make a conscious effort to bridge that . . .

CAC: You see, most of my colleagues would have no idea about this story you're telling.

GM: Yes, absolutely and most people, even social activists, community activists from outside the "U", have no idea what it's like to work within this institution. They have a view that it must be an absolutely wonderful, wonderful place to work and that's why most people come here to work, too—and sometimes it can be. [laughter] The other thing that I learned though about the first organizing effort was that every time we did something that brought people face to face, workers, it strengthened us and it strengthened what we were doing whether it was phone banking, or whether it was a committee meeting, or the newsletter. It wasn't lost on me that we lost organization went we went to mailing that newsletter instead of handing it out.

CAC: That's interesting.

GM: The idea was we'd reach more people but what I learned is that paper does not organize anybody . . . period. It doesn't. That was difficult for me to come to because I had learned a lot of my, sort of, world view out of books.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: It was kind of nicely complemented through experience but . . .

CAC: Do you have any idea how much paperwork drifts down on middle management, that is, I'm thinking of department chairs?

GM: Yes, that's right.

CAC: And it's filed in the wastepaper basket.

GM: Oh, yes.

CAC: We don't know what the hell these things mean.

GM: People don't read really except what they really want to read—and I think that's okay.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: In 1989, when I came back on staff as the chief organizer . . .

CAC: I'm going to stop you again.

GM: Do you want to go back?

CAC: Please, forgive me. I want to know something about your student experience then. You take two years out to get your . . .

GM: I took two years out, right.

CAC: Yes, what was that experience?

GM: Well, it was a very interesting experience. I was trying to draw as much as I could in terms of credit from my previous experiences at the University of Arizona, and Berkeley, and Iowa and found that university college was the place that was going to allow me to do that. They were going to allow me to put together a degree that was meaningful and made sense to me, too, which is where the Women's Studies and Legal Studies came from and that they would also allow me to take classes, for instance, at Inver Hills Community College. Some of the Legal Studies classes, I ended up taking there and they were very good. The Women's Studies experience was really interesting. I had a very difficult time in the Women's Studies program here. I learned a lot. I appreciated the people that were around me. I appreciated what the faculty were doing. I had a very difficult time with what I can only describe as a certain amount of classism. I took a class that was aimed at looking at working women's lives and most of the reading material, with the exception of a work by Tillie Olson . . .

CAC: Oh, sure.

GM: . . . was from people who were sort of looking in on the lives of working people and it was oh, the drudgery, oh, the pain, oh, how awful. I'd read the stuff and I'd just feel like, where is the spirit that I know about? Where is the intelligence, and the strength, and the laughter along with what's being described here? It was very difficult for me to spend time in a class that . . .

CAC: I can't imagine that you didn't speak up.

GM: Oh, I did! I absolutely did and the P-9 strike was going on during this, too, so I was constantly saying in this class . . .

CAC: Now, the P-9 is the Hormel strike?

GM: Yes, the Hormel strike. I was constantly saying, "Well, you know, I was just down in Austin, Minnesota, and the women met at the strike headquarters before sunrise and in the freezing cold. We marched over to corporate headquarters, and lined our bodies in front of the gate, and we sang the whole time . . . you know, trying to infuse the class.

CAC: But the other students would listen?

GM: They would listen. It was mainly the curriculum, it wasn't the students as much as what we were studying.

CAC: Yes, or the faculty because most of the faculty would have been union left and their liberal left and political . . .

GM: That's what was so disappointing to me . . .

CAC: Yes, I understand.

GM: . . . is that these women were kind of missing the boat even though that's who they were. Actually, at the end of that particular class, the faculty member did thank me for bringing that element into the class and reminding everybody that there was something out there.

CAC: We had a dissertation in History last year by a graduate student, female [Jodi Vandenberg-Daves], who was of working class background, who did her dissertation on the history of women at the University of Minnesota from working class background as students.

GM: Ah.

CAC: I think it was 1950 to 1975.

GM: Oh, I'd love to see that.

CAC: I'm not even sure it's filed . . . it *just* was done this late summer.

GM: That's wonderful.

CAC: Well, we should read it, right.

GM: That expressed itself in other classes that I took in the program but at the same time, I think that the Women's Studies experience was also one that was confidence building for me—I guess. Even though I was having a difficult time with some of what I was hearing and studying, the atmosphere was one that was good to be in, I guess.

CAC: Good.

GM: I finished my degree in 1987.

CAC: I have to ask a provincial question.

GM: Yes.

CAC: Did you take any history?

GM: No, I guess I didn't except what would have been Women's Studies history.

CAC: Did you work with P-9 with the professor of history from . . .

GM: Peter Rachleff?

CAC: Yes.

GM: He's a good friend of mine, yes.

CAC: He's a remarkable scholar.

GM: Yes.

CAC: And almost sui generis . . . there aren't many of us like him.

GM: Yes, he is. He has a tremendous amount of respect in the labor community because he has been, I guess, in the trenches, is the best way to put it.

CAC: Oh, you bet. He's been able to maintain the respect of his fellow scholars and it doesn't come easy there, you know.

GM: Right.

CAC: Go ahead with your story. Where were we? [laughter]

GM: What was I saying? Oh! so I finished my degree in 1987 and got a divorce the same year. [laughter] So, this was a period from 1985 to 1987 of pretty big transition.

CAC: Were the two events related?

GM: I think so. I think that everything that happened, the failed organizing drive, leaving the university, going into that sort of intense academic experience, the P-9 strike and my relationship to that, which was kind of bringing me back out of my home, where I'd been buried.

CAC: But you're still parenting? You still have two kids?

GM: I'm parenting, that's right.

CAC: How old are the kids by this time?

GM: Well, my daughter was born in 1977; so, six/eight to eight/ten during this period. My ex had been working seven days a week for a long time. I was working days. He was working nights; so that didn't help us any either.

CAC: Oh, boy, to juggle all those things . . . I think of my middle daughter and the juggling that has to go on.

GM: Yes, it was incredible. I had then, it must have been 1987, gone to work as a secretary for the Grain Millers International Union, which was quite an experience, too. The two people that I worked for were wonderful, energetic people who were setting up a Health and Safety Department, which was really needed in that industry badly.

CAC: Oh, I'll bet.

GM: The international officers were a story in and of themselves in that union. [laughter] I experienced sexual harassment in that office.

CAC: You had not at the university?

GM: No. No, I hadn't. I had at Honeywell.

CAC: Did you have mostly female managers in files?

GM: To the person.

CAC: Well, that maybe explains it.

GM: Other kinds of harassment but not sexual harassment.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: I eventually ended up working at the State of Minnesota and I had decided that I wanted to be back in a union environment. I knew that AFSCME represented state workers; so, I

worked very hard to land the job there. All this period of time between 1985 and 1987, I had maintained contact with the union and every time I'd run into somebody who had been connected, you know, to the organizing here, I say, "Whenever you're ready, I am. Let's do this thing." Finally, in the spring of 1989, the union started receiving calls from workers at the university.

CAC: Just spontaneous because this Concerned Employees group is . . .

GM: Spontaneous . . . different people . . . a completely different set of people. There was a group of people that had done a comparison, and this is almost a decade now since the university has done away with its progression system in salary and had also ceased to give the nonunion people the equivalent of across the boards that had been negotiated by state workers, which had been the pattern prior to the 1980s. The union workers at the "U" were receiving what the state workers had negotiated; so, people were starting, in the late 1980s, to see that their salaries were falling significantly behind unionized, public employees, state workers. Workers at the "U", we know that we're university workers but we also consider ourselves to be State of Minnesota workers.

CAC: Sure. The state health system would be the same.

GM: Right, right. Everything is the same, the retirement system . . .

CAC: I'm sorry to do this. Does it make any difference, for example, who is vice-president for finance in the university? Do you have any sense of whether Morrill Hall, Central Administration, makes a difference in the work, attitude, systems, and conditions?

GM: It hasn't seemed to make a huge difference to me.

CAC: Where does the difference exist, at the divisional level, or whatever would be the appropriate term?

GM: At the collegiate level, there might be some difference. At the departmental level, certainly there can be a difference.

CAC: You felt when you were doing this organizing—we'll get to that immediately—that there was no position of Central Administration that would be helpful or create a certain environment in which things were possible or not possible?

GM: Unfortunately not. No. We didn't find that.

CAC: So, you had no direct contact with what we call the faculty of Morrill Hall, meaning Central Administration?

GM: We did have contact but it didn't get us anywhere.



CAC: You could wait on people and they would listen but not hear, as you said earlier.

GM: Right. Exactly.

CAC: All right.

GM: We felt, finally, unless we represented ourselves in a way that somebody had to hear us legally that we wouldn't get anywhere and even with that it's been a tremendous struggle. There were articles in the spring of 1989 and into the summer that began to appear in the *Daily* showing comparisons between similar classes, University of Minnesota and State of Minnesota, and showing that university workers were in some cases 46 percent behind their counterparts at the state in a decade.

CAC: Ooof!

GM: So, I think that that effort inspired the phone calls to the union and I, finally, got a call in the summer of 1989 . . .

CAC: Who inspired these articles in the *Minnesota Daily*?

GM: Workers at the "U".

CAC: So, they went to the *Daily* and said, "This is a story [unclear]."

GM: They actually did them as opinion pieces.

CAC: Okay, thank you.

GM: Yes. That information, of course, spread like wildfire through the university—even without E-Mail. [laughter] I got a call in the summer from the union saying that they were putting together a budget to the international union and a request for funds to do organizing. Then in August, I was hired. The idea was that we were going to organize all of the University of Minnesota Civil Service, across bargaining units, about 8,000 people total.

CAC: Not including those workers who already had a teamsters' contract?

GM: No. No, not including those. Anybody who already had a union, we considered [unclear].

CAC: Okay.

GM: I agreed to do the campaign with two conditions. One, that we would do person to person organizing, that we would set out to meet, literally, every single person that worked at the "U" and get to know them and that that would be our model for organizing. Secondly, that the union

would have to open up an office on campus or near campus. There was ready agreement on the first issue, person to person organizing. The area director for the union, Evelyn Mix, really understood that. Then, there was fairly quick agreement about having an office on campus.

CAC: But you'd have to negotiate that with the university? To get space here is not easy.

GM: What I wanted was Dinkytown, [unclear] Village . . . here.

CAC: Oh, I see, close to campus. Does your union have office space on campus now, I mean really on campus?

GM: That's a whole story?

CAC: I don't want to interrupt. Let us come back.

GM: In the hospital we do. At UM-D, we do. We have space in the U-Tech Building in Dinkytown. No, not in the way I'd like to see it.

CAC: I didn't want to break the story. You see, I was looking you up. I can't find you in the staff directory.

GM: We're not in there. We're only the largest organization at the university . . .

CAC: It wasn't there! [laughter]

GM: It's because we're still viewed by Central Administration as a third party, as outside, as an outside agency, and we're not. The organizing effort began and I think that probably key to the union's making the decision to come back and try this again were the calls from workers but also Harvard workers had just been successful in organizing and had affiliated with AFSCME. A few years previous to that the Yale workers had organized and within the union . . .

CAC: But that's a long ways away and those are private universities, I can't image that there's a correspondence.

GM: Oh! there is. There is.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: I was baiting you with Harvard and Yale because I know that those places are not like Midwest Minnesota.

GM: For workers, they are.

CAC: All right.

GM: I've heard the story of the organizing at Yale and have talked to members of the union there and the union leadership and it's like listening to our story here when you hear it.

CAC: Fair enough.

GM: I, in the fall of 1989, went out to visit the organization at Harvard and I've spent a lot of time out there.

CAC: I see.

GM: The only real difference that I noticed was that in one of the program offices, I think it was the International Center, all of the workers in that building—they just built this new, very beautiful building, or refurbished it—were drinking out of the same china teacups, coffee cups with saucers.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: They were beautiful and I said, "Now, this we would never find at the University of Minnesota.

CAC: That's real elitism. Here we've got mugs.

GM: Yes, we've got our mugs here and they have slogans on them. Except for that, it has been remarkable how similar the issues are. There's the isolation. There's the trying to organize across a massive institution. There's the rich and the poor. There's the decentralization of decision making. There are the different cultures, the Medical School, the Law School. They even had Holyoke, which was like our 1919 university which is no longer . . . very, very similar.

CAC: Ahhh.

GM: The things that people talked about, the workers talked about, were similar. They wanted progression increases. They wanted respect and dignity. The stories were the same. When I met the union members at Harvard, it was like meeting people that were speaking the same language and we worked very closely with that group of women to organize here. I think it was the combination of their experience and what they had learned with what I had learned and what the union had learned generally, that allowed us to do what we did here. We had, eventually, on our organizing staff here Sue D'Narski, and Kim Laden, and Laurel Code, who had all helped with the Harvard organizing effort.

CAC: You mean they came from . . .

GM: They came here and joined our organizing team.

CAC: And stayed how long?

GM: A couple of years.

CAC: A couple of years? I see.

GM: Yes, at least a year and one half . . . some for longer, some for less time. Also, at different periods in the organizing effort, they sent us some of their members and staff to help when we really needed it. They would do things for us. The head of the organizing effort at Harvard, the head of that organization, Chris Rondo, was a wonderful person. During the week when we were trying to do our get out the vote for our election here, she would very quietly go out and buy oranges and we still have pictures of these paper towels laid out with orange sections on them. She wanted to make sure that we would have something healthy to eat during that period. [laughter] She'd make us these little orange section snacks, which we hardly noticed her doing but later, we'd look back at the pictures and say, "What were those?"

CAC: Ohhh.

GM: "Oh, that was Chris." We organized one person at a time here, literally. I can remember, during the first couple of months of organizing, waking up in the middle of the night and thinking, I'm going to organize 8,000 people? How am I going to do that? I'd have to bring myself back to saying, You're going to meet people, one person at a time and it's going to grow. That's really exactly what happened. It seems simple. The teamsters came in pretty early in our organizing effort in competition with us. From about October of 1989 through the election, we were in a competition in the clerical unit with the teamsters organization. They had a very different organizing effort than we did. They had the organizing effort that we did in the early 1980s and we were trying to do something very new; so, they put authorization cards out right away and they told people, "Just sign this card. It's good for you. It doesn't mean very much except to have an election." We wanted to really build an organization and we wanted people to feel like they were part of it. We told people, "When you sign this authorization card, we want it to mean that you believe in what we're doing. We want it to mean that you're part of it. We want to mean that you're going vote 'Yes' in the election. This is not a meaningless card." I remember on two occasions when I—everybody else on our organizing team had the same experience—felt that somebody was signing a card before they were ready because they felt pressured. I said, "I don't want you to sign this today. Wait until you're ready." We meant that. It was the way that we wanted to build the union. We, also, didn't organize around issues, which was very different than what almost every union would tell you to do. I always found it a little bit insulting to have somebody come in from the outside and tell me what my issues were and this is part of when I said I learned from that first experience staying in the work place. It felt

weird to me to have this stuff through the mail harping on issues that I already knew about, and my coworkers knew about, and that we knew better than anybody else could articulate. I don't believe that you ever get to sort of a magic issue that resonates with everybody and is going to be the thing that makes people organize. I, also, think that it's kind of dangerous in an organizing effort because it's the way that people get bought off. Again, at Harvard, they had the experience of doing a campaign when they were organizing . . . they had a button that said, "Dignity, Democracy, and a Dental Plan." And the big issue was the dental plan. Harvard produced a dental plan; so, they had to drop that campaign and they still didn't have the dignity and democracy but they also had lost this issue that was supposed to be the one that organized everybody. What we wanted to talk about was the kind of community and organization that we wanted to build here. We organized around principles and values instead of issues. Probably, the biggest piece of it was the idea that other people don't give you respect . . . that self-respecting adults represent themselves in all things, everywhere, all the time, that you don't turn your decision making power over to someone else, and that to unionize was to be self-representative and self-respecting. It didn't matter what the issue was. The issue could be something good that we wanted to work on. It didn't have to be something bad that was happening to us that we were reacting to. We could build some stuff here. We talked about the university being an employer like any other university, that our campaign was not about the university, it was about us and what we wanted in our lives.

CAC: Ahhh.

GM: We also said that as women, we deal with life and death outside of the work place, some of us in the work place. We have a huge amount of responsibility. We're smart. We have incredible tasks. Then, we come to work and we're treated like children sometimes. We wanted everybody in this institution to recognize who we are, and what our lives are like, and what we bring to this institution, and to have respect for that, and to demand respect for that. We decided that we were going to use as little paper in the organizing as we possibly could. When we did something in writing, it was usually a collective effort, something that tried to express who we were and what our values were and express it to the entire university community, not just to ourselves. We did one piece that was called, "Our Voices are Union," which we did fairly close to the election. We did another piece that was sort of a keeper booklet that was "We Believe in Ourselves," and it was nice photographs of different people in the work place with short quotes about who they are and what their hopes were for the union. We did lots, and lots, and lots of small meetings. This was to break down the isolation.

CAC: Boy! I'll tell, you're reflecting feminist ideology and strategies all the way then . . .

GM: Absolutely. Yes.

CAC: . . . even though the movement itself does have that classist and, sometimes, racist overtone.

GM: I think that it's true that women tend relationships and care about relationships a huge amount; and we do it sort of in spite of ourselves and unconsciously and I think that building organization is building relationships, that one of the principles and values that we have is that the union should know everybody in the work place, that everybody should have somebody that they trust that is connected to the union, that they can go to—we certainly have fallen far short of getting there here within this institution but it's still a goal for me—and that people should not be allowed to be isolated in the work place. This comes out of our own experience, not only at work but in life. As we started to think about when we were successful as human beings, it was not when we were isolated and alone, it was when we were thinking and doing in concert with other people and that when we had seen people crushed, it was usually because they didn't have a support mechanism, whether it was family, church, community, coworkers, even without a union; so, the idea for us of a union was to consciously construct . . .

[telephone rings . . . break in the interview]

GM: It was to consciously construct that and we thought that the issues would take care of themselves. Every time that we had a noontime meeting, eventually people would start talking about the issues that were of concern to them. But in terms of whether or not to have a union, the big thing was, Can we build the kind of organization that will allow us to work on whatever we want to work on?

CAC: It won't surprise you, I would imagine, because, clearly, you're sensitive to all kinds of issues that were there, that one of the themes talking with lots of faculty is this sense of loss of community here at the university, and of isolation, and the specialization of knowledge. They begin to establish their closest relationships with fellow subspecialists elsewhere. This sense of community is . . .

GM: Is gone.

CAC: . . . difficult to sustain. It, of course, is present in some places, and in some programs, and in some coalitions but it's a difficult thing to sustain and more difficult now than forty years ago.

GM: Yes. It's one of the reasons why we thought that the union would be a good thing for the university . . . because we think, or at least I think, that if the union were allowed to grow and flourish that it would help the entire university find that community because we don't have as support staff the same degree of . . . competition, I guess.

CAC: Ahhh. And intellectual fragmentation?

GM: And intellectual fragmentation. There's more of a community of issues and . . .

CAC: And shared experience?

GM: . . . shared experience. That's right. Those of us who believe in this model of unionism care very much about sharing that with the rest of the university, if we ever get there . . .

CAC: Yes.

GM: . . . and, also, care about the institution. We said that throughout our organizing, that we're not people that don't care about the University of Minnesota . . . we care very much but we want to take our rightful place within the community.

CAC: Right.

GM: We want to be part of it.

CAC: With that kind of a grounding philosophy—I was going to use the word strategy but it's much more than a strategy, it's a real grounding philosophy—this time it worked?

GM: Yes. It did work.

CAC: The election was in?

GM: In 1991, in February of 1991.

CAC: What kind of a percentage turnout of potential voters was there?

GM: We had, I think, about an 80 percent . . .

CAC: Ooof!

GM: . . . turnout. It was a mail ballot.

CAC: I see. It was supervised by?

GM: By the Bureau of Mediation Services.

CAC: Okay. Of that 80 percent, plus or minus, that voted, what majority did the union get?

GM: Well, the pro-union vote, including the teamsters, was 61 percent.

CAC: Oh, that's pretty close.

GM: The AFSCME vote was 51 percent; so, we just squeaked . . .

CAC: That's known as the skin of your teeth.

GM: . . . by and actually the majority of elections have been skin of the teeth.

CAC: So, there is a latent resistance still for support staff to . . . ?

GM: Yes. What happened was that we were forced into an early election, number one, because the teamsters union was really calling the time line.

CAC: I see.

GM: They, in October, put the cards out, started collecting them, filed for an election with 30 percent cards, which we never ever would have done. We wanted to organized, put the cards out when we felt that there was an organization built up, have people in the work place actually collect the cards from one another. We weren't able to do that because the teamsters were pushing, pushing, pushing and doing bad organizing really. At the point that we won, we didn't have the degree of organization that I would have like to have seen here in order to begin to move into that phase of the struggle with Central Administration . . .

CAC: Ah.

GM: . . . which we have been in ever since. It's been very, very difficult. I compare it to Harvard because I think that what they are doing there is a model, not only for an organization at the university but for unions in general. They have an organizing committee in every single college, thirty-two organizing committees; so, they have a structure of organizing. Those groups meet weekly and they make sure that everybody is kept in contact with the union. The other thing that is different about my view of the union and the way it should function is that the life of the union isn't the local meeting. The local meeting is probably a place where the most active people come and make some decisions about strategy, if it's functioning as it should. Lots of local meetings, most local meetings, are terribly boring and about business and not much else. I think that the life of the union ought to be everyday, in the work place, in small meetings, easily accessible. We used to do a lot of that; we don't do very much of it anymore. It's really unfortunate.

CAC: Because of logistics?

GM: Because there isn't . . . Pre-election, there was a full time organizing staff that was dedicated to organizing and nothing else. Post-election, the model was much less an organizing model—this is because of the larger union—and much more had to do with grievances, and negotiating contracts, and kind of the typical service model of unionism.

CAC: Sure.



GM: We no longer had a full time organizing staff and I spend most of my time now in grievances, in meetings with management. I meet with management much more than I meet with workers.

CAC: That will eat you up.

GM: It does; it eats me alive . . . and arbitrations which take a week to prepare for.

CAC: What is your position in the union now?

GM: I say that I'm organizer disguised as a business rep. [laughter]

CAC: So, what are you called?

GM: I'm a business representative or business agent.

CAC: How many of you are there for the university?

GM: Well, for the entire university, there are now 5,000. In four years, we've gone from 750 AFSCME represented workers to 5,000 AFSCME represented workers.

CAC: [whistle]

GM: We're organizing 2700 more right now in the professional unit. But there are, for 5,000, Bev, Judy, Roseanne, myself, and Bruce, five. It *ain't* enough, I can tell you that. [laughter] The idea is that—AFSCME is very much centered in the work place—people in the work place really should be the heart of the union and not a full time staff but I think that there's too much of a dichotomy between the two and that really what ought to be focused on is, What is the relationship and how does one build, and sustain, and develop the other? I don't think the union has been very good at that.

CAC: You must have done some of it . . . you went from the figure you noted to 5,000?

GM: In the pre-election organizing phase, I think the union has learned how to do that but then seriously drops the ball at the point that we win these elections. At the point that we won in the clerical unit, which was at that time 3200 clerical workers statewide, our organization—if we were honest about it—was made up of 804 people. That was the real AFSCME organization within that unit. That's a large . . .

CAC: That's about 25 percent.

GM: . . . organization but it's not enough. Had I been able to follow through, had all the time, and resources, and autonomy to do it, I would have maintained our organizing staff and followed

through on the organizing piece of it to the point where we had at least doubled that number and had an organizing structure that could sustain the organizing in the work place. That wasn't done.

CAC: In the meantime, it wasn't done in some part because once the election is won, however slim that was, then you had to go into bargaining?

GM: Right.

CAC: That had to eat up your time, and energies, and money?

GM: That ate up a lot of time, that's right.

CAC: So, this is 1991. You win . . . barely.

GM: Yes.

CAC: Then, you've got to go to the next step?

GM: Right.

CAC: Share with posterity what was involved in that next step then.

GM: Well, a tremendous amount of excitement for one.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: We knew—because some of us had been organizing for years at the "U", because of the work that we had done—when we went into the election, out of 3200 people, we knew all but 96 people. We said that the teamsters would get 259 votes in the election. They got 256.

CAC: [laughter] That's good politics!

GM: We knew everyone . . . we really did.

CAC: God!

GM: And we knew, like that [snap of the fingers], in a heart beat what we needed to do in that first round of negotiations. We needed to bring the progression system back to the pay structure. We needed to do away with the horror of people working here for twenty-five years and being considered a temporary employee. We needed to build in more security, more rights, for people who were laid off so that the thirty year employee is not starting over if their job is eliminated. We wanted to build in some flexibility into the work place . . .

CAC: Flex time?

GM: . . . because as 93 percent women, we knew that we come in and out of the work place and . . .

CAC: Do you know how recently my department went into flex time?

GM: What . . . two weeks ago . . . two years ago?

CAC: Yes.

GM: Well, I hope that we were part of that.

CAC: That was just because Sue [Haskins] . . .

GM: The administrator?

CAC: . . . knew that she couldn't manage her family life without that and, happily, we had a chair that said, "That's swell."

GM: That's part of the respect and recognition for what we do in the world that we wanted. We also wanted it recognized that sometimes we even disappear for a year or two at a time, or three, or five, from the work place.

CAC: Yes!

GM: We wanted to be able to come back and have our previous service recognized.

CAC: I see, yes.

GM: All of those things in the first agreement, we accomplished.

CAC: Whom do you deal with in Central Administration?

GM: That's been an interesting experience, too, because the negotiating team for management is drawn from the areas of the university where there are large concentrations of support staff. CLA [College of Liberal Arts] has always had somebody on the management negotiating committee. We've always had somebody from CLA on our committees. We don't negotiate with the university's executive committee directly and that is a problem for us.

CAC: Well, whom do you negotiate with?

GM: We negotiate with people who have been drawn from the various colleges and administrative units and then there's a chief negotiator, a labor relations person.

CAC: And he's out of Central Administration . . . I say *he*.

GM: Actually, in the first contract, it was a woman named Marsha Orr who came in from outside of the university.

CAC: Just to do this?

GM: Well, no, she thought she would have a job when she got done that would be ongoing but they let her go. It was not a particularly smart move, I think, on the part of the university to bring somebody in who didn't even know what a job evaluation questionnaire was, who didn't know really any of the previous policies and procedures of the university or the history here. Then, they gave her very, very little in the way of support to negotiate that first contract. Then, they were obviously mad . . .

CAC: Her name was Marsha . . . ?

GM: Marsha Orr, O-R-R. It was Marsha, M-A-R-S-H-A, the old spelling.

CAC: Okay.

GM: It was interesting because, she drove us crazy during negotiations, just drove us crazy but when the university let her go, there were a lot of people, women, on our negotiating committee that were furious at the way that she had been treated.

CAC: From whom was she taking orders?

GM: Central Administration.

CAC: But who there?

GM: It would have been Bob Erickson, Jim Enfante . . .

CAC: All right.

GM: I would say that Bob Erickson had a huge amount to say.

CAC: He's out of the private sector.

GM: Right, right. We also had Rich Portnoy, who I'm assuming you must know? Okay. He's in the budget office in the College of Liberal Arts.

CAC: Oh, yes, okay.

GM: He has been on all of the management negotiating teams and he was famous for saying, in the first round of negotiations, that anybody who has worked at the university longer than five years is just dead weight. So, that's kind of what we were hearing across the table.

CAC: Including faculty, I imagine? [laughter]

GM: I don't know, we didn't ask him but I'd assume he'd think some. [laughter] I think, he's coming up maybe on his five-year anniversary at the "U". There are some women in the College of Liberal Arts who are thinking about giving him some kind of present.

CAC: [laughter]

GM: It was the first round of negotiations that . . . the biggest thing that we had to contend with was Bob Erickson's desire to establish a merit pay structure. We, of course, wanted a progression structure; so, those two things were head to head and probably the biggest and most difficult issue. We did prevail on that.

CAC: During these negotiations, what implied threat does the union have? This is a new situation and you have the weapon of strike or not being university employees?

GM: We do have the weapon of strike but the university, I think, is always aware of what the union's membership is and they were also aware of by what margin we won the election; so, all of that plays in, of course. We have always done contract campaigns which go to making the university aware of what we are capable of organizing.

CAC: I see currently there is now . . . after a lunch hour people coming back with banners into the elevator here in the Social Science Tower.

GM: We're picketing in front of Morrill Hall everyday now until we have a contract.

CAC: Are you working without a contract now?

GM: No, we're under the old contract but it's very, very tough negotiation negotiations this time. The first negotiations lasted eleven months . . . yes, and was a huge struggle. I don't think that Central Administration has ever wanted this union, has ever been happy with it.

CAC: How does that express itself?

GM: Well, it expresses itself in taking a very hard-line stance in negotiations, in using the contract that has been negotiated as a book of rules, not living by the spirit of it but more by the *i*'s and *t*'s, dotted and crossed.

CAC: Well, I'll tell you if any group works to rule, they're in trouble. That's an old union trick, you work to rule . . . the factory falls apart.

GM: Yes, that's right. There are all kinds of people going the extra mile but you have to be very well organized and that's where you get back to . . . you say, you win the election and then you have this whole new set of things that you have to do. How well organized you are and how much organization you come out of that election with is going to impact those other things forever more.

CAC: Sure.

GM: So, if the union misses the boat on that, you're going to be in trouble for a long period of time and we've been struggling with that.

CAC: Are the regents ever aware of this? Do you ever have any sense of the regential?

GM: We have contact with the regents. In fact, tomorrow they'll be getting their pictures taken and we're going to be there; so, we'll have that kind of contact. [laughter]

CAC: Are you going to hold up banners behind them as they're . . .

GM: I don't know but we will be there. We are having so much trouble in this round of negotiations that we plan on being everywhere we can. At every event that we can muster any bodies to, we'll be there now.

CAC: But you know there are members of the regents who are out of the union movement and are sympathetic to it?

GM: Right.

CAC: And do you have contact with them at all?

GM: We do have contact with them.

CAC: And you know who they are?

GM: We know who they are.

CAC: In 1991-1995?

GM: Yes, we know who they are and we do have contact with them.

CAC: How do they respond as regents? I assume that Wendy Anderson is one of them?

GM: Well, Bill Peterson who is with the AFL-CIO, on the executive board of the AFL-CIO, is a regent, the state AFL-CIO. We have talked with him.

CAC: Before that there was David Roe and there was Neil Sherburne going back even farther, right?

GM: Yes. I think that we had a very good working relationship with Dave Roe. Then also Julie Belisle, who is actually on the union staff, is a regent and, incredibly to me, she's taken a lot of junk from people about that being a supposed conflict of interest.

CAC: As though everyone there isn't? [laughter]

GM: Exactly. She only happens to represent a much larger set of people than the majority of people on that board who, maybe, represent a single corporation.

CAC: But now the regents aren't talking to the vice-president for finance saying . . .

GM: They are. They will. Yes. There is some of that that goes on.

CAC: You have to cultivate those relationships as well as with your members?

GM: Right. We attempt to do that but there's a very hard-line stance being taken. There are some very basic things that union contracts everywhere have that the university has just absolutely refused to negotiate for the clerical workers and the technical workers in this institution.

CAC: Like what?

GM: Things like hiring priority. The idea that an experience internal candidate, if qualified, will automatically be in line for promotion over somebody from the outside . . . they will absolutely not agree to that.

CAC: What reasons do they give when you're talking . . . ?

GM: They want to be able to hire whoever they want to be able to hire. They want complete decision making authority over hiring.

CAC: They know they can't do it with the faculty because we're all tenured in.

GM: Right. We've been able to do a huge amount to protect long term employees. It's no longer that if you're laid off and you're a thirty employee that your seniority doesn't count for anything. You take it with you no matter where you go within this institution now. We've been able to do that.

CAC: Do you have fringes of health care?

GM: Those were all mainly negotiated at the state level. We have not though been able to convince the university that if somebody is laid off and they regain employment within this institution that they should not lose salary; so, we have people who have worked here for twenty, thirty years and when they are laid off, they end up being forced to take as much as \$10,000 in an annual pay cut.

CAC: And they come back again?

GM: If they come back or to exercise their bumping rights.

CAC: Is the issue of subcontracted, privatizing services an issue also?

GM: Yes, that's an issue.

CAC: I know it is with the custodial staff but that's not your union?

GM: Well, no, but it is an issue for the labor movement; so, in that sense it's an issue for us and I think it should be an issue for the university. I think privatization is so short sided and you lose so much control. There was an eloquent speech . . . We did two public hearings in April and we convened a panel of well-known people from outside the university. In fact, Peter Rachleff was on the panel. One of the women that was laid off from the laundry, when they privatized that, spoke and she talked about how the workers in the laundry would find in a lab coat somebody's wedding ring, or would find Johnny's teddy bear in the sheets, or this and that and the other thing, stories like that, and how those things would get returned to those people because the laundry was run by the university, in house and now that's it's being done in Wisconsin and shipped in, how those kinds of things get lost. What we've tried to do in negotiations is to talk about successor agreements, the idea that if, for instance, the main issue was in the hospital, if the hospital were to go private, we could negotiate that we would continue to represent that group.

CAC: Ahhh.

GM: We raised that issue in this round of negotiations partly so that we could try to get some information about how seriously the privatization issue is.

CAC: Oh, well, that's one of the options they have is . . . the hospital's not working financially now.

GM: Right. I think that the university is facing a major . . . I guess the best way to put it is that I think that there's a crossroads that we're at here and I think many universities are at the same crossroads . . .



CAC: You bet.

GM: . . . and the issue is, Is there going to be any longer public education, and public research, and public teaching that is run by the public or are we going to have these large institutions that really function only as a subsidy to the private sector and the needs of the private sector? I feel that that's where [unclear].

CAC: The national climate is certainly the other way now, I mean political climate.

GM: Right.

CAC: Say something about the downsizing that's taken place the last five, seven years.

GM: It's wrenching. There's a lot of it going on.

CAC: Within the support staff?

GM: Oh, I think the support staff has been hit hardest by this.

CAC: I see it with the custodial staff.

GM: I'll tell you when we organized in 1991, the clerical unit was 3200 people. The last figure that we got from the university was 2500.

CAC: That's five years.

GM: When we asked for statistics in relation to negotiations this time around and we wanted to look at what's been happening with jobs within the university, I think that—my figures aren't exactly right but they're close enough to give you an idea of what's going on—we lost over 300 clerical support staff positions and we gained around 45 administrative positions. Now, who is doing the support work for these people?

CAC: Well, is part of it changing technology? Let me give you an example. In olden days, letters of recommendation, all kinds of stuff from faculty, our office staff would have to do that. Now, the things are in computer. I write for a graduate student now a basic letter and then I add a paragraph for a specific job or I change here and there. Our staff with computer technology can do that in ninety seconds.

GM: In a very short period of time, right.

CAC: Yes. So, that the volume of paper work is quite different.

GM: It's different but what's happened is—especially, I think, in research—you move from doing that kind of paperwork to doing a lot of computer work . . .

CAC: Which is more highly skilled.

GM: . . . between different programs, a lot more desktop publishing. Maybe the manuscript revisions, you have more of them because it's easier to do . . . those kinds of things.

CAC: Yes. [laughter]

GM: So, there's not a sense that technology has necessarily meant less work, it's just different work and in some areas more.

CAC: Bravo. Fair enough. Yes. One way this downsizing—we're having a conversation, right?  
...

GM: Yes.

CAC: . . . is concerned with the faculty, we don't have care of our office. I mean, you know this?

GM: Yes.

CAC: This afternoon, I will—I don't mind doing that—wash my own windows, and I dust my own things, and then the custodian tells me, "Well, they're thinking of privatizing and then it will be even worse."

GM: Yes, right. And if the teamsters go on strike—which they may well do—be sure to bring your trash in from home as well. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

GM: We'll fill up the hallways.

CAC: You are union working all the way.

GM: Yes.

CAC: Let's come back to this serious central concern again. You wrote your basic contract in 1991. It took you eleven months?

GM: Right.

CAC: So, you're into 1992 before it happens?

GM: Yes.

CAC: Is that the contract you're living under now?

GM: No, this is our third contract already that we've negotiated.

CAC: Do you do this every year?

GM: Well, it sure seems that way. Our contracts are supposed to be good for two years that run with the biennium but we start in February negotiating and we're still negotiating the contract for this biennium that we've just entered into; so, who knows when we'll get done at this point.

CAC: You were saying earlier, it's difficult to maintain the morale of the union if you and your sisters are constantly engaged in negotiating rather than in building these networks.

GM: Building the union, yes. It's very difficult.

CAC: But that's what you're facing right now?

GM: Yes. I think if we had a two-year window in which the union funded up a staff of organizers, we could do the groundwork that we need to really get this union . . .

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Tape 2, Side 2]

CAC: I was going to ask you a series of quick questions. What proportion of the teaching/research faculty do you think are aware of the things you've been talking about this morning? That's not a rhetorical question.

GM: Not very many.

CAC: How about administrative staff?

GM: Probably not very many of the administrative staff either. I think that some administrative staff because they sit on the other side of our grievances are getting to know . . .

CAC: Well, those who do that, yes. How about Central Administration itself in all of its forms?

GM: That's interesting . . . I used to think, and I know that some other people used to think, that

some of them just didn't understand and at the point that they really understood that we might begin to see some change. Now, I believe that they understand and have understood but that it's not their agenda to take on the economic well-being, for instance, of the people who work here. It's not part of their agenda.

CAC: Mr. Erickson has resigned and will be leaving that office?

GM: Right.

CAC: Do you have any sense of the presidential office and staff, whether they have time for this? I know that Nils [Hasselmo] is just overwhelmed with all kinds of agendas.

GM: He must be but what could be more important than the support staff, faculty, and students at this institution?

CAC: But you're suggesting that he and forerunners don't have a daily concern either?

GM: No, I don't think they do. In fact, he has walked by and through our picket line in front of Morrill Hall on more than one occasion . . . and has stopped to talk. I think that he's a nice human being and would stop to talk.

CAC: Oh, he's really decent, yes.

GM: His attitude seems to be, I understand but I've delegated.

CAC: Okay.

GM: I said, "Gee, well, maybe we ought to invite him to join the picket line." [laughter]

CAC: And the regents? You spoke of several who are already there because of their own careers.

GM: Some of them seem to be concerned but I think that support staff have not ever been a priority within this institution. Somebody gave me a 1923 yearbook as a present, which is a beautiful book to have, and not once in this—the yearbooks used to be about four or five inches thick—yearbook from 1923 is there any mention of anybody working at this institution. We've been invisible for a long period of time. I used to joke that we were going to have to make a contract proposal for the addition of staff to the human resources function of the university because one of the ways that the university shows that staff are not a priority is in its complete understaffing of that department of the university . . . so that even the people who have been laid off miss opportunities to get back in to the work place because if one staff member is out of that office, everything comes to a screeching halt.

CAC: Members of the legislature, how concerned are they with the support staff of the state and the university?

GM: Individual members are . . . as a whole, I don't think that they've shown themselves to be very concerned.

CAC: The public generally? You don't have many stories in the *Strib* [*Minneapolis Star Tribune*] or the *Pioneer Press*?

GM: The public, generally I think, thinks that the university *must be, must be* a pretty decent and enlightened place to work.

CAC: So, the real problem is the communication, I'm suggesting.

GM: Yes. I think that the public view is probably the easiest one. I think that the legislature isn't set up to take care of the needs and interests of working people, frankly, and neither is the Central Administration of the University of Minnesota. If we know that those things are true, then we know that it's probably more important to look to our own house for strength. I think too often the labor movement looks outside of its own house for spokespeople and for strength. You know, we're going to go beg to someone else to fix it for us. The whole idea I think of a union is that you're going to fix it yourself.

[break in the interview]

We were just talking about whether there was anything else that I thought was important to add. I guess it would be that the organizing that we've done here I think is important to the entire labor movement. I don't think that the idea of knowing everybody and building an organization that's based on relationships between people and not allowing people to be isolated is something that is just for universities or just for the public sector. I think that even if you are organizing an intensely anti-union poultry factory, if you really want an organization, you're going to have to build a community. You're going to have to find ways for people to relate to each other as workers and union members in a community sense and that when we try to leap over that to create a union, we usually only create a mess. I've seen workers left in the lurch because a union came in with flyers, called it a "hot shop," gathered up authorization cards; and then, the employer comes in and scares everybody to death. The union election goes down to failure. The union walks away and the most active people get fired. That's criminal.

CAC: Yes.

GM: We need to learn how to do it differently and we're part of that here.

CAC: To the degree that the union can create a sense of community within the support staff, that's also healthy for the university?

GM: Absolutely. Yes.

CAC: Maybe that's a good point to conclude on?

GM: To end on? Yes, I think it is.

CAC: Thank you!

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

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