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Joan Beifuss- Side 2 on the Bill Ross Interview, ok we were with the Checks and the Poles coming to work in in the mines.

Bill Ross- And so all of this is race or civil rights or whatever you want to call it. This recent sanitation department strike in my estimation nothing more than the revolt of the public employees. The same type of revolt as we had in the (muffled) department, building trades, railroads, coal mines. And this had been, this is happening all over the country we are seeing it with the teachers and with what everybody considered a real conservative organization, an affiliate of the NEA the National Education Association down in Florida well they closed...the New York Sanitation strike and the bus strike and all these others. Employees in the public sector are getting further and further away from the economic mainstream.

Bill Thomas- Let me as I understand it and I want to make it clear, the same union that was behind the New York Strike is no the same organization?

Bill Ross- No, no the same organization. Teamsters.

Bill Thomas- The teamsters were behind the New York Strike?

Bill Ross- New York Garbage department affiliated with the teamsters.

Joan Beifuss- Bill are you saying then that the labor people here welcomed the entrance into the strike the leaders of the negro community.

Bill Ross- No I am not saying that. The leaders of the labor movement we recognized without the COME organization the strike would never have been won. But the rank and file never accepted it as such. The rank and file felt like it was strictly civil rights but here again it is the ignorance on the part of our rank and file to the real labor background. The labor history involved.

Bill Thomas- However you did get quite a lot of support from other organizations.

Bill Ross- Oh yes, I am not saying that they didn't support it financially the local labor unit did support it financially. But as far as participating in the demonstrations as so many of them do when you have the normal picket line, this type or participation we did not get.

Joan Beifuss- Well now why were there no picket lines put out in this.

Bill Ross- This was part of the injunction, the injunction forbid. This is another the reason that we feel like the injunction of 1966 was an illegal injunction. Because it violated their rights under the (muffled). In as much as it forbid them and enjoined them from doing information picketing. So this is one point that is being argued now before the federal courts. ACLU has taken it up out of Nashville.

Joan Beifuss- The, I am still a little bit confused, did the local labor people ask the NAACP to come in on this.

Bill Ross- No the local labor did not.

Joan Beifuss- Ok because the NAACP and Zeke Bell and people like that were already speaking before the macing incident.

Bill Ross- Well they speaking some before the macing yes. But the members of the sanitation department encouraged the members to participate. But when you are talking in terms of labor leaders you are referring to those people how have been in the labor union for some time, those that are out (muffled), for instance officials of the council and this type. But as I said before we realized that without their help this thing could have never been won.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now there was a strategy meeting after the mass meeting right after the macing, is that right?

Bill Ross- Yeah Saturday morning, Mason Temple there was a strategy meeting.

Joan Beifuss- Now do you recall who was represented in that meeting?

Bill Ross- Oh I sat in on it, there were 25 or 30 ministers (muffled). And then another meeting Sunday afternoon that's where the real formation comes.

Bill Thomas- Remember anything about those meetings Bill, what was decided?

Bill Ross- No actually all they did was to determine what they could do at that time to better prosecute the strike. They realized they had to raise money and they knew that the one international couldn't finance this strike. See this strike finally cost in my estimation half a million dollars just in welfare benefits. Just in welfare benefits.

Bill Thomas- For the men?

Bill Ross- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Now what was being supplied to the men throughout this period?

Bill Ross- Originally it started out just paying furnishing food and food stamps and paying light bills and just those things that were necessary for keeping people from being evicted or foreclose. And then the latter part of the strike they were given a flat \$35 a week.

Joan Beifuss- Oh really.

Bill Thomas- (muffled)

Joan Beifuss- Without food, or \$35 plus food.

Bill Ross- Well there was some food.

Bill Thomas- Do you remember about when did that start, after they drew there last paycheck, was that on the 20th something like that.

Bill Ross- The assistance started about the 3rd week of the strike. And then (muffled) I don't know how much money was raised.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have any idea where the bulk of the money came from or percentage wise how it came in for instance? How much would the local unions here supplying?

Bill Ross- I don't have a breakdown. State, County, Municipal, the OCME organization, in other words the money was funneled through the COME organization and for the most part it was sent to the COME organization and they in turn gave it to state, county, municipal. This was frowned upon because as far as I know there was no accounting made by COME.

Joan Beifuss- Who was it frowned upon by?

Bill Ross- Several of the people from labor that were on the strategy committee. We don't want anybody handling money (muffled) just not our way of doing business. Out of the \$50,000, \$20,000 (muffled) large contributions made by the seafarers. (Muffled)

Bill Thomas- a thousand a week?

Bill Ross- Yeah.

Bill Thomas- That's the seafarers union.

Bill Ross- Yeah I think their original contribution was \$5,000 and then they gave another \$1,000 for each week it lasted.

Bill Thomas- Now did this money, to whom did this money go to?

Bill Ross- State and county.

Bill Thomas- Can we get who made the contributions?

Bill Ross- A list of the contributors?

Bill Thomas- Yeah.

Bill Ross- I would expect that is pretty well garbage.

Joan Beifuss- Why?

Bill Ross- Well, I am sure there is a complete list made but anytime you make public something like this invariably you overlook somebody.

Bill Thomas- Do what?

=Invariably you overlook somebody.

Bill Thomas- Oh.

Joan Beifuss- Would you have any idea what the negro, whether the negro community itself was able to raise very much money for this.

Bill Ross- Overall no, but they did a beautiful job of raising money, Ralph Jackson did a beautiful job of raising it but as far as being able to raise anything like the need or anything like the major portion of it. What they raised was only through what they took up at these mass meetings which was 7 or 8 hundred dollars maybe \$1,500 was the exemption the big one.

Bill Thomas- (muffled)

Bill Ross- Yeah, this was who made the contribution.

Joan Beifuss- Now did labor people sit in when the COME ministers decided on the boycott of the newspapers and of the downtown stores or was that something decided strictly by the ministers themselves?

Bill Ross- No now when they decided on their overall boycott we were present. The state and county municipal where there some of us were there. What we didn't participate in was when SCLC came in and made their decisions on boycotting. Such things as Hart's bread and Wonder bread and Coca-Cola and these individual firms. We were not in on that.

Bill Thomas- You mean that SCLC had a list or something.

Bill Ross- Well they didn't give us a list. I don't think we are getting noise in here. SclC came in here after the first march and...

Joan Beifuss- That late.

Bill Thomas- When they first came, you are talking about when they first came...

Joan Beifuss- King came without marching. Did SCLC come in at that time?

Bill Ross- Yeah, King came in and spoke before the SCLC came in and he spoke the night he decided that SCLC should come in. They came in and made some decisions to put up some boycotts and they were (muffled) themselves which caused some trouble, seriously.

Joan Beifuss- Do you know who the SCLC people were that came in first?

Bill Ross- Jesse Jackson and Jose Williams.

Bill Thomas- Well what (muffled)

Bill Ross- Hart's baked bread, Wonder bread...

Joan Beifuss- Coca-Cola.

Bill Ross- Coca-Cola, and (muffled).

Bill Thomas- And some people were in the union...

Bill Ross- Not only that, the fact that all these companies but one were organized. All but Coca-Cola organized. But if they were planning to use this to put pressure on Lobe it was the wrong tactics. Because Lobe is not national business oriented, he is local business oriented. He could care less about what happened to a big corporation because all his business dealings were laundries, locally owned businesses.

Joan Beifuss- Cut back to early in March again when the daily marches started and the mass meetings started being held at night. Did you for instance go to those night mass meetings or the noon time mass meetings?

Bill Ross- I made a great many of both of them out of all of them but not all of them. I made more of the night meetings than I did the daytime meetings. But I spoke to the group on the average of twice a week.

Joan Beifuss- Were they kind of pep rallies is that what they were.

Bill Ross- Yes, that is about what it amounted too. Just a beautiful group to speak to they respond beautifully.

Joan Beifuss- Ok there was an attempt during that period by the ministerial association to get negotiations going again what happened to that?

Bill Ross- I think it had some bearing on the outcome. It was definitely a good thing and a (muffled) thing in as much as it brought out in the open or it convinced some of the ministers who had not been convinced that Henry Lobe was wrong in the position he was taking.

Joan Beifuss- I don't mean that, are you talking about after Dr. King was killed.

Bill Ross- No.

Joan Beifuss- Are you talking about early?

Bill Ross- When we met at St. Mary's with various other churches. (Tape Break)

Joan Beifuss- Ok I hadn't gotten the impression that ministers had been saying that Henry was wrong.

Bill Ross- Well here before the ministers had more or less sympathized with Henry until they went through these meetings and realized the conditions and the depravity whereas (muffled) and that Henry was wrong in taking this adamant position that he wasn't not going to deal with them. Then when the whole thing was escalated and it was pointed out by newspapers all over the country for instance the

Atlanta Journal, defied Lobe's position in not being able to deal productively with the local leadership, that he as inviting trouble. This is the ministers realized for the first time.

Joan Beifuss- Now why did those negotiations break down?

Bill Ross- It was due to Henry's refusal to recognize that he had a problem. His adamant position just refusing to be a productive with the local leadership. This says it all.

Joan Beifuss- Ok. Throughout that period in march their seemed to be a lot of sort of undercover attempts by a great number of people to get the thing settled.

Bill Ross- There was attempts made at every level including this Federal level, reaching as far as the vice president.

Bill Thomas- This is before the assassination?

Bill Ross- No, yes this, this was first of March latter part of February. All through this every kind of pressure and every kind of contact that anybody could think of including as I said the vice president.

Bill Thomas- Why, did this (muffled).

Bill Ross- I am sure it was just every avenue was explored.

Bill Thomas- Can you clear that up a little bit.

Bill Ross- In other words, everybody that we felt like had any influences with the mayor, this was used in an effort to try to get him to change his position.

Bill Thomas- Are you saying there was some federal level people called the mayor or...

Bill Ross- Well there was contact by the vice president to a mutual friend of the mayor.

Joan Beifuss- Can you name the mutual friend?

Bill Ross- I would rather not (muffled).

Bill Thomas- And you know what that position was. They wanted Lobe to...

Bill Ross- Recognize the union.

Bill Thomas- I see.

Bill Ross- And he laughed at everybody just like he laughed at the group of Main St. merchants when they went to him, begging and pleading. And he in as much told them to go fly a kite.

Joan Beifuss- Were, was then people from labor were meeting with councilmen sort of behind closed doors, was this type of thing going on?

Bill Ross- We were meeting with anybody we could in an effort to bring this about. Yes we had people in favor meeting with the mayor, meeting with councilmen, using everything that we could and as a last stitch desperate attempt the afternoon Dr. King was assassinated the labor council had called together a group of leading businessmen including bank presidents. The real top business leaders, chamber of commerce and this type. We met at Hotel Peabody.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled)

Bill Ross- Yes the day King was killed in fact the business we had just left the hotel had time to have a cup of coffee, and as we were leaving the hotel we had heard he had been shot, this is how close it was. We told them at that time that something had to be done.

Bill Thomas- This was business leader sin Memphis?

Bill Ross- Yes, this was top business leaders. I have a carbon copy of the letters that we sent to them.

Bill Thomas- Might we have that? (Tape Break)

Bill Ross- (Muffled) reverend Robert Atkinson.

Joan Beifuss- Who is he?

Bill Ross- He is pastor at Calvary Episcopal Church, George Houston president of future Memphis, Allen Wunderlich National trust life insurance, C.D. McAdams founder of sears roebuck, James H. McCue founder of firestone tire and motor company, A. Plow Plow Inc., (Muffled) president of first national bank, A.C. Neusome president of the insurers of Memphis, Horace Grace president union planters bank.

Joan Beifuss- We know Horace Grace.

Bill Ross- Tom (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Tom who? Ferris?

Bill Ross- Faires president of the Chamber of Commerce.

Joan Beifuss- Chamber of commerce.

Bill Thomas- This is a list of the people who attended a meeting on April 4th at 4 pm in an effort to settle the strike.

Bill Ross- It was about 20, 25 or 10.

Joan Beifuss- Ok and what was, did you get any bearing on their feeling by then?

Bill Ross- It was a cold audience. I have never seen as far as their outward appearance and from their remarks they made in the meeting our pleas just fell on deaf ears.

Joan Beifuss- Why do you think because by then there had been the mini riot and...

Bill Ross- It is hard to say why. I sit back now and look at it and think damn it these people were about like that they were caught up in something in a whirlpool and didn't know how to get off or where to get off. I talked just as plain as I could, so did Tommy and so did the rest to them.

Joan Beifuss- What did you tell them?

Bill Ross- I told them exactly what was happening. I told them that this thing was going to continue to be escalating because it was out of our hands and it was it was purely an SCLC show.

Joan Beifuss- Ok well can I take you back, the decision to bring in Barrett Ruston (muffled).

Bill Ross- The urban league, Whitney Young, I mean NAACP man Whitney Young,

Joan Beifuss- Now where you in on the decision or was labor in on the decisions to bring him in.

Bill Ross- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Ok. And then also to bring in Dr. King to speak.

Bill Ross- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- How about when Dr. King announced he would lead the march? Were you supporting the King march?

Bill Ross- The 1st march?

Joan Beifuss- The 1st march right. right.

Bill Ross- That was a spontaneous decision made by Dr. King the night that he spoke here that he would return and lead a march.

Bill Thomas- Labor wasn't consulted on this?

Bill Ross- No wasn't anybody consulted on that. COME or anybody else, in fact originally I don't think King intended to come back. I think he said in the meeting Abernathy would come back and lead a march and then later on he changed it to where he said he would come back and lead a march.

Joan Beifuss- Were you at that meeting?

Bill Ross- Yes I was at the meeting.

Joan Beifuss- Then did your or did the labor people have anything to do with planning that march or was that completely out of your hands also?

Bill Ross- That march no, we didn't have anything to do with the planning of that march that was the COME organization and the people sent in by, well no COME did because SCLC had very little to do with planning that march.

Joan Beifuss- Did you march in that march?

Bill Ross- Yes. I got tear gas at Main and Beale. In fact, I was right there when the first window was broken on Beale St.

Bill Thomas- By the shoe shop?

Bill Ross- At (muffled), that was the first one that was broken.

Joan Beifuss- Did you see who broke it?

Bill Ross- No.

Joan Beifuss- When the march formed at Clayborne Temple did you get any kind of impression of the crowd then.

Bill Ross- As far as the young people are concerned it was a unruly crowd. My estimation it should never have been delayed regardless of whom. Because anytime you keep people standing around they have a tendency to build up tension. And the same thing could have very well happened with the big march and hey delayed it for Mrs. King to arrive.

Joan Beifuss- Who were you marching with who was around you on the first march.

Bill Ross- Oh I wasn't marching particularly with anybody because I was trying to, I marched awhile with the ministers and Monsignor Leopard and group of sisters at that time and then later on with headstand (muffled) and two or three other church related people.

Joan Beifuss- looking back at it now, did it appear to be a planned violence.

Bill Ross- Nope. Definitely not. Violence is all done by younger people without any direction.

Bill Thomas- Even at that level...

Bill Ross- No, there was no direction. No signs of organization at all.

Joan Beifuss- So what happened when the windows started breaking.

Bill Ross- Well the human reaction set in, once a big noise, once someone hears a big noise they want to see how another one sounds. There was no looting at this point.

Some destruction of property reach in and grab something and throw it down, but no real looting. But it is just an idea of hearing the window crack.

Bill Thomas- Bill in the place where you were in the march (muffled) did that break ahead of you or do you remember?

Bill Ross- Hell I was right in front of it.

Bill Thomas- And you were right at pretty close to the head of the line?

Bill Ross- This was the reason we had told them before that they shouldn't allow these signs on sticks. And they weren't in the big march you didn't see any signs on sticks in the big march. This is a mistake that the planners of the march made. Of allowing people in the march with placards on a stick. This was main, you can strip those placards off the sticks and sticks can sail through the air. Because they were like sticks hitting big windows. Just throwing a stick from 15 or 20 feet wouldn't break a window. It took the most part two or three of these kids pounding on them to break them and then they would pop.

Bill Thomas- Well what did you do after the march broke up.

Bill Ross- When the march broke up, when they tried to reverse the march.

Joan Beifuss- Who tried to reverse the march?

Bill Ross- The leaders.

Bill Thomas- Jim Lawson...

Bill Ross- Jim Lawson, and Vasco Smith and this sort. And the people had, after King had left the march.

Joan Beifuss- Did you see King leave the march.

Bill Ross- Yes.

Bill Thomas- Ok tell us how he left.

Bill Ross- King left down a side street to Front street, this is as far as I saw I didn't see him get into a car.

Joan Beifuss- With his SCLC people?

Bill Ross- No with local people, local people got him out of there.

Bill Thomas- but he walked away.

Bill Ross- Yes he walked away.

Bill Thomas- Down a side street.

Bill Ross- Down a side street. (muffled) Call St. this little street that is almost straight across.

Bill Thomas- Do you feel the march had been turned at that point or not?

Bill Ross- Well let's put it this way if the march had been allowed to continue there is no telling how much damage would have been done and possibly some body killed. Because it was definitely out of hand.

Joan Beifuss- Dr. King though simply fell out of the march or what was left of it and walked.

Bill Ross- He walked away (muffled). See what had actually happened the truck leading the march the escort they pulled the same thing in this as they did with the mace. The head of the, the head escort police escort didn't move nearly fast enough. Consequently King and the truck riding right in front of him soon became engulfed in (muffled). And that is when King realized he was in danger and there was going to be violence and that is when they decided to get him out.

Joan Beifuss- Do you know who left with him?

Bill Ross- No I don't, I don't recall.

Joan Beifuss- So then what did you do?

Bill Ross- At that time I turned around and went back to Beale and that is when they started shooting that tear gas further down Main beyond Beale and I went and we had a hell of a cloud of it and I got a big shot of it at Main and Beale and I walked over to Front St. and circled around and came back (muffled).

Bill Thomas- Came back here to the office?

Joan Beifuss- Were you by yourself?

Bill Ross- Yes on my own then.

Bill Thomas- Did you have any trouble getting back?

Bill Ross- No.

Joan Beifuss- had you ever marched before with Dr. King?

Bill Ross- No that was my first time. In this kind of demonstration, I have been involved in other.

Joan Beifuss- So then when the sporadic violence or whatever it was broke out that afternoon and evening where there meetings called then?

Bill Ross- No because the curfew was put into effect. This was when the boy was killed down here on 3rd street with his hands in the air.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Bill Ross- Payne.

Joan Beifuss- Did you see Dr. King, had you been in any meetings with Dr. King had you met him personally before when he had been in..

=I had met with Dr. King prior to his coming to Memphis. In fact this would have been a couple of years earlier on some work they were doing in Mississippi. Particularly in the (muffled) county.

Joan Beifuss- But then you were not present with Dr. King after the mini march that afternoon.

Bill Ross- No.

Joan Beifuss- Now another thing we skipped over, when did Frank Miles begin negotiations?

Bill Ross- Frank was selected as the (muffled), after the first march as I recall. In other words after, prior to the big march negotiations weren't doing anything they weren't even meeting. Completely broken down and it was only until after the first march that Miles entered into it and of course after the assassination Jim Reynolds was sent in with the instructions to get the damn thing settled or else.

Bill Thomas- Are you saying people really began to get concerned (muffled).

Bill Ross- Yes. After the assassination of course hwy this involved a lot more.

Joan Beifuss- Now the march that King was planning would have been his second march here. Were labor people meeting with him then?

Bill Ross- I was in on it from the very beginning and so were other people. Then after ht assassination and the planned march, after the big march was planned well I was in on practically all of its planning.

Joan Beifuss- Did you get or was there any way for you to get the impression that Dr. King wanted to come back in a second time.

Bill Ross- Definitely, very definitely. He realized his public image was at stake and he realized this. He realized that he had to come back and lead a nonviolent march. He couldn't leave Memphis with the idea that he had participated in a march or a demonstration that had lead to violence, not with his big Washington thing in the making. I think this had as much to do with his decision to come back as anything.

Joan Beifuss- Had, I am getting a little fuzzy in time, was Frank Miles the negotiation with Frank Miles were going on before Dr. King was shot hadn't they?

Bill Ross- Yes they had.

Joan Beifuss- Now why did they break down that time do you know?

Bill Ross- Here again I think (muffled) on refreshing my memory, I think that Henry was still trying to run the show. And Champa and Worth realized this that it wasn't true mediation. It was a mock affair. And they realized they were just wasting their time and everybody else's time because if everything they, the every move that they made wanted to question the legality of them meeting with Worth and Champa and as much as they were under contempt of court convictions.

Joan Beifuss- Was the union agreeable to the dues check off form the employees credit union from the beginning.

Bill Ross- Certainly. It was their suggestion. Worth made this suggestion even back when the ministers were holding mediations or negotiation sessions. I was in one of these meetings when Worth explained in detail the dues check off through the credit union. Joan Beifuss- Coming back to the afternoon of the assassination, when you met with the business leaders you still got the feeling that they were not going to move on this thing?

Bill Ross- We got the feeling that of course you never know how much good you have done but actually we got the feeling that we accomplished absolutely nothing.

Joan Beifuss- Did they ask questions of the meeting, was it a give or take type meeting?

Bill Ross- Very little expression of any kind on their part.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled)

Bill Ross- Really a bunch of (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- They weren't concerned the fact that Dr. King was going to lead the next march.

Bill Ross- Well I don't know looking back on it I don't know whether they didn't realize the graveness of it or they resented being told this by labor people, sometimes I think this is what happened. They resented us sitting down and more or less telling them where the cat ate the cabbage because look what happened we didn't pull any punches.

Joan Beifuss- Ok so go back now where did you hear King was shot?

Bill Ross- (muffled) hotel.

Bill Thomas- (muffled)

Bill Ross- At this Hertz rent a car thing somebody had a radio on and they told us they had heard it and then I came over here and I turned on my radio.

Joan Beifuss- Who was with you?

Bill Ross- Tommy Powell. Of course he lives down in the Levi area and he left immediately to go home and.

Bill Thomas- What was your reaction?

Bill Ross- Oh I don't know. Of course being in this neighborhood I knew I had to get out of here, I felt like I did.

Bill Thomas- And so where did you go?

Bill Ross- I went home. The only place for a man to go at this time.

Bill Thomas- Did you feel like this was a would be a setback or...

Bill Ross- Well I don't think anybody at that time could properly assess the true impact of King's assassination. I don't think anybody realized, I certainly didn't, that he had this much influence. Actually I don't think the man did but in as much that he was assassinated the media made him a martyr. Even though he wasn't really the man and I highly respected him and this is the case of every assassination that immediately shoots a man up as a martyr but I don't think anybody realized or could foresee all of these riots coming across the country coming as a result.

Bill Thomas- Do you feel from the labor standpoint, did the labor feel that SCLC should have gotten involved in this?

Bill Ross- Oh that is a hard question to answer because one never knows. Definitely the labor movement has been very close to SCLC. After all we are the originator of nonviolent demonstration. Certainly. What is a normal picket line? But nonviolent demonstration.

Joan Beifuss- Let me again go back throughout March there were sporadic picketings from where the garbage trucks leave from the morning?

Bill Ross- This was carried on a very small scale. By the COME organization.

Joan Beifuss- How about there were a couple of incidents reported in the paper of one of a garbage truck being shot at and a few little things like that.

Bill Ross- This turned out to be if I remember correctly, I believe I am thinking of another instance earlier where one of the people in the garbage trucks had a rifle or a gun in his possession. Now as far as a garbage truck being shot at I don't think this was ever confirmed. Because they never did find where a bullet hit or anything like that it could have been a backfire or I don't think this was ever confirmed.

Joan Beifuss- Do you know whether the men on the garbage truck had guns on the trucks?

Bill Ross- No. Not to my knowledge. The only instance was this one kid.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled)

Bill Ross- Yeah. We thought like that Lobe saying to ride shotgun was totally uncalled for.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled)

Bill Ross- (muffled)

Joan Beifuss- Then after the assassination when every kind of pressure in the world was then on the city so what do you think finally made the city settle can you trace it to any one thing?

Bill Ross- No, I think that Lobe had realized though that he had met his equal and he couldn't continue to hold on to the adamant position that he had and stood on. For this reason and along with the pressure of just the presence of Jim Reynolds being here no doubt hurt Lobe considerably. If you have noticed since then that Lobe has not mentioned the strike, the settlement, or anything connected there to it since it was settled. The only reference he makes to it is occasionally and when he is talking about the budget and what the sanitation department. But he has never (muffled). Well you don't know. This thing got to come up 14 months afterwards it is only a 14 months contract.

Joan Beifuss- Reynolds came in from Washington it wasn't response from a (muffled) was it just a response to the assassination it self.

Bill Ross- It was a response as a result of trouble all over the country, pressure from the president to get the thing settled. You know if you remember in Vietnam his planned trip to Hawaii was cancelled due to all of this. You can imagine if the president of the united states had to cancel all this because of a hard headed mayor down here in Memphis. And Barrett Ruston was on his way to Memphis from New York and the president had him pulled off a plane in Washington for this conference he had prior to sending Reynolds in.

Joan Beifuss- Barrett Ruston was on his way...

Bill Ross- On his way to Memphis to help plan the march. When all the civil rights leaders were meeting with the president. He pulled Barrett Ruston off the plane then.

Joan Beifuss- Then right at the very end the newspapers had the strike saying it was all settled on a Friday and yet the final gratification or the final terms weren't announced until the following Tuesday I think. And the stories we were hearing was at the last minute lobe just wouldnt give in. Do ybou have any...

Bill Ross- Well there was some minor details to be worked out, minor language to be...(Tape break)

Bill Ross- In fact the business before they announced the settlement we knew that a settlement was near and it was just a matter of Reynolds and Mile working out the final language on it. Money had already been settled.

Joan Beifuss- Did you regard the final settlement as a total victory for the strikers?

Bill Ross- Definitely. They got recognition, they got dues check off, they got a good raise, they got a short term contract where they can come back in 14 months and re-negotiate. I would say it was a total victory far more than they had anticipated. In fact the strike could have been settled right after it happened (Muffled).

Bill Thomas- (muffled).

Bill Ross- What?

Bill Thomas- Much less the cost.

Bill Ross- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Looking back on it now, can you see any big ifs, if labor had not done something..

Bill Ross- You always look back your hindsight is always 20/20. But to pinpoint any of it no, nobody could that is honest with it.

Joan Beifuss- Just one more thing for the record on the King memorial march here that Monday, could you name me some of the labor people who came in for that march. (muffled), a group of teachers from New York federation of teachers, I don't know if (muffled) was here I have forgotten all their names was listed in the newspaper. A very good account. But I think the most significant group that was in here was the large group of public employees from all over the country [plus the group of farm workers that was here from the west coast.

Joan Beifuss- I didn't know about them who are they?

Bill Ross- This (muffled). Out of his organization they were here. Which indicated to us that all segments of public employees were involved in this revolt. Hell I don't know how many New York teachers were here, there must have been 200. Besides, there were 12 or 15 different international unions represented plus the entire civil rights department, the AFLCIO, incidentally we were in on some of the planning of the big march. Al (muffled) out of Atlanta out of the AFLCIO civil rights department was in here. A whole mess of vice presidents, it was full of them.

Bill Thomas- One point and then you have covered it. How many union members now?

Bill Ross- How many union members affiliate with the council?

Bill Thomas- Uh no, how many in the (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Sanitation workers.

Bill Ross- In the sanitation workers, probably 1,300.

Bill Thomas- About 1,300.

Bill Ross- In fact it had been the paper reported that 1,309 had signed authorization cards for the dues check off. Last week I think, no one day this week I saw this.

Bill Thomas- Ok that's fine you talked for 2 hours and that is enough for any man. Do you have anything.

Joan Beifuss- No, thank you very much do you have any final words.

Bill Thomas- We do thank you and it was very good that you were happy to do it.
(Tape End)