

Interviewee: Martha Baskin

Affiliation: Fair Trade Rep, King County Labor Council

Interviewer: Jeremy Simer

MB | Many people don't understand about Labor politics in the sense that there are a wide variety of people.

JS | Is it making you nervous? You probably interview people all the time... (Talks about the interview process. They discuss the WTO History Project and the information he's looking for.)

MB | I think Mike Dolan, like so many people, doesn't have a real grasp of unions, of the fact that unions reflect society. They're elite, they are hierarchical, there's a hierarchy of people, there are bosses, there are peons, etc. I think that also because Mike circulated - or seems to have, at least in recent history - circulated within the Beltway. He also was more firmly entrenched in kind of a very much an elitist view of the world. And I think that he used the Labor movement strictly from those that are leading. I don't think he totally understood that there's a wide variety of rank and file perspectives, and that the rank and file come from also come from all walks of life, and have varying points of view, varying perspectives, and can easily mobilize and kind of rock things along. Just like he does in his own team of people. Activating and really pushing the limits and making things happen.

Dolan is very much about making things happen. I can absolutely say that. But it seems very clearly either he or Public Citizen was very much entrenched with the staff that they knew and worked with from the AFL-CIO in DC, as well as leaders of certain unions. Unless they were getting kind of the go-ahead from those people, they were not... Public Citizen itself didn't really quite know what to do with anyone who fit, who didn't fit the equation of what they knew the Labor movement to be about.

I remember when, all along basically, all through 1999 it was a push and struggle because up until the coming of the WTO when I was Fair Trade Rep, just from the fall of '97 through '98, basically the King County Labor Council operated in a certain degree of autonomy. That's why Ron Judd appointed me to be the Fair Trade Rep to go ahead and speak out against Fast Track and the MAI. We were way ahead of the curve in basically forming an incredible MAI resolution, just like the community, the broader community was, of which Sally was very much a leader. The MAI resolutions that we got the Labor Council to write were then brought to the State Labor Convention and were written at least six months before the AFL-CIO wrote a position paper against the MAI. We were instrumental.

So when it was announced that the WTO came, in the very beginning, it took a while to comprehend and understand that now that everything that was being done had to be pre-approved and stamped by the AFL in DC. Because I was even, and I am, relatively new to the Labor movement in terms of sort of being internally, so to speak, on staff, I was in a very sort of funny position. I wasn't being paid. I was only offered to be paid in the end in the summer. When I think that maybe they thought by offering me a full time job, that I might go along with their line of reasoning, rather than continuing to be sort of a thorn in the side. I thought that we'd come to an agreement where I was going to work with them and yet also behave in somewhat of a renegade fashion. But I was obviously very naive. I couldn't do both. But I'm jumping ahead there and I think maybe you want to ask me another question.

JS Well, one of the questions I do want to ask is what was your position as Fair Trade Rep? How did that work, what were your activities and how was it that that position came to an end? Because that to me is illuminating in the way that the King County Labor Council was approaching the question of the WTO.

MB I think I was only given this position of Fair Trade Rep not necessarily because I was particularly qualified to do the job but because I was speaking out on trade issues as a delegate to the King County Labor Council. I think that's the only reason I was given the position.

JS As delegate through AFTRA, right?

MB As a delegate through my Union.

JS Now what does AFTRA stand for?

MB AFTRA is American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. And I think in any organization often the person who speaks the loudest and has something to say is often given a position. And that's what happened here. In fact, it was really at the very first meeting that I went to in September of '97, I'd never been a delegate to a larger body outside my Union. Mr. Judd came up to me, and as Annie Atkinson likes to say, she was an organizer with the Farm Workers, "Yeah! He glommed onto you like a fly onto shit!" And this part I would like edited out! Yes, because that sounds idiotic!

JS No, it doesn't, that's the lovable Ann Atkinson.

MB I know, I love her, I just adore her. She was here this weekend. They came down to see us, she and Gordon. And in fact, I have to tell you, I mean, Annie totally stands out of all the Labor folks that I've met over the last few years.

JS Are you sure you want that off the record?

MB Oh all right! Anyway. And that kind of sums it up. Between Annie and Sarah, they were my fondest memories. Oh, there were lots of people.

JS Sarah Luthens.

MB Yeah. I mean Sarah really stuck her neck out on my behalf. She wrote the first Labor Notes piece. They'd wanted me to do it, but I was just too much in the thick of it. That appeared in September. Did you see her version?

JS I don't know. Maybe I didn't.

MB Yeah, they'd asked, they wanted someone here on the ground because there were rumors already that... So, Sarah finally went and did it. It was a challenge for her because she was doing it as an outside journalist. She had, by and large, been involved with the Progressive Caucus, with Up Front Labor, but not really seriously with the trade matter. So she by and large spoke to myself and many others, Tyree Scott, and did that piece.

JS But what about Tyree? I missed that piece.

MB She largely focused on Tyree's work with LELO and myself. Because it's also interesting. It's interesting when you're in an conflicted situation. And it's even now happening with this conference this weekend, in my opinion. Because that one "radical" voice, that one will be allowed, but that's about it.

Did you know that Lynne Dodson and Dick Burton and then myself, myself and Bill signed a letter. We wrote a letter to Margaret at the end of January. You want to see it?

JS Yeah, please. So, the four or five of you sent that letter to Margaret Levi and you haven't gotten any response yet. When was it sent?

MB January 31st. Maybe Lynne has, I spoke with her, as I said, just last Saturday. Anyway. I think we're all going to go. See, what happened was that Lynne and Dick were new - now they're delegates to the King County Labor Council - but they were new members of the Labor WTO Mobilization Committee, the committee I'd formed in June when I became exasperated that nothing was really happening to mobilize. They were coming to the meetings throughout the summer, and in August, when we were then all delegates to the State Labor Convention. They were from their Union, they're of course, community college teachers and their larger Union is the AFT, American Federation of Teachers. We received our packets of materials - I'm really jumping all over the place now - to attend the State Labor Convention and there was no WTO resolution in the packet.

JS Resolutions on ...

MB No WTO resolution. And I had had a hunch that the various WTO resolutions that had been circulating in the spring into the summer were evaporating.

JS Which resolutions were those?

MB Disappearing. There was a resolution that Sarah helped write with OPIU. There was a resolution that APALA produced. There was a resolution that the Greater Seattle Postal Workers did.

JS And each of those organizations passed those resolutions.

MB Precisely. When they were brought to the King County Labor Council, I don't know what happened to them. Although I have my hunch, I think that was simply a part of again, the undemocratic process of basically, the AFL-CIO had one line regarding WTO at the time. It was, we reform it. We don't stop it. We don't oppose it.

During the march, no matter what your opinions are about the march, everyone was all over the place on stopping it. Stop it! So they couldn't contain it. But January into November, they did their best to keep it narrowly structured and defined. So anyway, Dick and Lynne, we had a great time with this. No WTO resolution in the packet. Bill was also let in on the act. That second weekend in August we ...

JS Was Bill also a delegate?

MB No. But he was then involved. That was the culmination and that was the rather quick end. Because then by Labor Day, I was out. That did it for me. Then I signed my death warrant by participating in this wonderful thing that we did at the State Labor Convention. Because, basically, that was it.

Wait a minute, there's not even a WTO resolution in this packet. We cannot believe our eyes. Because resolutions are where policy, where delegates have a chance to change policy, or Locals do, or that that's how you change things in the labor movement. And so then it was very clear that there was some level of subterfuge going on here. I called up Norma Kelsey who's on the Executive Board and had written and is, was, instrumental to getting the OPIU stopped. WTO resolution passed. She didn't know why it wasn't in the packet.

Our main concern was that and she's very, like I would say a good majority of people, at least who are delegates to Labor Council are, very, very fond of Ron Judd. Thinks he's a very fine fellow, believes he's very progressive. But she said, "Well, this is not good, because there's not going to be any democratic debate." And I said, Exactly.

That's all I ever really wanted here, was democratic debate. That weekend then we struggled to figure out how we could get a resolution forward. We tried to track down APALA, David Yao, who is a member of the Postal Workers and also a member of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. Couldn't find him. Called Alfia Burton Lute. Very, very strong player in the labor community in this town. She said well, whatever happens, I will see that a resolution is discussed. You have to come to the resolution committee meeting before the actual delegates meeting and we'll see what we can do.

The long and short of it is that Norma Kelsey walked into Ron Judd's office that next Monday morning, this is four days before the State Labor Convention and said, I don't know what she said, but she basically said, "People are screaming about no WTO resolution" and he produced one out of the King County Labor Council Executive Board. Bob Hasegawa vetoed it, because he said it was too weak. And indeed it was very weak. But at least it gave us something to work with.

JS Do you know where I can get a copy of that?

MB We then took that resolution and had a blast with it. We made it the strongest resolution, this is according to rumor. Tom Lewiston, who is a former tinner at the Lockheed shop, stock shop shipyards, was locked out and has many an amazing tale to tell about the labor movement. He says that the resolution - he has a buddy at the State Labor Convention who chooses to remain anonymous - that the State Labor folks had never seen a resolution that was amended that much and amended so strongly, and had such unanimous approval.

JS Are you talking about the amendments that came from the floor?

MB The amendments that the four of us did on the floor along with a woman named Shirley McCulla.

JS Can you tell that story? Because I've heard it before. For the record...What was it like at the actual convention?

MB There was a WTO workshop scheduled at the convention. I knew already that I was in trouble because I was not asked to be a speaker at the WTO workshop. Instead, Marty Schmidt was asked to be a speaker and Marty Schmidt is a trained lawyer in international human rights law. He's an LLM in international human rights. But had also been working with, with, SEIU 1199 as an organizer. She was asked to do a presentation at that workshop.

I'll stay back with the story. I knew I was in trouble cause I wasn't asked to be that person. I was the Fair Trade Rep. For me to not be a speaker at the WTO conference was obvious that I had crossed over a line and I was now the bad girl. I was operating then, as basically, I suppose, as kind of an anarchist would.

We were basically having a great time going around the (inaudible). We were so angry that the only thing that was at the State Labor Convention was this measly workshop with absolutely no materials except for this terrific blue green white flyer that says, "I'll be there on the 30th" or "Be there on the 30th." And you sign your name. No content whatsoever. There was absolutely no material content.

The Evergreen State College Trade and Labor Center also had a table and they were told that they could have no WTO-related literature on their table. And they abided by that State Labor Convention rule. And that's when we finally went ahead and we produced material, in the course of five days, we produced pamphlets. Basically mobilizing material, mobilizing literature. It wasn't the best, by any means; we were doing it totally on the fly. But we then produced thousands of flyers and leaflets and distributed them to delegates openly. But we were not supposed to be doing so. And then also clandestinely. We put them in all the hotel lobbies. We went to all of the hotel clerks in the evening.

JS This is in Wenatchee?

MB This is in Wenatchee. What else are you going to do in Wenatchee? We went to all the hotel clerks, and we explained our tale and we got them to display our literature for the delegates to see, because when we were especially focused in on the GATS. Cause that's of course, the GATS is one of the two agreements along with agriculture that is still in the works.

You know Dick Burton? He's great. We just had a blast. I remember once in the hotel lobby, Ron Judd was standing there talking with Rick Bender and I said, "I can't do this. He knows what I look like, I can't do this." Dick and Lynne went up to the hotel clerk and blatantly did what we'd been doing in all the other hotel lobbies. We distributed our pile of literature and walked around Ron Judd.

It was silly, we were behaving like kids. It was a combination of fury and ... because this is a State Labor Convention on the eve of the WTO business being in town. And there's literally, this, this incredible reluctance to inform your own. It was just really astonishing. Once we went to the resolutions committee and got an initial amendment put in ...

JS And this is in Seattle before ...

MB No. This is actually at the State Labor Convention. First we went to the resolution committee to make sure that the resolution that had been brought forward was already tweaked and amended so that it had some teeth. Once we did that, Robby Bender was, I think, quite amazed at what we were up to.

JS Was he supportive?

MB I think he was wishing that we would disappear through the cracks in the floor. I just think that they were not quite prepared for the level ...

JS Now wait, who's Robby Bender?

MB Robby Bender does legislative work for the state labor convention. You have to remember that this is a state Labor meeting.

JS Isn't it Robby Stern?

MB I'm meaning Robby Stern. I'm meaning Robby Stern and I'm saying Robby Bender. Rick Bender Robby Stern. I'm talking about Stern. He was a little nervous because Dick and Lynne and the teachers had had a few altercations with the State over their struggle the previous spring and you'd have to have them tell their side of the story on that.

JS What struggle is that?

MB They were struggling to get recognition and pay for part timers.

JS Oh yeah. At the community college level.

MB Yeah. And they basically kind of went around the State Labor folks who were unwilling to support them, for various reasons. It's all your level of ... it's all politics. Even within the labor movement...it's like you know you can only step on so many people's toes at any given time.

Robby is a legislative person; he's down in Olympia. He's a lobbyist essentially. And so, if he's pushed too hard, he worries that he won't even get the little bit that he does get out of the legislature. You can say that it's a given. We were definitely outsiders who felt that ... ours was an issue that we really fervently believed in.

I think that on staff and leadership it was basically just another issue that they were having, that they were maybe going to be embarrassed by or going to be puzzled with. Another thing that was just always just really, really pronounced is that no one really knew anything about the WTO. It was much too complex. Or so they thought. They didn't even begin to try to wrestle with it.

I even felt that way in the beginning. But once you started figuring it out and if you had a little help from your friends... It actually was Ellen Gould up in British Columbia who liberated the GATS for us and turned us on to just checking it out on the Web. All you had to do was do it. But someone had to do it. And then you just really found how profoundly disturbing, privatizing the entire public sector and every "service" in sight, was. With 160 different

services being targeted, and those services covering everything from education to health care to public road maintenance to... it's just astonishing.

JS So can we get back to the State Labor Convention...

MB Okay, what should I tell you?

JS What exactly were the mechanisms of the convention? How do the amendments get put on? Was there an open debate with Sweeney? Am I remembering that correctly?

MB Yeah, yeah, yeah. I have a copy so that you can read it, and I did write it out. And when we got it passed ... in fact it was Ellen Gould's husband, who was also a Unionist, who immediately told us to put it on line and on the net. And it was with Sarah's help that we immediately distributed it.

JS What's her husband's name?

MB Something happened to him that was almost worse than what happened to me. He was really, kicked off the (inaudible). I mean Murray Dobbin was very much an ally because we were so out front and so ahead of ourselves even in the progressive Labor community in terms of rocking the boat so harshly that it was either perceived or it was true.

We didn't have a lot of support. I mean people just sort of watched us, I think, in either awe or horror at what we were up to. That we were actually trying to challenge the AFL-CIO at the State Labor Convention, which is what we did directly in front of Sweeney. I think what really caused my head to finally roll, is that I didn't do it deliberately, but for Ron Judd to have one of his delegates and someone who had been given the position of Fair Trade Rep, to be challenging the AFL-CIO directly in front of him was just basically a sign that he couldn't "control" his people.

You just don't do that. You basically assign people who are going to be your allies. I remember even in September when Ron and I finally had the conversation and it was just best that I stop being the Fair Trade Rep, I asked him, I said, "But you didn't even hardly know me at all when you gave me this role to play."

JS And what was his response to that?

MB And I said, "Why did you do that?" And he said, "Well, I like to give people... That's the way I am. I like to give people positions of authority."

So in that sense, that's why he does have a progressive reputation. He will step out above the norm. And he'll see someone who is alive and has energy about something and he'll say, "Go for it."

He was tuned in enough to the political reality, fair trade, a catch phrase and he was savvy enough to say the Labor Council needs a Fair Trade Representative. It's an up and coming thing. Here we go, let's go with it.

We were never really that close. I mean, we never had private conversations even like you and I are having. I never really knew him that well either. But I just didn't realize that, down the road, after all, he is the head of the King County Labor Council AFL-CIO. If he wants to maintain his position and any ambition he might have, he certainly has to follow what the AFL-CIO executive county leadership is dictating.

JS Is his an elected position? I'm surprised that I don't know that.

MB And this is a basic thing that I should know too. It is, but he's only elected by delegates.

JS So it's not a very direct...

MB No. And I've never voted on him for example. Yeah. Anyway, you're trying to still get me to go back to August.

JS I want the full picture of what happened at the meeting. Who said what and how the thing was pushed through? (They take a break.)

MB Lynne is very interesting because she is exceedingly diplomatic; she's the President of her Union.

JS This is Lynne?

MB Lynne Dodson. And she is very, very concerned with Union democracy but she also, she's well, she's I don't know.... (something, searching for some papers) I think these are just bulk, bulk, bulk, that we have extras of. Although towards the very end, although this is an interesting actually case study. Because this is what the AFL-CIO produced. This is interesting though. Their perspective is always over there. It's the children over there, in India. I just looked at this and I said, Get (inaudible).

JS We're looking at the green and blue...

Right, right, they still use the green and blue. But again from their perspective, it's, globalization that's out there, not trade policy internally that has to be

changed. I mean even now with China, it's the US that needs to withdraw from the WTO. Okay, you can ask for China, you can say, No. In other words, clean your own house is my perspective.

JS Where were we...?

MB You're asking me to go as far back as August and give you a palpable sense of what happened.

JS Because you made this agreement, but I tend to think...

MB Have you read this?

JS I remember reading it in August or September; I just tend to think this is a pretty important episode in the whole saga.

MB It is. It is actually.

JS So, that's why I really want to get all the details now, that I can, that you aren't able to pick up from just looking at the actual document. So, tell me about the debate. How did the debate go?

MB Okay, well, basically I have to confess that once we got onto the delegate's floor, it almost ran like it was staged, because unbeknownst to Dick, Lynne and I, Shirley McCulla was a delegate. Shirley McCulla is this retired Greater Seattle Postal Workers Association. She's a woman at least in her mid 70's. She was basically at our side the whole time. And she, for one of the resolves that you see here, the second resolve.

It's the WTO does not make decisions favorable to the environment. How it worked with these, is that the resolves themselves were never more strong. Okay, here's how it worked. The resolves themselves were presented in such a way, and Shirley presented this second one. She presented it on the floor of the convention. It then had to be seconded. I went - this is in front of President Sweeney. I went then simply to the podium and seconded her resolve. And she directly asked President Sweeney that if the WTO did not begin addressing worker's rights, which is fairly straight forward, what was it going to be doing. What was the AFL-CIO's plan?

JS What was his response? Did he say anything?

MB He did. He did, he is the President of the AFL-CIO, after all. What did he say? It was an embarrassing situation, because he was basically at a loss for words.

JS Shirley McCulla is her name?

MB Shirley McCulla. She's all sorts of things, but she's still totally right out there. And her phone number is 363-6587. And she will actually have a very rich perspective, because she is also a member of the Labor Party.

JS And you said she is retired from the Postal Workers?

MB Right. Postal Workers of Greater Seattle.

JS But, how is she still a delegate if she's retired.

MB Ah, that's a good question. I think, then, maybe she is a delegate from the Labor Party. The thing about the King County Labor Council you can be a delegate from a caucus or a local. Something like that.

JS So, Sweeney's there, stumped.

MB Sweeney's there, essentially, somewhat stumped. He pauses for a moment. He looks to his side, he looks at Ron Judd, and he looks at Rick Bender. And there's a very pregnant pause in the meeting. And the 500 delegates have already been primed mind you, because Dick, Lynne and I have been running around like crazy people leafleting and making a nuisance of ourselves.

They definitely were already getting to hear from us. I just recall that Shirley's was a very, very significant thing, and that it passed. What she was asking is that if the WTO did not begin making rules favorable to workers that the AFL-CIO would then lobby the US to withdraw from the WTO. And that was totally ahead of the curve, because they weren't even thinking that far. The AFL-CIO strategy, I think, is largely Washington DC legislatively oriented. I think the AFL-CIO and many of the people who work there I would probably hazard a guess that a good 15 percent of them by and large, they're players, they're diplomats, they're lobbyists. They challenge to a certain extent, but they're certainly not radical, by any stretch of the imagination.

That's just not their scheme, that's not their plan. Although, I'll always recall Thea Lee who was sent out here by the AFL-CIO many, many times as the AFL-CIO's designated voice on trade issues. She would say we need a domestic consensus for things to change. We need a domestic consensus for us to ask for more of the WTO. And, but if indeed that is the case, then why did you treat those who were asking for more than that, so harshly. I don't know.

JS So what was the relationship like between the KCLC and the AFL at the national level during these months? For example, do you think there was direct pressure from the DC office on Ron Judd and the KCLC to tone things down?

MB Absolutely. Absolutely.

JS Do you have any examples of how that might have worked? Or can you think of any moments when the tone changed or a position changed at the local level that seemed like it might have been...

MB I think the Center for Labor Studies had had a “Strikes!” conference. When was that? Was that in '98?

JS No, it was '99. It was last year, but I was out of town. It was in the springtime. It might have been around May or something.

MB It couldn't have been that late. I'm confused on this that it happened in '98.

JS I'm quite sure it was '99, because I was in Mexico.

MB Okay, okay. All right. But it happened before May, it wasn't as late as May. We already had our series of community meetings... For my mind it's happening sometime between late 98 and very early '99, let's say February of '99. Ron Judd was all fired up and he initially ... there were internal meetings about the WTO coming to town. He said, “We'll have a general strike!”

JS He said that? Publicly?

MB Kind of to others, he didn't necessarily say it publicly, but people within the King County Labor Council community knew that he said it. And these guys really seem to have serious disagreements with Ron Judd. The Wobblies, there's a very small Wobbly contingent here in this town. And we're talking about Jason Adams and ... Oh, he's an ILWU guy. He helped, he did a lot of work towards the end.

JS Jason. Oh, Ron Wilds. Jeff, uh....

MB No. Not Jeff. No, Jeff was not working with us at all during that year. He was involved with other issues. Anyway, they were basically, they heard Ron say this and they tried to have conversations with him about it.

JS Do you think he said it because (inaudible) or do you think he meant it?

MB I think he said it because, as he has said to me, he prides himself having been a member of Students for Democratic Society, 20,000 years ago. He's a radical after all, and he says these things, sometimes, to please and sometimes because he's fired up. But this is an example. That tone. He was obviously being reined in. Because he stopped talking about that really already by March. Almost four to eight weeks past whenever that conference was.

JS So it was around the time of the conference that he said ‘let's have another general strike.’

MB Right. But this is still early into the 1999 cycle. Because for example when Thea Lee and Barbara Shaler from the international department of the AFL-CIO and Joe Uehlein, he was sent here a lot from the AFL-CIO. When they first came to an April meeting, and then Rosalinda Aguirre from Jobs With Justice was there and then Verlene Wilder was there. She was then, that was when she was finally being, put into the meetings. She's a staff person.

JS About when did she come in, do you think?

MB About April. But she would never say a word. Never ever said a word until August when she was then assigned the task of forming, of having the education committee then being assigned to do WTO work. I would read, to basically, let this, the labor WTO Mobilization committee, of which I was the Chair of, know that there was now a new internal group that would follow the rules and do things the way they were supposed be done.

JS So, Labor Mobilization...When was it formed?

MB I formed that, not that it was that early, but finally in June. I remember Ron Judd and Rich Feldman came to the first meetings and we were still talking then. There was still hope and there was still, at least the pretense that we were one happy movement. But, back to how it's being watered down. In April, when, at this meeting that I'm describing, Rosalinda Aguirre was excited and she said, "Oh, we can do CD. We can do Civil Disobedience. And we can do... "

And Ron said, "There will be no CD." And he said it in his most strict, serious voice. You know he's really a personable kind of fellow in many, many ways. And he was saying this now, again, in front of three people who'd been sent from the AFL in DC. Thea, Joe and Barbara. And I looked at Rosalinda and she didn't say anything then. She didn't offer any voice of protest. And actually, Tyree was at that meeting as well in the afternoon. It was an all day-er. And I was in on it all day.

JS What kind of meeting was this?

MB This was a meeting in which Ron was, and the AFL, were trying to have by and large a Labor meeting, a planning meeting.

JS Specifically for the WTO.

MB Yeah, yeah. And this was really the first kind of broad international King County Local meeting.

JS Would you happen to have a calendar somewhere so that you could figure out what date it was? Later on.

MB

Yeah, I can do it later on. I have an enormous file of quite a few things. And actually, I have a memo of that meeting. That I sent to none other than Mike Dolan. And I think that might have gotten me in some trouble. I think there were all sorts of internal things that I don't even know about to this day. But, I don't think I want to know about them. And maybe you'll discover them. You can be the investigative reporter.

I think what was so remarkable was that there was so little real discussion. That it was a decision that obviously Ron had obviously already been talked to about, that he needed to stop talking about having a general strike. He basically, shut the discussion down, in kind of no uncertain terms. There will be no civil disobedience. And again, this is just invited guests who are at this round table. These are just all the people that you want to have at the table. And I think that, really, also what is at the heart of the matter and why it was so puzzling and disconcerting and outrageous for me to observe was how little debate there really ever was about any of this.

The huge debates that were going on at the community meetings from February into the fall, well, especially into the summer, about the name, about the issues, about what we were talking about, about what we were debating, and to have so little of that going within Labor. was really an injustice to the new Labor movement. And that was what was the most egregious, on my part.

In spite of having been in the Union for almost 20 years now, I really knew nothing about the new Labor movement, or even about the whole intricacies of Labor Union politics. I'd been elected to my Union board and I still am on that board, I'd been on that. But this was nothing compared to what I was experiencing in this year of the WTO and the Labor movement. And even in my capacity as a freelance radio reporter, I was doing all I could to expose and share stories about the new Labor movement.

You know about WashTech, about the struggle to invite illegal blue-collar construction workers. It was totally unheard of in the Labor movement. They never did that; they always fought and, said, "No, no, we don't want to have anything to do with you." That was just so promising. So, to see this kind of behavior, when you were working, when you were supposedly trying to organize what I thought was going to be an organizational opportunity of a lifetime around the WTO.

To see so much obstructionism, and basically, just blockage, just anti-Democratic party politics. This paragraph just here towards the tail end, this whole business of the AFL-CIO's catch phrase was "an economy that doesn't work, doesn't...doesn't work for working people, doesn't work." And that was supposed to cover the ground of the entire WTO and that was clearly not

particularly informative or adequate to be the catch phrase that you would always pull out on any occasion.

I think I simply just pointed out in this talk that I gave in down in San Francisco that also the concept of a working group, that the AFL and other NGO's are seemingly satisfied. Working, demanding from the Clinton administration a working group on worker's rights, a working group on whatever you have it.

I think that if the AFL leadership and staff had attempted to rally Unionists to Seattle with calls for "We demand a working group" that they wouldn't have...if they'd used that blatantly, I think probably the sit down strikes of the '30's might have been replicated because Unionists would have been totally appalled. What this is what we're supposed to be excited about? Because when you come down to it, that's what the leadership was asking for, a working group.

JS Do you think that would have led to another sit down strike or do you think that would have led to people not showing up and the Labor Mobilization being 5,000 Locals and nothing else.

MB I guess you could have looked at it either way. I guess it could have gone either way. I like to think that the leadership is very skillful at trying to pretend that it's to it's membership, that it is working on the behalf, and doing all it can. What I've come to learn as I've had some little more time to read in these last few months, and I've been reading Kim Moody's book over and over again, An Injury to One, whatever it's called. Do you know the name of that book?

JS Isn't it, An Injury to One is an Injury to All?

MB Yeah. The Democratic debate has been stifled in the Union movement since the AFL-CIO merged, 45 years ago. More than that. It's that you don't have Democratic debate in Unions. It's not done. Because of this strict allegiance to the Democratic party and being simply a vehicle for the Democratic Party, versus, a thorn in it's side or a real guiding light.

JS I was going to switch gears. Can you tell me about the Kingdome? I remember your earlier rally was supposed to be in the Kingdome and later was moved to Seattle Center, to the Memorial Stadium Do you know why that happened? Or did that really happen, was there really an original plan to start at the Kingdome

MB Yes. From what I understand of it, the AFL-CIO was simply not willing to fund the far larger, the far costlier Kingdome. And they were concerned that they would not be able bring 50,000. And so they lowered their sights.

JS Is that the capacity for 2000?

MB Right, they lowered their sights to 15 and then were able to raise it to 25 or whatever numbers they did actually have. What was also going on all along, so that it wasn't just some figment of my foggy imagination, is that there huge fights within the AFL-CIO Executive Committee of just what to do on trade policy. Those fights were manifest in actually how much of a presence Labor was really going to have on the streets of Seattle when push came to shove, when the WTO was actually meeting. And so the Kingdome expectation was lowered finally in September, when Ron Judd was simply not able to get enough executive committee leadership support to say, "We will bring our Unions, we will lobby our Locals to come and join you."

When you really think about having the World Trade Organization meeting on US soil for the first time in history you'd think that there would have been a million Unionists here. And that, if you go back into the New York Times and read Richard Greenhouse's articles... Is it Richard? Greenhouse, who does Labor, now, for the New York Times.

For example, in October, it finally came out, Greenhouse wrote about the AFL-CIO signing on to Clinton's trade policy by signing onto an advisory committee. Have you seen that document?

JS I haven't seen the actual document. I've seen excerpts of it. I need to get a copy.

MB Okay. I don't have an actual copy of that, but I do have a copy of either the LA Times or the New York Times recounting of it. Do you have that?

JS I have some articles.

MB Right, right, okay. Well that, that is obviously very revealing. Because if you have the AFL-CIO leadership basically signing on to the trade policy then you're not going to have much of a commitment to rallying the troops against the trade policy in the form of the WTO. And so, I think, all along, why, like even if I give you a thesis or debate about why I think that this pretty pamphlet is not so good. This pamphlet didn't come out until October. Obviously there was a real reluctance from DC to producing much of anything. And the blue book pamphlet that came out, the earliest, that finally came out in late July, it was so dense.

JS Which book?

MB Unionists call it "The Blue Book." The AFL-CIO produced a blue book on the WTO that basically didn't provide any action plan, didn't, it basically offered a petition. It offered a petition for Unionists to get signatures on, that they would in turn send to the AFL-CIO, who would in turn send it to various members of Congress. It was an awkward attempt at mobilization that was basically just sort of a laughing stock. I remember when we got it, Labor Mobilization

Committee. It was like, "No, no, we're not, this is of no use to us." But you were asking... What were you asking? Were you asking a specific question about the Kingdome and I think I answered it.

JS I just chose the Kingdome specifically as one the one expression, the one example I could think of policy changing in terms of what the AFL was going to do or planning to do for the November 30th. Can you think of any other examples like that, that really illustrate any decisions or policy statements or anything like the Kingdome decision, that really kind of illustrate...

MB Right, right. No CD. No more talks about a strike. Right.

JS And the good and the bad, too. Not necessarily just the less progressive steps, but anything particularly progressive that came out of delegates from the KCLC.

MB Well, that's a whole other discussion and I think I should...I think you should really discuss also, have some conversation with other members of the Labor Mobilization Committee. And I think I've already mentioned some of the key players. Dick Burton and Lynne Dodson and Jason Adams.

You definitely should track down Jason, because he did a lot of work. The Wobblies continued to mobilize for a citywide walkout. For Labor's position as a whole, they altered the word "strike" and they did a lot of work on that. And they had tons of work on that. Obviously, clearly in a nutshell, Ron Judd became very compromised by the AFL-CIO's firm allegiance to the Democratic Party.

It didn't take too much of a genius to figure that out. Although I didn't get that for the longest time. Because I couldn't believe it. Because he has carved such a niche and such a name for himself as a progressive Labor leader ... He was never able to openly, obviously, he would never share that. Or really say that. He just wouldn't do that. And many, many Labor folks in this town think that he's an absolute hero for having mobilized as much as was mobilized. ...

JS Did you have anything else you want to say about that?

MB No, I don't want to get started on that.

JS What roles did the rank and file activists play in the mobilizing?

MB I don't think we did much at all really. We did what we did at the State Labor Convention and we did produce the leaflets. We did a lot okay, it's true. But by and large, and you'll read this then when you read my talk, we spent far too much time, where I say "we" I mean the core of people. Like me. Basically batting our heads against the wall trying to push the KCLC and the AFL-CIO

into territory it had no intention of going. And we would have been far better off if as a Labor WTO Mobilization Committee, we had had an alliance, or a community alliance, who would welcome us or another union, or somewhere to go, to really mobilize then from that. That place of origin. Rather than the King County Labor Council, where we were.

JS If you could do it all over again, is that the strategy you would take?

MB Oh absolutely! Absolutely. My strongest allies, who of course were Sally Soriano, through early September, and she used to tell me that Mike Dolan was telling her, that we need to keep Martha inside. You know, this is very unusual that a central Labor Council has a Fair Trade Rep. We need her in there, pushing. That's where she needs to be. And I was protesting from the beginning. Because I saw, reasonably clearly, by April, after the meeting with Thea Lee and Barbara Shaler and Joe Uehline I saw, Wow, these people aren't asking for very much at all. That was not what I was about, because I was not thinking that I was going to be...

JS Thinking you were going to be what?

MB That I would be getting some job out of this somewhere down the road. I think I had some vague dreams that, "Oh, gee, maybe I found myself actually, a real job."

JS Wouldn't that be nice to be paid for once?

MB Yes, you're right! I mean Jeremy, Jeremy Madsen. He always said, well, Jeremy Simer, that's who's going to go somewhere. I mean that's what everybody always said.

JS No.

MB Well, yeah. But keep me on the track. Where was I?

JS Okay, what role did the rank and file play?

MB Well, I was telling you that we were batting our heads... So, I think that the role that we did play, and Bill is really convinced of this, and you should talk with Bill, too. He spent a lot of time on this. The main role we played was, I think, to at least push the AFL-CIO, or to shame them a little bit further than they might have gone. Many of the Unionists who did come to know me, primarily staff, but, many rank and file Unionists have found me over the months, all through all of this have said, "You helped us, you alerted us, to what this thing was. No one talks about this in our unions. We don't know about it. So, thank you. You did that."

So as much as I could, as much as the resources that we had at our disposal, which was none, we were doing this all out of pocket, the role we played was to inform as many as we could. I think you're asking me something I'm not quite, that I'm skirting around. Are you asking me to look back at it? Or are you asking, literally, concretely what did we do?

JS Well, I was kind of asking both. Kind of in a big picture theoretical what was the place of the rank and file. But that was mainly my question.

MB If you speak with Jason, and I ever remember what his Wobbly friend's name was, who is in the IBU or the ILWU, or one of the maritime unions....

JS Who always worked on the Labor Mobilization Committee?

MB Because he and Lynne and Dick sent out, for example, a great letter, to every single member of the King County Labor Council.

JS Every delegate?

MB Every Union. Every union. About mobilizing and about, here, we're available to you as speakers.

JS Who sent that letter?

MB The man's name, who I'm forgetting, Lynne Dodson and Dick Burton.

JS When was that, about, do you remember?

MB September.

JS And offering...

MB John Pursack!!

JS John Pursack. I know his name, but I don't....

MB John Pursack. 937-5252. John Pursack.

JS Offering help from the Mobilization Committee?

MB From the Mobilization Committee. Saying this is what we're doing, we're meeting on the second and third Thursdays, or whatever, we'd love to have your participation, come join us. We have this to offer, this, that. Because, quite frankly, Jeremy, I was, I had been seriously burned by what happened to me and was not much use to anyone for a while there. I was losing sleep. I had never lost that much sleep. I wasn't eating, I was in bad shape. I was like, Wow!! I

didn't think that this was going to happen. And I had to kind of bow out for a while. Of course, that's, then I was able to do a little bit more journalism than I otherwise would have had time for.

JS I suspect this might be a touchy subject, so, forgive me if you don't want to talk about it. But, what exactly happened, you mentioned earlier on that you and Sally had a good relationship, but apparently that's not the case any more.

MB She won't talk to me. She's never ever returned a phone call.

JS Can you explain to me why? Do you know?

MB And this should probably not be on the record either. (Tape is paused) The origins of that split, after the Metropolitan County Council passed a WTO resolution, a very strong resolution. You were there. Of course, you were there. You were one of the speakers. There were five of us. It was exceedingly powerful to have done that.

Through the resolution process, it was going to be... what's the word? All right, so President Clinton calls King County Executive Ron Sims. Ron Sims calls the Metropolitan County Council Members and in turn calls Ron Judd, as I understood it. Ron Sims called Ron Judd - this is the Labor Day Weekend -and says, basically, "What is going on here? What is going on?"

JS With the King County Resolution?

MB Right, we cannot have such a watered down WTO resolution. Do something about it. Ron Judd in turn called Sally Soriano that weekend and said, "Who has been representing Labor?" as if he didn't know. Well, Martha has. In all of my legislative work, by and large, what my work was, as a Fair Trade Rep is, I was the spokesperson for the King County Labor Council. Time and time again, Judd had said, "No, you speak for me."

He had asked me to speak at an amazingly (considering how lousy I am at doing this interview) he'd asked me to speak at huge occasions and said, "No, no, no, you speak for me." And until that day, I had never been told that I was not to speak for him. But he called Sally and said, "What is going on here? Who is speaking for Labor?"

Sally and he got together over the weekend and had some kind of conversation. And also, it would be helpful to hear Maria Kane's point of view because she's a very trustworthy person. She of course, was Brian Derdowski's WTO lobbyist. And, basically, when the resolution was going to be revised after this, and this is the part that we need to (tape stops).

JS I can move (something)...You are giving me a wealth of information right now, this is wonderful.

MB So, there's a new meeting.

JS We thought we'd won the week before.

MB We thought we'd won. Yeah, and this time, of course, barely half of us showed up. Did you show up for that one?

JS I don't think so.

MB And I was late, I came in to the council to the hallways, and Ron Judd was scurrying back and forth, and Maria was there and Sally was there and I saw that it was very much Ron and Sally working together. And this was new for me, because Ron had never been there before, basically. And so I went up to each of them and asked what was going on and was kind of shooed away. I was shooed away rudely by Sally, but I was given some information.

Ron is a politician, he's the head of the Labor Council. Well, we're figuring this out, so we can appeal to all parties. It's difficult, and Clinton's called (inaudible)... this is now, I'm kind of reviewing this. I could just sort of laugh now, because it's like, Right and you're doing everything you can to get out of what we did, to totally rewrite and revisit what we've successfully accomplished. From my point of view was indeed what was happening.

And I went into the Chambers to see who was still there. And Dick was there and Bill was there and a couple of other people. I come out into the hallway, and this is actually of about 10 minutes of assessing, and came to the conclusion that clearly Sally and Ron and Maria Kane... but Maria was being civilized, and was speaking to me. But clearly there were internal meetings going on that I had no knowledge of.

I didn't like what I was seeing because I immediately saw language that was rewriting that was combining the words "free" and "fair." That we will now have "fair and free trade." Which was totally co-opted language, because it completely canceled out even the little bit of meaning that the word "fair" had if you combined it with the word "free." And I have a copy of the watered down motion.

Ron was there ostensibly, according to Sally... Sally was very, very... obviously she was totally under the gun and under the wire with this. But she said, "Well, no, Ron is here, he's going to save at least some of the Democrats votes for us," and she named the people that he was going to have, that he was there to get. They were going to be Cynthia Sullivan, Greg Nichols, and Larry Phillips. Oh, and then, the other three, Larry Gossett, and Maggie Fimia, and ...

who's the other Democrat? It didn't happen. Ron got no one to the only three Democrats that stayed with us, and I later learned this and I point blank asked Maggie Fimia, were those who basically didn't care whether the White House called, because their allegiance was simply to being County Council Representatives. They didn't have ambitions of going forward in Democratic Party politics. They stayed with us along with the two Republicans, Derdowski and Ken Pullen.

JS And who were those three?

MB The three were Larry Gossett, and Maggie Fimia, and he sits at the far, far end on the left. And the three, but the three that were that Ron always speaks of, I mean he's very, very tight with Greg Nichols. Larry Phillips he was going into the back room to discuss things with, ostensibly to get them to vote, to stay with us on the motion that was then very seriously watered down. And the whole thing was a charade. You saw the outcome from it. Dick Burton's famous e-mail when the, what, do you know what happened then in the room?

JS Why don't you tell me?

MB The whole Sally thing is the most upsetting. But this is very important that this should come up.

JS We can take a break but we can finish this today. (Tape paused)

MB I retain a visual image of the meeting, of - you may recall when you were there - when the motion was originally passed. All of us were filling the back room, we were all together. We were clearly all together. And the County Council Members could see that we were that we were a unified body that had obviously, serious misgivings about the WTO. At this second meeting, Ron Sims' Labor Liaison, or whatever her official title is, Kathy Ogelsby, Sally Soriano and Ron Judd sat on the far left of the audience section all in rows behind one another, once they came inside. The rest of us, who were not privileged or not a part of the negotiations, sat on the other side. And that visual always stays with me. Because it was clearly then a split in this grass roots coalition.

I saw that clearly Sally and Ron and, and, I guess Maria Kane and some others had their own little clique going on, I then did try to invite people out to quickly pow-wow and say what we should do. The outcome of it was that we sent a note to Maggie Fimia just like we'd actually done the very first time. I remember Sally and I just basically went up to Maggie that very first time, because the port, there was Pat Davis, etc., we need to be able to talk. We're not going to be just here in the background getting to respond. Remember? And then we quickly went through the audience and Jeremy do you want to talk? And Dick Burton, who wants to be a spokesperson here?

So, I tried to do that again, but with no success. Because, it just wasn't going to work. Although Maggie did come out into the hallway. I will remember her all my life for this and I hope someday to perhaps work with her.

JS Do you remember her speech? When she, I don't know if it was the first or the second meeting, but when she really slammed the amendments and talked about how the amendments would just take out all kinds of meaning from the original resolution.

MB No I don't.

JS I remember being blown away. That was my introduction to Brian Derdowski and Maggie Fimia. And I remember both of them. And especially Derdowski, but also Fimia, really, really blew me away in terms of their...they, to me they were the ones who had a sense of integrity... and Pullen about the issues, but also really spoke very well to the issues. And we're the only ones who really understood what was at stake and what was happening.

MB Anyway, that second time, she came out and said to me, "Well, I'll see what I can do. What do you want me to do?" Maggie's very intelligent and smart and she could obviously see that something was, well, there were just things that were gravely amiss and things that had changed. But of course the long and short of it is that, when the Council was making its votes known, Bill got up and just he just said, this whole thing is a sham.

JS I remember.

MB Oh, you were there.

JS Yeah. Was this the second meeting we're talking about or the first one?

MB Yeah! What are we talking about? We're talking about the second one.

JS Okay.

MB You were there then.

JS I guess I was at both, then. But that's not to say that I don't want to hear it. I still want you to tell the story. So, Bill got up...

MB And then, well, he got up and, basically said...I don't remember what he said.

JS But something to the effect that the proceedings were ridiculous.

MB Right, right, right. I don't know what he said. Then of course, Ron Judd then stood up and chided Bill. I think what was so, oh, was so egregious for me was the fact that Ron had been nowhere in sight for all the work that we had been doing. And that's where I really, really, I mean, how dare you to be saying anything here when I have not been aware that you have been doing any organizing yourself to educate about the WTO, truly. And what right do you have then for those of us who've been putting in the time to pull us, to rein us in?

JS Right. What right does Judd have to rein people in? Yeah.

MB In other words he was clearly there to, for political purposes. To, to, take back, take away all the work that had gone into even getting that WTO resolution amended so successfully and that was infuriating.

JS Do you feel certain that that was his position on it, in trying to take it back?

MB What I do feel certain about is that this was another chip in his pocket in terms of playing politics. He'd gotten a call from the King County Executive, who'd in turn gotten a call from the White House and heads were going to roll if, basically, whoever was there on the ground, rocking the boat and messing things up wasn't reined in. You better do your job. I think I can, with certainty say, Ron Judd is a very political animal and a political player and he knew what he needed to do and he did it.

JS I know from speaking with Sally and ostensibly being on the same staff that, or at least what she was telling me, there's always the possibility that she was speaking out of the side of her mouth. I believe that she meant it when she said that she, in negotiations that she had been involved in was trying very hard to make sure that the original amendments, to clarify, the original resolution was very pro-WTO. Amendments were put in to say, to support Fair Trade only and to say, we welcome the individual delegates to our city, but they must, when we reminded them that they had better do something good for workers and the environment.

It's all finally coming back to me. I remember that Sally, indeed was, or at least claimed to be pushing very hard to keep those good amendments, those fair trade amendments, and that, so, do you think there's any chance that perhaps Judd, despite the pressure that might have been coming from the White House, might have been pushing to keep those original amendments in, or do you feel pretty certain that he was working to find a compromise with, such as the Free and Fair Trade Clause?

MB I think, it could be, it could be that, he was using Sally. That Sally was being used in the process. To help him figure out a way, because she of course, is far

more knowledgeable on trade. To help him figure out a way that he could sort of please all parties involved.

Okay so you have a difference of opinion about how this session went. That's that's one thing, but clearly, I was out of the picture already, because of what I'd done with the State Labor Convention and because I'd already stated, it was clear that I wasn't going to be reined in and follow the AFL-CIO rules. So, that in itself was very, very obvious.

But, I think had Ron Judd not had Sally as an ally, if he'd not been able to call upon her and if she had perhaps, turned away his request to make this resolution palatable, that we might have been able to hold our own. Because he would have been too much of a lone wolf. It would have been simply the head of the Labor Council suddenly coming along rather than this broad-based coalition of grassroots activists.

In other words, I think for my opinion, I think that Sally did a disservice to the work we had done by aligning herself with him at that point in time. That's my perspective, but I think that what you'll find is that obviously Sally has a very different perspective. I've never been able to talk to her about it. Because she will not talk to me. She will not return calls. I haven't I sent her a nice holiday card, but I've never gotten her to talk to me. But the point is, of course, she'll have a different point of view. And of course, Maria Kane will, as well.

JS And I hope you understand that in the question I was asking a minute ago, I did not in anyway mean to contradict what you're saying. I personally feel pretty uncertain about what happened there. That's when I first came into the situation and even though I was there and a witness, I was kind of bewildered. I'd never seen the King County Council work; I didn't know your relationship with Judd, your relationship with Sally. Their relationship together. And what your position was. I felt like we were all kind of, a number of us were, sort of in the dark about the situation. So, I'm not saying that I disagree with your opposition; I think it's very possible. I just wanted to sort of gauge, if you think that maybe there was another way to look at it.

MB Yeah, yeah, no, and I'm not locked into it. The reason that you see kind of a painful look on my face go across is because it was then, the end of my relationship with my good friend Sally. That was it.

JS That day?

MB No. Not the actual incident, but then, how it proceeded is that then after Dick sent out his email and Sally was absolutely infuriated about that email and she manifests that fury, I believe by... Not I believe, she did! She called Sarah Luthins then, the day after that and continued to feed to Sarah, the fact that Bill was a racist.

JS Bill Brugnoli?

MB Yes, my husband. Right. In other words, Sally retaliated... Okay, here's the first step. Sally called me that next morning and asked me to help her do a press release, response to Burton's email on the victory that had been achieved at the...

JS A press release?

MB A statement.

JS To the press or to activists or Union?

MB No, it was a real press release. In fact, I have it, cause she did it herself. She always asked me for help with those. Anyway, she was calling me to ask her do a positive spin, essentially on what had happened, and I ... No. There was no way I was going to do that. I think what happened was that Bill was then home all those days in August. He was taking all of August and into September off.

JS Was he, why was that, was he wasn't feeling well or just to work?

MB The latter. What he finds is as a worker in the construction industry, he just cannot work 12 months out of the year doing construction work. It's just inhumanly... it's inhuman in the first place. But I mentioned that, because I think that that also didn't help Sally and my relationship. Because then Bill was playing interference. He would be at home to answer the phone, whereas, if she wouldn't find me at home in the morning, she'd track me down at work and she, it would just be she and I working out things.

I think to this day that if Bill... because basically Bill really let Sally have it. He gave her his opinion, in a very, somewhat harsh way. Now, Sally is no mouse or saint, as you are perfectly well aware. Nor am I. But, I think that that didn't help in our relationship. But what she did do that was exceedingly wrong, really, because it was taken out of context and very blatant, is that she proceeded to spread, in the Labor community, and most specifically with Sarah, that Bill was a racist, because of what had happened at a prior meeting chaired by Verlene Wilder. That the education committee had the third week in August. In which, Lynne Dodson, Dick Burton and myself and bill had attended an education meeting to inform them of what we had done at the State Labor...

JS In the mobilization?

MB At the State Labor Convention. And that is when it was very, very clear to me that my days were numbered. Because Verlene chaired the meeting in a very.... What's the word.... the meeting was run in a very sort of strong way.... From my

understanding, Verlene must have already been told that I was going to be history, because she introduced the meeting by saying, by not asking everyone to even identify themselves in the room and there were only about a dozen of us there. She didn't even do that part, but she put, drew names on the board and she said, she wrote her name at the top, that she was going to be handling all the King County WTO Mobilization work and then Rich Feldman - she and Rich Feldman. Then she wrote Vinnie and George's name, what they were going to be doing. And then she wrote other people's names who were working and I'm sitting there and of course, I still am the Fair Trade Rep. And everyone, at least everyone in that small everyone community knows that I am the Fair Trade Rep.

I was completely ignored and she proceeded to outline a very top down, blatantly top down strategy for organizing about the WTO. And it was just, it was as clear as day. Top down, you organize you tell the leadership about this and if they choose to organize the rank and file, well, you're in luck. If they don't, you're out of luck. And it was just so, so, blatantly a top down strategy that it was just shocking. And she didn't stop for a second.

I'd never known Verlene at all, she's a very, a strong woman and has plenty to say and she didn't stop for an instant and this was her theory and la, la la. And Bill finally just basically challenged her.

JS Was Sally at this meeting?

MB No. The link here is Marty Schmidt who Sally and Marty had known each other over the years through the committees of correspondence. And so that's how they know one another, although there have been years when Sally will not talk to Marty Schmidt so there was obviously a change in 1999 because they were talking.

So, it was Marty Schmidt then, who was obviously the leak here and, what Bill simply did is he basically said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Basically he was saying, your strategy sucks, your strategy's not working, and, if you're just going to do this with top down, then, I don't know why I, a dues paying Union member...

Lynne Dodson, when I asked her about this after all of this transpiring, I said, do you think that Bill was really, cause I'm also... I can be very critical of my own husband, and I know who Bill is and what he isn't. But, Do you think Bill was really, really out of line in calling Verlene to task. Cause he's a New Yorker, basically. And Bill, a: he's a New Yorker and b: when Bill first got into the Unions, he was basically turned into a coffee boy, because he used to sit with all of the new young, Black and Puerto Rican construction workers who were finally being let into the Unions.

We kind of told that story when we had that meeting, remember at the People for Fair Trade office at that horrible meeting. So, Bill... well, I suppose he's a racist as much as all white people are racists to a certain extent that we have no knowledge to be a person of color. But, anyway, for that, Marty Schmidt then reported into Sally that Bill was a racist. For basically talking Verlene down, so to speak at a meeting. Because Verlene then sat down. But now, again, Verlene is not, Verlene is not a meek kind of submissive person. I was there and I've seen her functioning. I am now cautious of Verlene because of everything that happened. But prior to that, whatever. Verlene was not like, visibly upset or like she had been diminished. In other words, Bill's take on it was, She's a strong woman, I can talk to her because she's just talking bullshit. So I'll say what I have to say.

So anyway, Bill, Sally had told me that she thought Bill was a racist during at the Labor picnic, which was the Saturday prior to the meeting, the second King County Council meetings. And I had actually, she called me, she called me on it right away and she said, I have to talk to you about Bill's racism. I said, "What are you talking about?"

JS Who was this?

MB Sally called me. I said, Sally (whispers something), and, but, at the same time, cause sally and I were already... it was tense. By August, things were, we were just like all fried. We were already fried and it got worse. But Sally and I always did have fun. We could disagree or whatever. But I didn't think that she would keep on revisiting it and in a nutshell what happened after I disagreed with her perspective on what happened at that Council meeting is that she revived and revisited this racism charge and brought it forward to Sarah Luthins and said, You need to get together, you need to be a mediator with Martha and I because I have to talk about, we have to talk about Bill's racism.

Then Sarah Luthens called me and just the whole thing was just totally out of hand. But I think what also may have happened is that that charge against Bill might have been used to finally get me out of the picture. Because it was then, it was exceedingly slanderous. We're not talking about whether we really think it was racist or not. This is, again, I think depends on your perspective, depends on what part of the country you're from, but we'll leave that for another subject.

From Bill's point of view, he was just spitting mad that he was hearing this top down model and he was seeing his wife completely written from the picture. So he was calling it for what he thought it was. But from Sally's point of view, she seemed to be using it because she was very enraged, I guess she was very angry that I didn't see, I didn't share her point of view about what happened at the County Council and she was very angry at what Dick Burton said. She seems to really not be able to sometimes be interested in a plurality of perspectives.

But, there, her rage was something that I don't think I've even quite encountered. Very, very, very angry and it may be that she was very angry that I simply wasn't going to budge and go to her side. Because from my perspective, her having spoken with Ron Judd... (tape is stopped)

... Ladders and heavy equipment back from the Labor Day picnic. And we'd just been at the Ballard office, on Sunday night, Monday, or whatever it was. And she didn't say a word. And so, for me also, I felt extremely betrayed. I was kind of out there. I was really sort of stepping way ahead of myself in spite of myself, just in terms of doing the little, the little bit that I was doing. In the scheme of things, I really don't think I did that much at all, but, but, I counted on my community allies, and she was one of them.

So, but for her, there's a political link, or some ideological rather, things that I don't really have that much hard facts on or knowledge of.

And also, what one of the strongest components of that is this business of unity, which is big in many grass roots movements, when they're trying to fight a really, monolithic thing like the WTO, is that you must remain a unified force.

I think the main thing that I did that Sally just finds completely unforgivable, is that I basically blew the balloon, blew the facade, that we were a unified force. I was basically pointing out that the emperor has no clothes in the Labor movement. Those the Labor movement's protests to the contrary are, by and large, just smoke and mirrors. So, anyway, for that I was banished from the kingdom! So, I think I'm fading.

JS I want to thank you so much for all this time. This has been amazingly helpful, serious, you're really helping me get a perspective on some of the intricacies of the issues involved and the players and what happened. And you're helping me formulate the questions that I need to be asking of Sally Soriano and Ron Judd and such. That's not to say that I'm going to go directly to them and say, you know...

MB Martha Baskin said.

JS Yeah, not at all. Not at all, that's not what I'm doing. But it's also helping me think of ways to approach these issues, sort of obliquely. You know, what about this issue of rank and file democracy, or something. Or what about working coalition with diverse members? This is amazingly helpful.

MB I had to learn it, so if I can share and give you a heads up in figuring it out....

JS I have one more thing to ask. The Librarians are asking me to take photographs with people

MB | No. No. I want to be fresher! At the earlier part of the day!

End of Interview

**Comments for Open World Conference & Union Democracy:
San Francisco 2/12/2000
Martha Baskin, AFTRA/Seattle**

Reviewing US labor history for this conference - the images and experiences of the Battle of Seattle still vivid, still palpable - I was reminded of the use of sit-down strikes of the 1930's; at the time considered a new tactic when they were introduced by the CIO's rubber factory workers in Akron, Ohio - and strictly forbidden by AFL policy. "With the rhythm learned in a great mass production industry," wrote novelist Ruth McKinney, "the tire builders stepped back from their machines. Then the tire builder at the end of the line walked three steps to the master safety switch and drawing a deep breath, pulled up the heavy wooden handle. Out of the terrifying quiet, came the screams of success: "We done it! We done it...." They'd shut the plant down. The AFL leaders of the time (the federation didn't merge with the CIO until 1955) demanded that the CIO be dissolved if it persisted in using these new tactics: sit-down strikes. And when the demand was rejected, unions affiliated with the CIO were suspended and then expelled from the AFL.

In 1999, as many of you who were in the streets during the WTO know, the job of actually shutting the plant down - or in this case the WTO - went largely to those outside labor's ranks - by independent high school and college age youth - with a significant assist from the over-30 generation - groups from all over the world, Global Exchange and Food First here in the Bay Area, the Direct Action Network, Third World Network, and the Seattle based "No To WTO Student Outreach Committee" formed by union teachers and youth. There were exceptions - rank and filers and entire locals from the Steelworkers, Teamsters, Teachers unions, maritime industry, Sheetmetal Workers, Electricians, Carpenters - but overall, Labor's response remained rigidly defined by the same trade policy the AFL-CIO has maintained since NAFTA. "Not This NAFTA" was replaced with "An Economy That Doesn't Work for Working People Doesn't Work". Hence the immense satisfaction from the AFL and other NGO's about a "working group" that would discuss same. AFL leadership and staff, needless to say, didn't attempt to rally unionists to Seattle with calls for "we demand a working group" -- if they had or if the federation had tested its trade policy by allowing its dues paying members to vote -- the sit-down strikes of the 30's might have been resurrected with vigor. But trade policy and union democracy are not yet in the same equation -- it's still taking care of business -- not the song -- but old business unionism: one party rule, top- down decision making, suppression of the rank and file, censorship of alternative views, and an aversion to genuine confrontation that is genuinely pathetic, considering the battles yet needing to be fought.

A few years ago Seattle's central labor council assumed the absurd acronym , SUN, not for the sun that never shines, but for "Seattle Union Now", after the city's labor council was designated as one of the AFL-CIO's new organizing meccas. And indeed the central labor council and its affiliates have had many victories in organizing health care and childcare workers, non-union immigrant construction workers and truckers, white-collar "permatemps" at Microsoft. But organizing efforts regarding one of the biggest issues of all: the World Trade Organization -- the organizing opportunity of a life time considering the full impact the WTO and its 18 agreements have on working people everywhere until it is permanently shut down -- never really got off the ground. Or were reduced to slogans such as "Be There On the 30th" - originally sent as a bumper sticker from the AFL in D.C. without any mention of the WTO --- not only because of an allegiance to the Democratic Party -- a dysfunctional love affair if ever there was -- but because of the lack of autonomy within central labor councils themselves. An international fight cannot be successfully waged when labor councils are bound by international business union policies and led by ambitious leaders who talk out of both sides of their mouths playing politics with serious trade matters like chips in a poker game.

Eventually grassroots organizing did happen -- -- but in spite of, not because of, the vast resources of the AFL or Seattle's central labor council. Those of us who were a part of that grassroots organizing, the Labor WTO Mobilization Committee -- which began in the central labor council chambers and moved to the halls of Teamsters 174, learned much in the process -- but overall, we spent far too many hours battling our own kind (to an outside observer) in order to free resources for the cause.

Lesson #1: Know when to quit an institution - labor or otherwise - and find another.
Lesson #2: Know when your community allies have been coopted and will turn on you.
Lesson #3: Be wary of D.C. or other regional NGO's who come to town with resources to burn but only know unions from dealing with leadership and international staff in the beltway -- who think of the term "rank and file" as a kind of quirky phrase from the 30's versus unionists across blue and white collar lines with hands-on experience ready to mobilize.

So what did this independent Labor WTO Mobilization Committee do? We produced fliers and leafleted at plant and job sites. We spoke at as many locals as would have us. Some in the committee - the Wobblies -- organized for a city-wide walk-out and succeeded in getting many businesses to close shop for the 30th. Our rallying cry was: "Educate, Agitate, Organize" - about what the WTO was really about, instead of worn refrains deriding "corporate greed".

The WTO agreements (there are 18) were a phenomenal tool for organizing but were, curiously, off limits for debate with the rank and file. It was only through non-union allies - those with time for interpreting and digesting the WTO via the web - in particular an ally from British Columbia, Ellen Gould, that we got wind of one of the most egregious WTO agreements - the GATS or General Agreement on Trade & Services which hopes to 'liberalize' or privatize over 160 different services. "Services" cover a broad swath and include basics such as public education, healthcare, housing and social

services run by government agencies, municipal and public construction, all transport, financial services, cultural institutions, libraries - to name a handful of the 160 targeted.

The GATS (you'll find that the mainstream press rarely spells out what the GATS is, instead blandly saying "services" in hopes that the reader or listener won't care what "services" means...) is one of two agreements (along with negotiations on agriculture) that the WTO has agreed to resume talks on according to news sources out of Geneva this week. Agriculture and services account for 65 percent of global output and 80 percent of the world's jobs. For the AFL to not inform its membership of the full impact of this agreement was unconscionable -- and deeply embedded in both Democratic Party politics and top down AFL-CIO decision- making models.

In August, the Labor WTO Mob Committee used the GATS to pass one of the strongest resolutions against the WTO the Washington State Labor Convention has ever seen. We were motivated by what I will kindly term manipulative obstructionism by leadership, who seemed hell bent on preventing any information on the WTO from being distributed and any resolution that opposed it, versus reforming or tweaking it, from seeing the light of day. For example, an OPEIU STOP WTO Resolution written by a truly democratic unionist in this audience (Sarah Luthens), like others submitted to the central labor council between February and August, had mysteriously disappeared.

Hence we were fighting not only the undemocratic/fascistic WTO, but an equally malignant pattern within the AFL. Six fired up, independent unionists was all it took. Those with locals of the American Federation of Teachers (Seattle Community College Federation of Teachers), Sheetmetal Workers Local 66, The Greater Seattle Postalworkers Association, OPEIU and myself, from AFTRA. The two teachers, new members of the Labor WTO Mob Committee, started the ball rolling when they asked a simple question. "Why is there no WTO resolution in the state labor convention packet of materials?"

In my quickly diminishing capacity as Fair Trade Rep to the Council, (I'd been rather blatant regarding my opinion of the AFL's trade politics and the progressive pretensions of the central labor council), I called upon an executive board member who, although loyal to leadership, also believed in the novel concept of democratic debate and was equally alarmed by the absence of WTO resolutions and information. A resolution was resurrected in 24 hours. The resolution, among other things, obliged the State Labor Council to appeal to the AFL to lobby Congress to withdraw the US from the WTO unless it began making decisions favorable to workers and the environment. It also granted locals complete autonomy to mobilize about the WTO. After it was passed, a Canadian unionist, advised us to quickly post our victory on the web so that leadership couldn't try and negate what we had done.

Perhaps there are those in this audience surprised to hear about the level of obstructionism we witnessed from a central labor council and the AFL-CIO. Unfortunately, for all the talk of the new labor movement, it's clear that there's a long way to go for such bodies to be truly democratic and represent the collective will of their

dues paying constituents. The "New Alliance" plan to reorganize central labor councils, approved at last October's AFL-CIO convention, further rips apart the heart of the new labor movement and the possibility of organizing from the ground up. The plan will centralize financial and political control over labor councils and allow the largest internationals to control the "new" labor councils.

With this in the works, and after my own experience, I think I'll stick with broad based coalitions consisting of maverick locals, mixed members of the rank and file, youth, environmentalists and others who are free to speak truth to power when it needs to be spoken and not afraid of the grassroots - the majority of the population. One of the most vital grassroots/ union/community alliances in Seattle was the "No To WTO Student Outreach Committee" - a mix of high school and college age youth across class, race and sex lines - with a few solid union teachers thrown in for good measure. The work they did in educating in the public schools and community centers in Seattle throughout 1999 makes most of the union activity pale by comparison.

In the book Organizing to Win, Lowell Turner writes in the chapter *Rank & File Participation in Organizing* "Given the long term decline of the American labor movement, it will be some time here before labor is ready to claim the extent of full social, political and economic conclusion that South African unions are currently demanding in their transformational society. The key to the South African success lies in a history of active, social movement unionism: largely black unions, with more than 50 percent membership density. Unlike business unionism or a servicing model of unionism, social movement unionism is dependent on active rank & file participation, a mobilization of involvement that, if encouraged rather than suppressed, can carry over into expanded union, workplace and political democracy."

This is true today in South Africa, as it has been in the past. It can be true in the United States with new grassroots alliances. May new roots push forward from this conference. There's much to be done and little time to spare.