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William Lucy, AFSCME Headquarter's Staff, 1968

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David Yellin- Testing 1, 2, 3,4. Testing 1 ,2 ,3 4. This is November 1st 1968 we are a the committee office with Joan Beifuss and David Yellin with Mr. William Lucy.

(Tape Break)

David Yellin- Ball is in your court if you could tell us a little about yourself or we don't want to restrict you even to a little bit where you were born.

William Lucy- I was boron in Memphis itself in 1933. Shortly after about 1941 the latter part I moved to California. Attended a portion of elementary school in the city of Memphis. I completed my schooling in California in the city of Richmond.

Joan Beifuss- What schools did you go to here, what elementary school?

William Lucy- Larose Elementary school and I attended to about the 3rd or 4th grade as I recall. T the present time I am assistant to the international president of the American federation of state and county municipal employees.

David Yellin- How did you get into union work?

William Lucy- After completing my school in California..

David Yellin- Do you mind telling us how much school you had just for the record.

William Lucy- Well through junior college and I attended some special courses at the university of California specializing in the materials and research engineering. I was the assistant to the research engineer for one of the larger counties in California Contracosta County which is directly north of San Francisco.

David Yellin- Oh yes I remember is that Haywood?

William Lucy- No Haywood is in Alameda county Contracosta is the adjoining county. For some 13 years served as the assistant to the material research engineer and I actually became involved in the union in that capacity. I was a member of the (muffled) which represented the county employees, and participated to whatever degree possible an eventually ended up as an officer of that union just as a member.

Joan Beifuss- Of that local?

William Lucy- Of that local union, local 1675.

Joan Beifuss- And what was that (muffled).

William Lucy- That is AFCFCME the same, a subordinate body of the international union here. In 1966 I became a staff member of this union in the capacity of a associate director of the department of regulations and community affairs. Where our function there was to assist our supporting, and advising on a legislative matters both at the state and national level. Normally my work involved work with congress

and other state legislative bodies on collective bargaining legislation for public employees, social legislation, (muffled) social security, workmen's compensation and this type...(Tape break)

Joan Beifuss- Are you married, do you have a family Mr. Lucy?

William Lucy- Yes I am. I am married and have three children, the oldest being 15 and the youngest being 10.

Joan Beifuss- Where is your family?

William Lucy- We live in Silver Springs Maryland just outside the district of Columbia in Washington, And my wife Dartheria was at home keeping the kids right now.

David Yellin- Where is she from?

William Lucy- She is from originally born in Arkansas we married some 16 years ago in California.

David Yellin- So all of this here is your coming home again.

William Lucy- In a sense yeah.

David Yellin- Is that one reason they sent you?

William Lucy- No, no, I don't think so it is just that as far as this particular situation is concerned we had some repoire from the last to the degree understood the dynamics of Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- If you understand the dynamics of Memphis will you tell us that then?

William Lucy- I mean in terms of our union.

David Yellin- You mean the current hospital strike but we are going to go back tot eh sanitation strike.

Joan Beifuss- Now wait let me clarify another thing first. Could you speak for just a moment generally on whether or not you think unionism will be helpful top negros in this country now, do you think that...

William Lucy- I think that probably as far as a vehicle it is the only available to working negros in terms of, as far as not the professionals so to speak or maybe even including them to a large degree but primarily the non-professional, semi-skilled, unskilled black workers the union provides the vehicle and the only vehicle for economic change and I say that with a full realization, in the past trade unions have been somewhat of a detriment to the black organization in the move for better economic conditions, At this point in time with the degree of organization that exists in the many areas that are unorganized the negro movement is the only movement

that can affect not only the economic condition but the conditions under which they work on a day to day basis.

David Yellin- Now are you saying by that this is better than black unity or black power or whatever you want to call it.

William Lucy- I am saying in conjunction with these other things, for instance the black unity does not necessarily have to be related to the job situation that the individual finds himself in.

David Yellin- The thing is you say "only" and I was under the impression that the only, I will answer that, it was more than just only.

William Lucy- Well I meant primarily the area of economics, there is direct relationship in the sense of the employer and the employee, where the union I can provide sort of the voice and focus for the needs of the workers. It was in that context, I think the black unity and black power etc. is isolated in the area of the need for social change, which the union movement is a part of its overall program is also concerned with, but the primary concern of the union is the service of the membership in the area of wages, hours and conditions of employment.

Joan Beifuss- Could you place any point in time in which the union almost quit restricting negroes out then..

William Lucy- I don't really give the indication that they have quit.

Joan Beifuss- Well it depends what union too.

William Lucy- In the early days and probably to a degree now they are building trades section of the labor movement where you have a skill, craft what have you, almost exclusively literally white and it is because of the nature of the union and remember the attitudes of those who are in the craft unions. The for instance in the CIO, (muffled) unions which are organized along industrial lines as opposed to craft lines. There has been a greater increase in not only the status of negro workers but the economic conditions also. I am not saying the attitudes aren't the same but the philosophy of the organizations tended to work for all the workers in a given area as oppose to for instance keeping the membership white and therefore not affording negroes the opportunity to get in to the union. We have seen that over the past few years some of these barriers coming down but you have a two fold thing, coupled with a shrinking job market. Many of the craft unions and the fact that there is just an out and out buy outs against negro workers coming into these unions.

Joan Beifuss- Joan Beifuss- Well now the AFSCME when did it start in specifically?

William Lucy- Well our union goes back some 30 years where in the Midwest oh about Wisconsin where it was more a legislative focus to the sense of the organization in the sense of improving the civil service systems, (muffled)

attempting to get some laws passed which gave public employees primarily the right to lobby for benefits.

David Yellin- I guess that is right I guess Wisconsin would be.

William Lucy- This pattern went on for some time. I think the present move toward full collective bargaining as it exist in the public sector probably started maybe 67 years ago. Where our organization adopted the attitude that public employees are no different and shouldn't be treated no different than employees in the private sector that they should be entitled to the collective bargaining process with the full rights to strike as exist in the private sector and the full rights to a binding agreement with the employer. This was sort of a new thing in the labor scene primarily because the general public had been indoctrinated to think that it was a privilege to work for a local government as to oppose to it being a job as any other job in the public sector and this may have stemmed from the depression days, when the government was sort of the employer of last resort and I don't think that necessarily has changed up to this point. But out of the many things a public agency may be it is also, in addition to having the responsibility to providing a public service.

David Yellin- Also civil service took place.

William Lucy- Right there was a feeling that civil service you know provided the ultimate panacea in terms of employment.

David Yellin- Yes, what else could you want you have civil service.

William Lucy- We have come to realize that civil service really is not the best thing for the municipal employment because it doesn't give the employee the opportunity of representation to the employer. The civil service boards and systems are appointed bodies and therefore become an extension of the administrative functions of local government. In a broad sense and theoretically an agency selects the employees who are eligible to be employed, but the real crux of the matter is that it excludes as oppose to includes and this is particularly detrimental as far as black employees are concerned. Theoretically the civil service agency is to design the criteria the tests and the qualifications for a job and yet we found in so many areas that the guidelines they set down in 90% of the cases don't apply to the function that is to be performed, it is only a test to mental ability instead of ability to perform the job.

David Yellin- Which was always the euphemism to keep people out, the black people out.

William Lucy- Right, so we have adopted the attitude that even if civil service exists, there should be a relationship between the employees through their representative and the employer that simply says that the employee and employer are equal in this process of negotiations and they sat down as equals and deal with the questions that affect the workers. Through written agreements, through memorandums of

understanding and through contract form. And we have many cases where civil service exists where we have contracts with the agency that we operate side by side.

Joan Beifuss- How many members do you have?

William Lucy- At this point we have approximately 430,000 employees throughout the united states and we also service employees in the canal zone in Puerto Rico.

David Yellin- Now this number was there any considerable addition as a result of the activity of the last several months? How many were there in January 1st 1968.

William Lucy- We were approaching 400,000 January of this year. One of the things that is hard to discern is the fact that we are the fastest growing labor organization within the body of the AFLOCIO and I think it is related to the philosophy in the sense that we are saying that we should enjoy the full rights of bargaining and public employees are becoming more aware of the fact that private industry has far outran them in terms of not only wages but not only benefits where the public sector was supposed to be so much further ahead say twenty years ago. But we are growing so fast it is hard to for instance point out at what point increase takes place over others.

Joan Beifuss- Could you for he sake of the tape just sort of generalize on what category many workers fall into, for instance sanitation workers..

IO would say the bulk of the workers at in what we would call the sub-professional classification and not necessarily relegated to sanitation employees but for instance we have parks and recreation employees, sanitation employees, hospital employees, any number of zoo employees. Even into the professional classes, we have doctors, dentists, engineers, technicians.

Joan Beifuss- What about policemen?

William Lucy- We have probably in our union approximately 15,000 policemen, both police and since the municipal police and also sheriff in the sense of county police officers.

David Yellin- Now, is your union divided in any way as to the craft within the entities, but if you are a civil, municipal employee you can belong to this union regardless of the nature of your work.

William Lucy- Right we don't divide along classification lines or craft lines, we do where we have for instance legislation in state where bargaining units are described. By law there has to be a break up of who is eligible to belong to the union and that break is along the lines of the national labor relations board, definition of supervisory responsibilities. That would be the only breaking point. We would not say for instance a guy is a gardener therefore he cannot belong to this union. Everyone is eligible and the (muffled) conditions as they are described by the union. We do have for instance in the library areas where you may only have a given set of

employees with the same classification, therefore if you organize them local it is going to be all of one kind. Not by design but sometime by circumstances we wind up in sort of a craft section.

David Yellin- Before we even get a little further about the union and so on, Joan, I am somewhat fascinated and interested in William Lucy himself. I would like to ask a few questions. I mean I know that I am interested in them and they may even be more relevant as we go along. But in selecting your career what were some of your motivations, I don't even want to put ideas in your mind. I mean, you know some of us really have very little control we are almost pushed into it, circumstances and what not. But you knew what was happening to you or did you suddenly wake up and find yourself?

William Lucy- I am not sure again when I say I knew what was happening or not, as I pointed out before for some 13 years I had worked for the county in the capacity I had and I had for that amount of time been involved with the union in one capacity or the other and at the same time I was doing what I consider to be a considerable amount of community work and at the same time along with one other fellow in the consulting engineers office and you were doing all of these things during the course of one day. There came a point as it seems to me where you had to make some judgments of how much time could be spent in any of these areas it comes somewhere near an effective job at least a job that would satisfy this as I was personally concerned. I decided in 1966 that is when the offer came naturally to work with the union on a much broader scale and maybe this was something I just wanted to try based on my own personal concerns and thinking as to what could be done if we really applied the philosophy, or attempted to apply the philosophy on sort of a grassroots basis. Because the unique thing about our union is the fact that those people who are members within a given municipality happen to also live within the boundaries of that municipality. So they have a different impact on the community, or potentially could have a different impact if they sort of focus their concerns and views outside of just the membership itself. For example, in just about every community you will find in this country people can play a role in community activities and social activities through the organizations that they are sort of wedded to during he day to day work. That can be sort of a two fold benefit as far as the community is concerned.

David Yellin- In a sense their, they are their own employers in a way. And a healthy community would give them a much healthier situation. But it seems to me that you had a choice, you could have gone on in engineering in some phase of it and but yet here you are?

William Lucy- Well it was just a personal feeling on my part in terms of helping people. I can do more on a full time basis with the union than I was building highways and bridges and this type of thing, it wasn't a question of money it was a question of the time to do the things that I wanted to do. I just didn't feel with this four level operation going on that I was really doing justice either for the person who was paying my salary then or to the community people I was working with and

we were involved in a tremendous number of programs and projects that you know they just left you wondering some time whether you were accomplishing anything on this split time basis.

David Yellin- Well now we have you in the union and functioning. Can we get you to Memphis or do you want to do something before?

Joan Beifuss- Let me ask you something had been back and forth to Memphis throughout all this time when you were away from Memphis, do you family here still?

William Lucy- No, no, no. When I came I had been through Memphis just passing through going somewhere else but not to spend any time.

Joan Beifuss- Not to come to live.

William Lucy- I came in February, was the first time coming back.

David Yellin- Did you have any memory of it or any recollection how it was?

William Lucy- Yes.

David Yellin- So that when you did come in February you were able to refer to what it was.

William Lucy- Yes. There hasn't been an awful lot of changes take place since I left in particularly in the area...

David Yellin- That's not what other folks say.

William Lucy- Well it the area that I am most familiar with.

David Yellin- Well maybe we can get into that. Could you, is it possible for you to trace your first involvement or the union's first involvement with what happened in Memphis? In other words, when did you first find out about the strike, or did you find out before February 12th that there was potentially something going to happen?

William Lucy- At the time when I first became aware of it I was out in Detroit on another assignment. And got a phone call that said there was a strike. At that point it was about a day old and it looked like it could be resolved pretty easy except you know we thought that some of our headquarter staff should be there.

David Yellin- Now who called you?

William Lucy- The president of the union.

David Yellin- Mr. Worth.

William Lucy- And he wanted us to come down and just do what we could to get the problem resolved. We knew of some of the background difficulties of the local union

had over the years that it had been organized or had been attempting to organize here.

Joan Beifuss- Excuse me for breaking in here, were there any organized AFSCME?

William Lucy- Oh yes, as a matter of fact the union was here prior to the strike as a matter of fact back in 1966 there was some, a strike or at least an injunction a situation where an injunction was served.,

Joan Beifuss- Yeah in the sanitation department, how about in any place other than sanitation?

William Lucy- Not to my knowledge there was no organization in any other areas.

David Yellin- Now you were aware of the 1966 situation in the summer when there was a threat of a strike and it never did happen. And all through this time the union had been trying to do something.

William Lucy- Right it had been trying to work under the rules that were laid down by the city. Trying to organize members but the basic problem they were having was the administration simply refused to accept the union as an organization. This was a charge against the Lobe administration because the prior administration had the same attitude.

David Yellin- Now all during this time let's say from 66 or whenever, Mr. Jones had become head of the union. Did anybody from the national come in to help out in anyway, do you know?

William Lucy- Yes, as I recall in 66 one of Pete Brown I believe had the assignment down here and work with the local and the administration and attempting to you know keep problems resolved and by some means or another arrive at some agreement where the city would recognize the union as an entity and therefore the union would be responsible to the membership you know for performing its function. The membership at that point it is hard to figure I would think 2 or 3 hundred maybe. The having great difficulty just surviving just because of the attitude of the city towards labor unions.

Joan Beifuss- Well not who came in with you when you came in early February?

William Lucy- I came by myself because I came from Detroit here.

David Yellin- That very same day that you were called by Mr. Worth.

William Lucy- Yes I left Detroit that same night and arrived here late that night. This as I say the strike was 1 day old then. I met Mr. Champa who came in from Washington either that morning or later on in the afternoon and we sort of tried to review what the situation was to see what avenues were open.

David Yellin- Now Mr. Champa's position again?

William Lucy- Champa is the director of field staff for the international union and he works out of our headquarter office in Washington DC.

David Yellin- And at this time you are talking about you held the same position?

William Lucy- No, at that time I was the associate director of our legislative and community affairs department and the legislation sort of specified one area and the community affairs section is sort of a multitude of work areas and types of work.

David Yellin- Now is it true that during the period before February 12th 1968 which we are referring that the international union did in some way support the local union and Mr. Jones and so on?

William Lucy- Oh yes, se the basic problem that we had in terms of keeping the union alive to service the people is the fact that the city would not allow the union to have a financial base to operate from. You could have 500 members but if you have to chase them down, I don't mean chase them down literally, but if you have to collect the dues by hand even though the members may be 100% committed to the organization if you don't see them you have an up and down financial situation that you are operating with.

David Yellin- Them are the facts.

William Lucy- Yeah so that only thing that we did was send in funds to at least give them mimeograph paper to have bulletins and this kind of thing, give them some assistance until they got to the point where they could get some recognition from the city.

David Yellin- Was there at any time as far as you know that the international said now we will give them up to a certain point, was there any kind of deadline for Memphis.

William Lucy- No, no, not at all. We have many organizations that are just barely surviving and in order to keep something there you have to do something., You don't set deadlines either for "x" number of members or anything else.

David Yellin- There are just a few questions that I think ought to be answered by you in response to some allegations we have heard and maybe some misconceptions and let's see if they are or not. And that is at about this time there was some activity on a national scale of your union to set out for a big drive to recruit. Or is this not so?

William Lucy- That is not true at all. Bear in mind that since 1964 our union has been increasing in membership all over the place in all classifications of employment. We have organizing drives but we only focus the on the local level. See we don't for instance sit back and plan a course of action on a national scale form headquarters, if there is people who want organization they request it through the local organization and if there is a need to then we will assist them in the sense of staff people to do the organizing,. I think you are referring to the charge that

Memphis was chosen as a target city. This is absolutely untrue. I think if anyone was in their right mind was going to choose a target city, a target time you would not pick winter time for a sanitation strike in a southern city that everyone knows has a reputation for being anti-labor.

David Yellin- Yup. Now just to be the devil's advocate here on the other hand you might because you got to break through the south somewhere some how some time why not Memphis?

William Lucy- Obviously that is true but I think our concern would be one there would have to be enough research and information available to let us know exactly what could be accomplished on a southern regional basis let's say. We want things to be in our favor if we are going to start an organized drive, plus we would not start an organizing drive with a strike. There are too many other ways to organize employees short of striking. For instance I don't think there is any secret of the conditions under which people are working, not just in the south but in many other areas. There is no secret about the pay levels and this is where employees are organized.

David Yellin- But to get back to the time where we are referring this is in February. The New York strike had just come in and it had been successful from the point of view of the union. Here was a new government and here was a city which had a reputation it believed itself that it had good race relations. If you wanted to make a case for the strike to strike you could make one and all in all I guess if you say no then we have to say you are right, this is what you are saying. But was there...

William Lucy- I think we have a need, and I don't mean to interrupt, but I think we have a need really to because you don't tend to take a look at the issue involved if you accept the idea that it was a planned strike for organization.

David Yellin- This is what is part of the accusation.

William Lucy- I think what you have to do is take a look at the operation in the year's past of the sanitation division and take a look at the problems the conditions and really the effort that had been made by the employees and other people who were not employees to get some of the problems resolved and then you can see some of the frustrations that existed probably about February 10th. When it looked like all things were going to eternally be the same way they were. What meetings took place, if meetings took place with local people, maybe some things were done. But I tend to think that what we had was a tremendous numbers of problems that had been existing for years and maybe this present administration had no responsibility for them but that isn't the way people view the situation, you have the ability to correct them and they are saying correct them. And I think these were the issues as oppose to us seeking to organize "x" number of members because bear in mind our organization is a voluntary organization. Either you belong or you don't belong. We don't have the ability to force anybody to join. It is not a union shop or

agency shop concept that we operate by. You understand what I mean do you understand the difference.

David Yellin- Of course what you understand that what I am trying to do is fortify arguments against so that you can refute them because this is an opportunity if they are refutable. What I think is an argument that could be used against what you are saying is that what happened immediately there after, St. Petersburg, Tampa, New Orleans, Baltimore. You know...

William Lucy- This was a, you have got to understand this that through the sanitation strike here and the attention that was directed to it, for the first time, well I should not say for the first time, but only this was one of the major efforts by workers to achieve some goals. Now we have had some good sized strikes in the private sector for years. This was not a big strike in terms of numbers of people but the manner in which the opposing sides lined up so to speak was different than any other to my knowledge in the history of the labor movement. Here you had probably the lowest level, or supposedly the lowest level of the workforce.

David Yellin- The stereotype lowest level.

William Lucy- Right, confronting really the powerful city of Memphis and they were confronting them not with a violent nature but simply saying we are going to withhold our services until you eventually take care of our problems. If you go back through labor history you will see that where private industry is involved there is just a work stoppage and nothing takes place. But here the city has the ability to go out and hire, it has the ability to do a number of things. The only thing the employees were saying is that they as individuals were not going to work under the conditions that existed and they are going to get something tangible from the city to deal with their problems or they are not going back to work. The city obviously and we recognize this fact cannot go out over night and hire 1,000 people or 1,500 people. And this is the only way that public employment the employees can fight and that is by the united effort...

David Yellin- But couldn't they do that in this instance? I mean maybe not 1,000 but they could 3 or 4 hundred.

William Lucy- No, you see the municipal government is designed as far as the rules to deal with individual employees, and deal quite effectively particularly when there is no voice. The only thing they cannot do is deal with mass numbers of people, that's the difference and that is the difference in the types of strikes that we have because in public employment bear in mind no one is in love with striking. There have to be pretty difficult problem to solve if you are going to get a large number of people worked up about it.

David Yellin- I don't know whether this has anything to do with it or not but it is along this line because it, Pete Sisson told us that in 1966 he sent 700 letters on Friday because he knew the union was going to call a strike on Sunday and this was before the injunction. And he had Monday morning he had 300, 400, people that

would work. That is the only reason I say they could do, maybe not 1,000, maybe not replace 1,200 in one fell swoop but they...

William Lucy- Well the difference as I see it here, no one at that time understood the nature of the struggles.

David Yellin- Are you talking about this February not that time?

William Lucy- Right, in 66 nobody understood the nature of the struggle. In this year, in February it was only a couple of days before everyone understood exactly what was at stake for the employees.

Joan Beifuss- Why?

William Lucy- I think primarily because so many of them were standing together and saying these are our problem and this is what we would like to have done. Now we had an active effort by the ministerial community to prevent people from taking the jobs of employees that were ours. Now this made the situation a little bit more difficult for the city.

Joan Beifuss- Are you talking about the black ministers.

William Lucy- Right, As ordinarily you know it is a very quiet thing and nobody knows what was going on and maybe you could find somebody who was seeking employment but nobody actually wanted to take the jobs of the men who were on strike here.

Joan Beifuss- Is this true now in the hospital strike?

William Lucy- I would assume that it is.

Joan Beifuss- The pressure of the black ministers has it been as extensive as it was 6 months ago, 7 months ago?

William Lucy- I can't answer that directly because we haven't done the same things in this one that we would do ordinarily in a strike for a number of reasons because of the parallel circumstances involved and the fact that we are not concerned to put the same kind of burden on this community that we put on it before. We interested in settling this thing and if we had to go to the community mobilization that we had to before we could do that. But by the same token we have a clear example of what road we are traveling if we do and I think that has been interpreted as a sign of weakness and a sign of a divided community.

Joan Beifuss- In other words you held off from escalating to the point where you did last time.

David Yellin- Yeah and why is that?

William Lucy- Well we just organizationally feel that we should not be cast in the role that every time there is a struggle to go out and rope in mass numbers of people

from mass confrontations because I think we have an atmosphere that exists in the city of Memphis that is very explosive. And this is the type of issue that will divide the community on color lines, it will bring about a confrontation that only hardens attitudes and hardens views and it really doesn't provide the basis for settling the dispute.

David Yellin- In other words you want to keep it a union affair.

William Lucy- We want to keep it a union affair but we know by the same token that if we can resolve it as a union then obviously we are going to start to move for community support.

Joan Beifuss- Is there any attempt to get this hospital thing, we keep turning back to that, but told you that night it seemed like we are playing the same drama over again. Is there any attempt to get this thing in the hospital settled now before the Ray trial begins on the theory that the Ray trial itself will be a thing.

William Lucy- We have been trying desperately to get it solved.

Joan Beifuss- But does the Ray trial itself enter to your thinking on that at all,

William Lucy- To be perfectly honest it doesn't enter into our thinking to the degree that it affects the issues involved, but it affects the manner in which we sort of waged the struggle. We are well aware of the fact that all kinds of attitudes exist now and will become more sharply focused as we approach the date of the trial. We would not want to have this type of thing going on downtown or marches in the street during this time because even though we can discipline our people we are not bale to control other people and have no responsibility for control on either side of the fact, so we don't want to be the focus of that kind of a confrontation, even though we for instance have some large scale arguments with the police department of Memphis we are not trying to provoke a confrontation with them.

Joan Beifuss- Well let's get back I am confusing one strike to the other.

David Yellin- Yeah, we can get back where we left off to again finally resolve at least from your point of view to give you full leeway to say what you want about the accusation that this was part of a pre-meditated national plan.

William Lucy- No it wasn't the point I was going to make, for instance immediately after the situation was resolved here, the things that took place in other areas, you know the issues and the unity and the glamour and tragedy and triumph that came out of the Memphis situation certainly affected other men in light areas of work across the country. You know the national press the national focus service was given worldwide attention that it was given said in effect that some 12 or 13 hinder men here in Memphis were actually heroes regarding to the amount of sacrifice that they made. They stood up and stood together for two months, there are always personal sacrifices and individual sacrifices, they went in and challenged the administration and challenged the city and eventually won. This became the pattern.

David Yellin- So obviously you had no way of predicting this?

William Lucy- Well we could have said what was going to happen, because of the militancy that was being showed. As a matter of fact we said it much earlier than it actually took place, we said that before the strike was ended that we were going to have a wave of these types of things around the country because the conditions here in Memphis are not unique to Memphis and employees will understand the need for unity in whatever their pursuits re going to be and that is what we had in St. Petersburg, in Tampa, Miami, Atlanta, Baltimore, Charlotte. All of these places.

David Yellin- But you had no way of knowing on February 11th that starting February 12th there would evolve the drama and all the things you said happened in Memphis.

William Lucy- No, no.

David Yellin- So obviously the fact that it did happen was a thing that propelled the other things to happen.

William Lucy- Well we had here sort of a raw display of the attitudes of for instance a southern city. We kept, I wouldn't say pleading, but requesting all the way through that thing that we sit down at the table and negotiate the differences and wind up with some kind of settlement thing that would get the people back to work. Yet we saw a mayor of the city who was more concerned with image than some of the problem. We saw all the forces in the so-called white establishment turn their wrath against the employees that had the least strength, and said to them to capitulate. So that the problem could be solved this is the sort of typical thing that happens, rather than them to address themselves to the one who can solve it and has the greatest ability to solve it they address it to the weakest.

Joan Beifuss- Now when you first came in early in February then , or when you first went to the union hall were you impressed by the men themselves t that point? Did it look like they were going to be able to hold, did it look like the unity was solid among them?

William Lucy- Yes, it was a very unique thing and I have seen some membership meetings you know over the course of the years but there was a different feeling with these men than you would normally see at a union meeting. There was sort of a blind believe that the union and the goals were right for them and it was these things in their determination to stick with it that was going to produce a victory and bear in mind that a victory like beauty is in the eye of the beholder so to speak. They felt that as long as they stood together that everything in the end was going to come out right, regardless of what they had to go through in the mean time. They felt every day that the thing was going to be settled the next day. And there was a thing where they did just committed themselves to a fight and there wasn't anything that was going to change their minds and turn them around.

David Yellin- And actually as part of our pursuit and a quest for meaning and my question is almost exactly Joan's and I wrote it down before her waiting for her to get it. There were 200 members of the union more or less, some say less and yet when the strike was called almost all of them, why?

William Lucy- This is the thing that, you see, the charge that it was a planned thing, the most if it was planned we could have felt it wouldn't have come out would have been those who were members of the union. Obviously they are in the underdog position you would not try to structure a strike situation where the overwhelming majority of work force are not even members. So this says that there were other problems the men were able to sit down with themselves and say they were big enough problems to cause them to stay off of work.

Joan Beifuss- Do you or when you came in and first saw the situation did you credit this to work T.O. Jones did for the last two years?

William Lucy- No, I would like to be big but I don't, because there was they supported a different feeling that existed. Well let me show what reason why, for instance the sanitation employees the overwhelming majority of men involved were older men that had lots and lots of time with the city and these are the last ones that want to become involved with the union. The last because they have got the least to gain and the most to lose, yet as you look out across the audience you were seeing the 50 and the 55 year old, and way up there. Much more staunch and much more stronger in their position than you found some of the younger men, which said they had given a lot of thought to this thing and they had not just been sorely, a lot of slogans, bill of goods and this type of thing because supposedly an organizer staff guy here you can sell ice cubes to Eskimos, but that is not true. You cannot convince a guy against his will that a course of action is the best one to take. He has to be firmly made up in his mind, that he sees no other alternatives and therefore he will join you if that's the way they are going.

Joan Beifuss- Would you say they are practically at a desperation point.

William Lucy- Yeah I think that's where they were, they were at a point of desperation and I think maybe it was kicked off by similar circumstances with the questions of the two fellows getting killed, questions of men being sent home, the questions of how they were treated when they raised questions about certain things. All of these things sort of came into focus.

David Yellin- Are you know or where you then or soon there after familiar with the events of the February 11th when Mr. Jones and several of the stewards went to see Harry...

William Lucy- Black burn?

David Yellin- Blackburn, Charles Blackburn and his people and asked Charles Blackburn to come to the meeting.

William Lucy- Right, I not being present and going by what was said by all the parties I understand that the same types of problems we were talking about here were discussed at great length and they really large meeting was called going much beyond the membership where they attempted to first of all clarify all the areas that they were concerned where they wanted to move and I believe a committee was selected out of that meeting to go down and see Mr. Blackburn and I guess some other representatives of the city. In an effort to find out what the city was going to do about them. And the meeting sort of continued while the committee was down discussing all these things and whether any resolution came or not I believe it was pointed out to me that the committee requested of the city that they come back and help them convey the position of the city to the men who are in the meeting because they felt this was a very tight situation and it maybe be helpful if the men could understand the bind that the city was in, if it was in a bind or the attitude of the city or whatever they were going to do and when they were going to do it. And as I am told, and I don't know this for a fact but as I am told this city refused to send a representative to the meeting, therefore the committee could only report the position of the city and the fact that no one from the city would come down and meet with them and I think...

David Yellin- Now what is your feeling on all this?

William Lucy- No one, (muffled) and if I accept the idea that there are multitude of problems prompted this thing it would be very easy then to accept the idea that what the men said to themselves well if they don't have the respect to come down and talk to us and tell us what their particular problems are and in turn we can tell them what ours are then to hell with them. I think it would be very easy for that to take place particularly if you have 5 or 6 or 10 people who are really gung ho. In terms of their own position or attitude and the fact maybe they just wanted to strike. You know all kinds of factors, I don't think any one individual could whip up the emotions of a crowd of that side prior to them deciding on a course of action.

David Yellin- So it was that meeting itself that really called the strike.

William Lucy- As I would see it yeah and I am not even sure that there was a strike vote taken, because as I heard stories before the guys just said I am not going tomorrow. And I have had enough of this moving around to where it just became a total thing. And at that point the union was the only thing that could focus the views you know, it had to become sort of the spear head for he movement.

Joan Beifuss- Now when you first came in had Champa already met Lobe and talked to him before you got here?

William Lucy- No we went to meet the mayor together on the same day.

Joan Beifuss- What was your first reaction to the mayor? Can you get that without...

David Yellin- No give it.

Joan Beifuss- Well I was going to say if you could get it without coloring it with everything that came in but it is so difficult to do that.

William Lucy- The reaction to the mayor was in my assessment of the thing was that it really wasn't a problem.

David Yellin- Where did you meet with him at his office?

William Lucy- At his office. That there was no problem and the outsiders had come in and gotten the people worked up and actually had he read the record he would have known we weren't even in town when all these other things took place but you know eventually in a day or so either the feeling of the men would die down or he would issue an order and force them to take a certain course of action and he felt very confident that the thing would all blow over in a day or so and I think that was the reason of his refusal to sort of look in depth at the things that we were saying to him and I think without question he was perturbed because he didn't get the kind of recognition and placement on the pedestal that the thought he should have from Mr. Champa and myself.

David Yellin- You men you were aware of that very soon?

William Lucy- We were made quite aware of it by some of the things that he said.

David Yellin- Can you recall.

William Lucy- Well for instance he sort of struck me as a wild west type you know back in the cattle days where your word is your bond and this type of thing and he made great reference to the fact that he was a PT boat commander I believe and a rugged individualist.

Joan Beifuss- He revealed you that himself?

William Lucy- Yeah these were the things that I recall, the fact that he was as stubborn as a mule.

David Yellin- This he said with pride?

William Lucy- Yes with great pride.

David Yellin- Were you prepared for mayor Lobe?

Joan Beifuss- I was going to say, had you researched him out?

William Lucy- Why I had never met him I didn't even know who the mayor of Memphis was, but I felt like we had such a critical situation that it wasn't going to take a difficult amount of time to A, point it out to him or whoever it was and try to get our heads together to see what we could do to resolve the thing and he could never accept the idea that we hadn't planned it. So he felt that he was being taken a little bit I think and he thought that given the opportunity to talk to the men he would have them back at work inside an hour or so. Because of his personality and I

think to a large degree the paternalistic attitude that you know he has had over the years and sort of a plantation philosophy also that you know my folks, and I will take care of them, I have been taking care of them for years and they are going to be humble in the sight of me and that type of foolishness.

David Yellin- Well now I want to ask you something, you met with him you and Mr. Champa and we have not met Mr. Champa we have had 3 or 4 meetings with him but they haven't taken place through various reasons, no fault of his I am sure. In other words you finished talking to the guy and you went out, what did you say to each other?

William Lucy- Well we tried to point out form a...

David Yellin- I mean to each other after you were finished with the mayor?

Joan Beifuss- You and Mr. Champa.

William Lucy- Well we were somewhat amazed because like I said this was the first time I think that we had ever come up against this type of individual and I am not saying he is an oddball but it was so strange that he had no conception of what we were talking about, he sort of (muffled) the idea that he was a purist and a moralist and I just could not even sanction the idea of sitting in the same room as people whom he considered to have broken some law. I think even in the early days of this thing it is illegal, it's illegal, it's illegal and as a part of my duty I just can't sit down with anybody who is doing something illegal but it was sort of a pure (muffled) type of thing he was projecting.

Joan Beifuss- Well now the publicity that Champa got the first week of the strike was very poor in so far as press and what not, the abusiveness supposedly took place between him and mayor Lobe is that true?

William Lucy- There was some pretty hot sessions. I think you have to recall that the newspapers function as to sell newspapers and the mayor took the position that he wasn't going to say one word unless the news media was there to hear it. And we had a sort of very strange dynamics you know the, we would be just sitting there talking and the TV lights would go on...

David Yellin- We have you on television.

William Lucy- The mayor would leap up and say something real militant and the lights would go off and he would sit back down. It went on with this kind of foolishness for a couple hours or so.

Joan Beifuss- Were the reporters always with you?

William Lucy- Always. Without fail.

David Yellin- Except one time, can I ask you a question, I heard, somebody told me very early on that before their confrontation that is notorious, well exploited

confrontation between the mayor and Mr. Champa that the mayor and Mr. Champa and one or two others retired to a room.

William Lucy- I am not sure at what point this took place, well it was after really the personality problem between the mayor and Mr. Champa got so keen. We felt that there was still an opportunity to resolve this thing you know very quickly and we suggested to him that a sub-committee be set up. You know a couple people representing the city and a couple people representing the union. Maybe get together outside of this thing and see what they could come up with. A very unique thing took place. We sort of set some guidelines and you are right the press was not present during that sub-committee meeting.

8But during the discussions about the sub-committee meeting.

William Lucy- Oh during the discussions about the sub-committee it was crystal clear what its function was supposed to be. I proposed the thing to the mayor and said that it may be better if 4 of us get together...

David Yellin- Was the press there then?

William Lucy- Yeah. And that the guidelines would be to allow us to go back and work on the differences. If we can come up with something that is agreeable to the mayor and agreeable to the union, Mr. Champa then that would be implemented. If it was agreeable to the mayor and Mr. Champa would not participate which meant we had to bring the work of the committee to each of them and then it had to be rehashed or whatever was going to be done to it. If there was nothing concrete come out of it and even if we agreed on some things and disagreed on others, we would just simply say that the meeting was nonproductive and forget it because nothing had been gained or lost. And we eventually wound up with an agreement on this. We discussed that particular guideline for about an hour and then we went into the coat room or meeting room off the mayor's office and we worked on them for about 3 or 4 hours.

David Yellin- Whoa re we now can you recall?

William Lucy- Mr. Giannati who I believe is the city attorney and Mr. Hallie, Myron Hallie.

David Yellin- Assistant city attorney.

William Lucy- Right one of our staff people Mr. Joe Paisley and myself.

David Yellin- The four of you.

William Lucy- The four of us. And we took up the issues that were involved, the questions of recognition and grievance procedure, payroll deduction of union dues and one or two other items and strangely enough in this sub-committee room we had boiled everything down to agreement and had actually reached almost a turn of an agreement on the question of the deduction of union dues. It was about that point

that the mayor came in to check and see where we were and he just came apart at the seams. He literally went apart because apparently he did not believe in it and felt that Mr. Giannati and Mr. Hallie were not involve themselves in that kind of thing, But we had sat down and tried to reason and rationalize and what have you to try to boil it down to something and we had reached basically an agreement that I at least personally felt was acceptable as far as the union was concerned. And I assumed that what they were doing was only agreeing to what they personally thought would be acceptable to the mayor. But he blew the whole thing out of the water so we said okay fine nothing is won or lost under the guideline we set down we would simply say to the press that nothing was accomplished. Well the mayor didn't trust us and we had no reason to, we hadn't gained anything so we had no reason to lie about it so we said ok, you can make the statement you tell the press that nothing was gained. So that, this was might about 1:30 or 2:00. He went out before the TV cameras and writers and what have you and said that nothing was accomplished through the meeting and that was it so we all went home. So the next morning he went to the news media and he said that the only thing the union was concerned about was the deduction of union dues. And he says that, he goes through this whole thing and he discusses all the issues and he says that the only thing we wanted resolved was the check off of union dues. He didn't mention the other items that had been resolved, he said the only thing that the union pressed for was the dues check off and that was when he made this the central issue involving the strike. And what had donned on thus then we were not dealing with a person of good faith, Because we had made no public statement what so ever and he exposed not only the meeting that was held but assumed that he had some tactical advantage by exposing us first. Now that wasn't so bad but later on in the morning we had sort of overcome our shock that he would do this and we had a meeting planned. So we attended the meeting even though we had saw that the morning paper and we were still trying to work on the issues and he waited very patiently until we had gone through maybe an hour or so of conversation and he said well if there is nothing new that you have to say then I am prepared to read to you a statement prepared by the city in reference to our position. And this was when they said they were breaking off negotiations and they were going to commence hiring people and so on and so forth, Well that was the morning just prior to noon if I recall because we had a membership meeting set at noon. This is about 11:00 and he was at his desk in short sleeves and what have you and the cameras recorded his reading of that statement. Well later on at the 5:00 and the 6:00 news it came on, now the office was full of people that morning on the news it came on and we were naturally watching to see how he was going to come across. He was fully dressed in a black suit, black trousers when he made his statement. But when he made his original statement he was without coat and in short sleeve shirt.

David Yellin- Were the cameras there?

William Lucy- The cameras were there, see what happened on the news is they ran a taped broadcast that had been made the day before because that was when he wore the black suit.

David Yellin- Before.

William Lucy- The evening before we had the sub-committee.

David Yellin- He had already made the statement.

William Lucy- Right, he had already prepared the newscast then and it was the newscast see he made the original statement in the mayor's office. But the newscast was taped in the meeting room that we had met in.

Joan Beifuss- Are you saying he made these statements a statement on his black suit before (muffled).

David Yellin- That's right. Now alright now, in his office and we have the film of Champa saying, well we don't have what he said there is no sound. Is that when he was in his shirt sleeves?

William Lucy- Yes I believe so.

David Yellin- Yes, as I recall.

William Lucy- The discussion there, the was of all around this question of the legality of the strike and the legality of him talking to people and the point that Champ was making was if we had done something illegal then put us in jail. If there was a law that punishes you for trying to meet with a city official while people are out on strike then he should implement that law. If not, then I think he told him to keep his big mouth shut or something like that.

David Yellin- Is that when he called him a liar?

William Lucy- Yeah, yeah...(Tape End)