

SS135.mp3

Tom Beckner- This is duplication of some tapes given to us by reverend James Jordan. First tape covers a negotiating session between the representatives of labor and the city and was arranged by the ministerial association of Memphis.

Frank McCray- I am Frank McCray that is my name

Nicolas Buron- Nicolas Buron.

James White- James White

John (muffled)- John (muffled) at (muffled)

P.J. Champa- P.J. Champa better known as Pampa la Julius.

Joe Paisley- Joe Paisely

Jesse Epps- Jesse Epps

James A. Jordan- James A. Jordan

Rabbi Wax- We don't have a name and we don't really need a name we are all active in the minister's association. Our committee if we call it that was formed very quickly today. One thing I think that can be said about those of us that are here and the other two coming, to use a journalistic term we are liberals. I think that would be correct adjective to describe our attitude towards a social problems. We don't want to intrude ourselves among anybody and we have no motives. We are and I am not really here official spokesmen you men have a right to chime in.

Unknown Male Interviewer # 1- Surely go right ahead.

Rabbi Wax- We are a deeply concerned about this matter there are two aspects to the current situation as I see it and I better use the pronoun I because I don't have the authority to speak for anybody. I would speak for myself only now. Namely I think there are two aspects to this situation now. One is the labor situation I will call it that, conflict between labor and management in a sense which is the city government. Secondly, in what really makes this very ominous before the community are the racial overtones or undertones. I guess normally in other communities though I am not sure it might have been a straight issue between management and labor but what has happened as I see it and these other men will speak for themselves, is that this has become a racial matter. The men who are here tonight and the other two that are coming are deeply concerned about their race question. Paul Tudor Jones is the class president on the Memphis committee on community relations has spoken out many times on one of the organizers of the group. The secretary seems to (muffled). Those of us who are sitting here and have had a hand at least we are very much behind the recent statement hat appeared in the press as a paid announcement or advertisement calling for racial equality in the community. We have had quite a long and deep interest in this matter of the racial

question. The minister's association this year we have a very active committee on social justice headed by Ray Dobbins. I don't know how many ministers are on it 8 or 9. We certainly had a very active committee on race relations headed by father Veron. Brother Jordan is on that committee I am believe you are the vice president is that not right?

James A. Jordan- Yes sir.

Rabbi Wax- We are very deeply concerned both by the racial aspect of the situation and also the idea of justice, we are committed to the idea of justice. I guess if you were to ask us we would all say we are pro labor and mean it. As for myself years past twice I was asked or suggested to serve as a mediator in conflicts in both boundaries rejected by management because of pro labor feelings. So I describe our group that you for a stranger here only here for a few days I suppose to try to tell you some of our feelings. Again that I would say speaking for myself and not for the others. I feel though that I do not have the ability to mediate this conflict but I do have and I think I can say this for the others I do have a very deep and genuine and sanguine feeling that we can create a climate where by the issue can be resolved. As I see it and I guess all I know is what I read in the newspaper or on television I think it can be said that the issue one not of purpose but of means. I have no hesitation in saying that I am 100% in accord with the objectives as I understand them. Don't examine me on the 9 points in your telegraph, but in general. And what I would like to do and these other men here can certainly speak well for themselves is to create this mood whereby you can achieve your objectives. We are here, I guess it sounds Naïve and infantile perhaps we are here to help everybody and harm nobody. We have had in this city good race relations, I am not speaking in an organized way, I don't want to be somewhat incoherent but we have had good race relations, we have worked long and hard at it. The late president Kennedy had sent two men here from the white house to study the situation Memphis, how is it that Memphis has made reasonable progress in race relations. He was impressed that while we are just a few minutes from Mississippi and the (muffled) into everything.....well I won't go on and describe Mississippi. Just a few minutes from Arkansas that we have made this progress. And I think we have made this progress not because we have the technique of working behind closed doors, that was a very important factor. But rather I think reasonable. And when I say reasonable I refer both to the negro leadership who certainly championed the cause of the negro and those of us of the white community who are deeply and sincerely concerned about doing justice for everybody. We want to do that tonight or tomorrow or whenever it might be. As for myself we are for what you are seeking. Our problem and I guess it is the central issue is how we got about it to achieve the objective and to....I am not going to use the phrase good offices, we don't have any good offices. We are just here as individuals, all of us are clergymen, and we want to be helpful and that is all I am about to say at this point and you brethren want to take over.

Unknown Male Interviewer # 2- I just endorse what Rabbi Wax has said and I think we have come in faith and goodwill to offer ourselves to whatever we can do to

bring a just and good solution to the problem that confronts the entire city because it involves us all.

Unknown Male Interviewer # 3- I don't think I would order us to be judgmental in the sense that we would skew the facts on one side of the picture or (muffled) rendering a decision, this is not at all my objective and I am sure this is true of the others. As Rabbi Wax has adequately said we are here, I was born here, this is my home, this is a very religious community in the sense that many people here have a strong relationship with the various groups which we don't represent but with which we are affiliated. We hope that we can offer ourselves of service. The second concern I have is in terms of the people who (muffled) with the pain tonight, the people who may suffer more than those of us who are sort of inconvenienced temporarily. This I say in terms of caring for them in some way. So often the real issue is never dealt with and we vote as probably was the case tonight on this big question. We vote the procedure and we approve or disapprove how the procedure, as oppose to the real needs that are there. And I don't think we have any question about the need that exists and I think we can deal with this and not let it be a matter of identity with union on one hand versus management on the other saw that we draw rigid lines. I feel like that we have the groundwork here to deal with the mayor and the city council. These are not strangers to us, these are our friends Henry Lobe is one of the dearest friends I have anywhere. We don't vote the same ticket politically but we are friends and I think the lines of communication can be opened and we could conceivably be used in this capacity but we want you to use us and help us and advise us as what we might be able to do and then to the degree, and we plan to talk to the mayor, not tonight but tomorrow after we talk to you, but we wanted to talk to you first. We thought that this was fair to those who were representing. I think we represent some thing of the sentiment of this general community. So we appreciate you giving us the time tonight.

Nicolas Buron- Something that ought to in that what we are trying to achieve besides the ethical and the moral issues that are always involved is far more difficult whether 6 or 7 of us or whether we were all 110 or as many as are in the association. Your objectives and your few men with you are comparatively easy. What you have to do is one thing and you have a unified purpose Mr. Champa. You want to form a union in the city of Memphis among the workers of the municipal cooperation among the sanitation workers and beside the moral and ethical issues that Rabbi Wax and Dean Demmick and Frank here said. He just needed its call for it's the thing about time. The reality of it is that we are faced with the reality that as you know the other clergymen might not agree with me but the sentiment that is created by the pres and all that is not with you right?

(Laughs)

P.J. Champa- That's the statement of the week.

Nicolas Buron- Now what I would like to tell you Mr. Champa or ask you as I would tell the very same things to Henry Lobe is where and what area, I would like to hear

what demands you have or what points you have. In what areas can you bend. In the same matter I would ask Henry Lobe in what matters can you bend. So both of you can come together. Jordan, Mr. Jordan.

James A. Jordan- I would just like to add this, if Mr. Lobe would agree with anybody it would be with this group for I am sure he respects the Memphis minister's union, thank you.

(Tape Break)

Nicolas Buron- This is a case as I see it of a municipal association and its workers to get together with labor and management, why should you allow it to become a racial issue to any small degree. Now you may say there is your power. Now you are no pro at this you have come here with a set plan and from page 123 you are going to 124 and you are going to use every means and every way possible. But we and one reason why we have had good relationship is not because of the white clergy but because of the negro clergy in this community that they have done a splendid job you see and they do not adhere 100% with any militant group that would want to go out and form not a demonstration but end up in a riot you see. Now you have your points and I am repeating now.

P.J. Champa- I think the first thing I would like to do is to put things in their proper perspective. It was I who am justly greatly for your presence where and I know it is your right to be here because you are here helping me and the people you are speaking of and my fellow men here. Two, I told the city council this morning that I genuinely sincerely want to find a solution to this problem. I came in here after the fact of a strike. I assessed the situation, there was a demand for 90 cents an hour for truck drivers and 55 cents an hour for laborers. After the first or second day you didn't see a price tag on it except when Henry Lobe (muffled) kept insisting on the original price tag. I says economics there has to be something on economics. Met with a broad committee of the workers, find out what their issues are and presented them to the mayor for consideration and from there we started bargaining, going round and round and round. The issues have not been resolved and in answer to your question where are we willing to compromise I told the council and I repeated before 1,100 members this noon and I tell you gentlemen. We are conciliatory on all 9 issues we are willing to compromise something in each but unwilling to abandon any. I think that is (muffled). But there is a more important problem involved in this situation and that is the basic attitude of city top management or the executive or let's be real specific and say the mayor. The mayor says one, I will talk with anybody. After 2 days of discussions quite intense a reporter asked the mayor at a recess time. Your honor does meeting after 12 or 15 hours of discussion with the union does that mean that maybe possibly you are recognizing the union. It was absolutely nuts. I am talking to these men Like I am talking to any other citizen in Memphis coming into my office to see me on my open door policy or any visitor that comes into my city I would give them the hospitality. But there have been ambassadors to the mayor after the lines got drawn between us between my whole team and he to speak. We got some quasi partial people to go in there. And the problem we have

mayor Lobe says I am talking to nobody until they put their workers back on the job. I won't even consent to an election until the workers go back on the job. Just to give them the right, I give no concessions at all. I will use bad grammar but I will quote what is repeated to me. I ain't gonna sign nothing. Ain't in capital letters. As late as 3:00 yesterday morning that is what mayor Lobe told some impartialists who had some sharp feelings about what (muffled). I can deal with you Rabbi it isn't a question of objectives because one of the first things I know as a bargainer is bring your objectives down to where they are realistic and you can defend them before any tribunal whether it be public tribunal, the religious community, the business community any of them (muffled) by having I am down to where I can defend it to anybody, but I can't ease of course. Now he is the chicken and the egg, the guys go back to work and he settles. I come out with the situation these men are depriving themselves of a livelihood because they have decided they don't want to work under the conditions, their grievance is so aggravated that (muffled). Until we remove the element we are not cure the disease. He says well bring them back and I will give a prescription. It doesn't work that way. The fellows have been in strikes from Maine to California with public employees and private sector. There is one thing there is a dedication to a cause for an emotion (muffled) if you want to put it that way. But I haven't seen since I was a fledgling in the early CIO days and they said what have I got to lose, going for broke, what have I got to lose. The other question I want to address myself to, we have a tremendous trade union issue or set of issues and we have repeated those trade union issues. I have gone on television radio at any hour of the day or night (muffled) If anybody would let me know I could get two more people I would either get there or had somebody get there. A lot of groups, a lot of philosophy, philosophical, a lot of philosophies attached to this that says that program is just. You can name committee group after group after group. I cannot afford to be judicial to say I will accept the support of this nice group but I can't accept the support of this nice group for the support of this maybe half nice group. I don't have the moral or legal right to be moral or judicial about it so I was going to have to say (muffled).

Unknown Male Interviewer # 3- Dr. Dobbings Mr. Champa.

(muffled)

P.J. Champa- The news media are making a lot of noise about the manners of my finger pointing at the mayor. Completely off the record we had been in chambers involved in tidbits. You know when you are negotiating in a fishbowl like we were you know everybody, the mayor was (muffled) and after about 4 or 5 hours I thought maybe I better make to the same thing. Then we went into the back room. To get some sub-committees going. It basically wound up that the mayor and I were there you know and as a sailor he is capable of a sailor's language and (muffled). I was handling and out acting him and it became a stupid contest of who creates the best image to somebody who might be taking a half a minute of film, not what is good for the worker, what is good for the city, or what is good for anything else. But who can argue a better point who is more (muffled). He still absolutely refused to

get into collective bargaining between the parties, formally, informally, or otherwise without anybody else there. But the issue of my finger pointing and my abusing him and tell him to shut his fat lip if he doesn't want to arrest me. He kept prodding me that I was violating the law, that I was a law breaker that, so I said if I am violating the law arrest me. If you don't want to arrest me then you are violating the law in your open office and shut your big fat mouth. You know things got unpleasant but that's behind us and I don't think that Henry Lobe has any rancor for me because in the back room we exchanged a couple of sailors (muffled). He is that kind of a funny guy. But the question still comes that the segment of society that he represents is the old management owner servant attitude. That is the real crux of the thing. It is not Henry as a man it is Henry as a philosophy in the people that he is associated with, And this is more than just do a thousand city workers get a contract. Now I am getting calls from Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, this is a national issue. It isn't, Memphis is a little New York and I am told by all of the conservative community hold fast, don't give an inch, don't give him a break. But Tommy Powell is not here the central labor body president. But this issue has united what factions there were within the organized labor movement in the Memphis area like nothing has for the last 20 years send quote Tommy Powell. It has united many other groups and whether it becomes you know whether the NAACP or the Urban League or the Sons of Africa or the sons of Italy or somebody else is going to create some (muffled) as a result of this I suspected it is not going to be too many days until the lid blows off of some hot head and away we go. I have warned every responsible community leadership that I can think of. That I am as concerned over the community relations here as I am over the labor relations. I cannot sacrifice basic principles of one thing for another. I have to accept support where I can get it and hoping the people on the other side of the views I have will find some areas to discourse what I say. That I will compromise on all 9 issues but abandon none.

Unknown Male Interviewer # 4- Now Mr. C, I am going to call you that because I mispronounce your name. Everybody I called today about he meeting tonight I mispronounced his name.

Unknown Male Interviewer # 5- pronounce his name again for us rabbi.

Unknown Male Interviewer #4- Champa.

P.J. Champa- Champa, it is pronounced (muffled)

Unknown Male Interviewer # 6- I have listened very intently to every word that you have spoken, I am not arguing and we are not discussing taking opposite views. Now I am a babe in the woods I am not speaking for my colleagues in the ministry I am speaking for myself I am a babe in the woods.

P.J. Champa- That is not your reputation...

(Laughs)

Unknown Male Interviewer # 6- I want to ask a question. There is no cleverness involved in this and no shrewdness but I want to ask a simple question. (Tape break) I heard on television and read in the paper. The mayor keeps saying that he is not going to talk so long as the men are not working. Let us talk for a moment or longer about he phrase as long as the men are not working. (Tape Break)

(muffled)

Unknown Male Interviewer # 7- That is the most sufficient reason (muffled). Union dues check off (muffled) I will never agree to that. Maybe 4 years from now if I am turned out of office you can get it in the meantime you can have the union. These are the things I said authorizing (muffled) As a man I cannot commit myself to any of these things because on principle (muffled). Right back where they are and I am not about to do that to these men because unless I have had some specific assurance of where Henry Lobe is going to 1, 2, 3, 4. And we need this as an PR operation, I am sorry sir (muffled). She can't last for more than another 5 or 6 days and something has to give. Now last thing (muffled) I don't know but that can happen 1 or 2 weeks from now or 1 or 2 months from now. I would rather if we are going to have any confrontation it would be in nice cool weather, not in the hot summer. But Rabbi I would like at this point because he was even more, I got more of a sense that he was even more the victim of the lack of candor in the individual and the situation. I like Bill Lucie's to really play up how far you think you can trust the individual and why.

Bill Lucie- There is a lot more that can be added to what Champa had to say. I think there are a couple of areas that he maybe touched on a little bit light. (muffled) quite honestly he had said he would never sign anything under any circumstances, now this puts him in a extremely difficult position. Yeah because you have nothing then we could just talk forever. But he said, he will never sign the contract, there shall be nothing like this between this organization and the city that resembles a contract. That doesn't really make sense at this point in time but that is what he said. Now we indicated as Champa has pointed out actually in a horse trading situation the first thing you have got to have is a horse. (muffled) we weren't even going to sit down and talk about it I will talk about anything, that if we reached an agreement what then? You got my word. I am not saying that his word has not been good in the past or that it wouldn't be good in the future but you know we all know that won't work in the court of law. (muffled) and quite often written has very little meaning but at least the men know that their lives are protected. Now going in back to these 9 basic issues and in a (muffled) session with the press and television and radio all present, which is a very difficult way to work as I am sure you are aware. We said that on all the issues let's take those that can be settled in the negotiation process not even concerned about how long that may be, (muffled) questions of workmen's compensation that all these men are without and I think an unfortunate situation had occurred a couple weeks ago so of dramatizes that (muffled). All put into the area of negotiations. Then we will sit down and deal then within this framework (muffled). And the basic questions we can't even bargain on unless you first

(muffled). One thing that the Rabbi mentioned earlier there has been a union here for years. This is not the question of establishing a new union it has been here a long time but it cannot bargain with the city because it has no official status. First of all in order to do whatever we do to be legitimate you have to recognize the fact that this organization represents the men. There was never any question of that in our mind and no question tint he minds of the men, that is point number one. Secondly if we are going to go into this drawn out process then there are some problems that exist right now that require some procedure for settling during the course of the (muffled) in fact it justified the grievance procedure. I think the community as a whole really don't fully understand why the three demands were put as one. They thought that they had to have some procedure for their day to day grievances could be handled in an orderly manner and they (muffled). Not knowing how long this process was going to take obviously any organization that is going to represent these men have got to have a financial base to operate from. Now you are talking about some 12, 1,300 men. Now you will have a guy who is trying got trick this people to create this financial base to operate from. So we said this, please for those men who request of you to make the deductions from their payroll agreed to by the city and us in this process of discussion however the meeting goes, there would be a (muffled) agreement. They want you to do it. By the same token (muffled) agreed to by the city and us indicating the desire of a man to stop the deductions you can stop it. If we can agree in the three areas or at least these are three items we can work on which will allot h entire process to go. It could get he situation over with. And they said they would go back to work. I wish that did (muffled) the other meeting. (muffled) If we can allow a sub-committee say to get out of this fish bowl and try to sit down and address themselves with these problems. In turn maybe they can come back with whatever recommendation they were able to work out, between Champa and Mr. Lobe both deserve the right to agree or disagree but if there was agreement then maybe they put it into affect. This is in my opinion an open, as open as you can get and after some time he said alright. This is Wednesday night I believe it was. The (muffled) This is what the whole thing boiled down to if we cold reach an agreement to solve these things and put the others aside to be handled in the process. Well we adjourned Mr. Giannatti I believe it was an his assistant Mr. Paisley and Myself into the conference room and this is about 9:00 or there about us and we were there until 1:30 trying to resolve these issues and we practically had it resolved. And it was at that point that we thought three was such close agreeance we thought we could call in the mayor and ask him and he said absolutely not. That's it, forget it. Now let me go a little farther because this is what caused us to feel the way we do. He said ok this is (muffled) within the framework, he disagreed we said alright as far as the press is concerned the meeting had been unfruitful and this was all there was to it and so that we couldn't express (muffled) We would allow him to make the statement to the press. On the next day and still (muffled) all the long hours, he said and most of you maybe remember the news cast. He said point blank to everybody the only thing they wanted was check off, we sat down and worked out everything but they want check off and that is all. Which in my opinion was a breech of trust in which caused a great deal of mistrust later on. I there is one other thing that you should possibly know. And that was in reference to where the discussion broke off

and it was in reference to a statement that was read to the news media it was read at the point that he statements broke off and when everyone was till present and theoretically that was the statement that was read on yesterday's newscast. Well in fact it was not the statement hat was read on yesterday's newscast. We were all still in the office at this time, Mr. Lobe was (muffled) grey shirt and brown tie. For those of you who may have saw the newscast Mr. Lobe was dressed in a black suit and a black tie. The news conference that was released was in the mayor's office the on they put on the air was in the conference room. The day before Mr. Lobe wore a black suit and a black tie. So the release that was run was taped the day before even before the meetings that night. So you see we cannot take his word or the fact that he can do some thing destructive and meaningful. (muffled). He adopts the provision that there shall not exist a contract between the union and the city.

Rabbi Wax- Yes we understand now I don't want to do all the talking you all wanted me to speak up. Let me just interject at this point. You men ought to be antagonists in this situation. You and the mayor and his associates. We are not the antagonists. We are the bystanders if you will very interested bystanders. He got himself worked up because the men aren't working this is the impression I got from the news media. Now we might remove that, I would hope to,. Number 2 he can't be antagonistic to us in the same way that he is with you men. Well he can be but I don't think...(Tape Break). Everything we believe you men believe that these things have happened and are witnesses to and all that. What we are trying to do, I think, I feel kind of guilty about saying we all the time and I (muffled) is to have an atmosphere if you will whereby these matters can be discussed. I have no hesitation in saying to Henry that his position is obsolete when he says he isn't going to sign or he ain't gonna sign. All of this was said yesterday and we tried to ignore yesterday but we are talking about tomorrow and I (muffled) that we might in an atmosphere with 5 or 6 of us from the clergy be able to talk to him and get a response from him because we are not in your position that you men have unfortunately been able to get. I you men would be willing to give and I don't mean to discredit this and lose faith. That he is going to have to give. Yes sir certainly. (muffled).

Unknown Male Interviewer # 7- Lucie says this is not new we have been organizing in Memphis since 1963 (muffled) T.O. Jones who has been sacrificing and sacrificing in 1966 (muffled). Some mistakes were made and the other men were (muffled) slap an injunction (muffled) obey the injunction until the time when someone else came in it was too late. T.O. Jones kept a relationship going with Pete Sisson and grievances were being handled and things were being done. Really and truly we were (muffled) 30, 40 some months 18u0, some moths 120 back down to 15...(muffled). And the operation since 66 to us ahs been a 95% economic liability. Two weeks ago after the elections and the politics had simmered down, T.O. Jones said let's find out what Memphis is going to do. So T.O. went to eh mayor and the mayor says I appointed a responsible director of public works, (muffled) and whatever he does is okay with me. So he went to him (muffled). Meant with Blackburn, T.O. told me something about them guys (muffled). Let's start with a reasonable approach tot his thing. Give me recognition let's work out a grievance

procedure and commit to a check off and then let's have a statement that there will be continued discussions for the other matters. (Muffled) that sounds reasonable but when you try to get the attorney to rule on it fine. A couple days they have got (muffled). I remember the press called me and said did the strike end. But you would be amazed is the ignorance of his responsibility to the city attorney. While Lucie and the man (muffled) I am sitting next to Giannatti, I said my god (muffled). Well the first thing the national (muffled) asked are all public employees (muffled). And we were in this kind of academic backing with the people, that I can't afford to say, I can't afford to break (muffled) with the people who have called on me to help and I think we have (muffled). Fellows go back to work (muffled) I have no faith, he could tell me, he did tell me at 3:00 one morning that these were (muffled). And at 11:30 the next morning saying in that informal meeting last night you agreed on everything else and all that is left is the check off and you won't have to keep into business. That is when I climbed the walls and all human decencies were gone and I am sure I was wrong in climbing the wall and getting abusive with him, but gee I can't say I (muffled) because I flipped. (muffled). Those are the things that are going to happen. (Muffled) with some comprehension of what the issues were within that administration that I could (muffled). So this is the handle of the situation. I was just looking for a handle, there isn't a handle in the whole administration. The city council I thought you know, (muffled). They laughed at him and booed him and laughed some more and things broke up. I thought my god (muffled). I am terribly concerned about this, they said we just adjourned (muffled). Can we meet informally over this issue. (muffled). I shuddered and slithered out and I found out they were trying to meet and the mayor was calling (muffled). Tommy Powell went over there and (muffled) Well first he wasn't going to meet with me, (muffled) then I met with him and some of the questions only echoed the amateurness of the mayor and his people. There were a couple of sophisticated people there and they kept quiet because they weren't about to be embarrassed because they were a small minority. (muffled) So how do you get over this you say Rabbi you say to me put the men back to work show some faith, there is no (muffled) if I don't show my good faith then I am (Muffled)

Unknown Male Interviewer #8- now this is a strictly confidential conversation I really don't know why you have a tape recorder to tell you the truth. (Tape End)