

brochure on this that I still have a copy of, I believe. So we began really carrying this message through to the membership, really rallying the membership around us for the '52 bargaining.

Well, we were right in the middle of the Korean war, and so production from North American Aviation at that point was crucial. So we knew we had something less than World War II, but a military crisis going on that was not as major as the dimensions of World War II. So we decided on a hardline, militant approach on the ^{auto-aircraft} differential. And since it was only a wage reopener, we weren't making the major effort on the whole wage system at that point. We couldn't do that, since we only had a wage reopener and this three year contract in '52. So the major effort was on the differential. So we hardlined it and campaigned effectively. I think, because we really roused the membership on this.

Then Truman put in the Wage Stabilization Board, so we had a wage freeze at this point. So here again, the government was intervening on top of us, and the ^{wage freeze} ~~position~~ did not deny us this. So we decided to just go for broke. We had learned as part of our politics with Reuther that you build your organization and build your base to a point where you've got some real bargaining power inside the union, in politics as well as in the whole bargaining

program. So we just made this effort with the support of the Fresno [California] local, which was a new local--there was a new North American Aviation plant--and we were coordinating with the Columbus [Ohio] local, another big North American Aviation facility. We had fought with Livingston for a bargaining council. He was opposed to the three locals getting together ^{in a} ~~for~~ the bargaining council, even though this was the pattern among the auto locals, where you had national GM locals together and national Ford bargaining council, Chrysler [Corporation] bargaining council, International Harvester [Company], everything like that. But he wanted to deny us, and we challenged him on this, and we finally got it. Because again, part of this whole ^{control} thing is containing political groups: ^{is} Madison, James Madison's idea. Anyway, we had this bargaining council going and ~~a kind of~~ coordination among the locals.

So finally, we got a big strike vote, and we wanted to strike. Well, the position of Starkweather at this point was--

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

APRIL 4, 1991

CONNORS: ~~They~~ We were talking last tape about [Eugene D.] Starkweather and this matter of the--

SCHRADE: Kaiser[-Willys] airplanes and cars coming off the same line.

CONNORS: ~~Yeah~~ We're looking at here a pamphlet called "We Demand First Class Pay" and this is concurrent with the 1952 wage reopener. One of the pictures that Paul [Schrade] is pointing out here is this Kaiser Willow Run plant where Kaiser automobiles are being turned out alongside aircraft. You were talking about Starkweather.

SCHRADE: At the same higher auto pay. Well, Starkweather was really opposed to this and very upset that we had carried on this campaign for first-class pay to knock out the differential during bargaining in '52 on the wage reopener. We had to negotiate for sixty days into the deadline. And his constant line became a chant. "We're operating now under Wage Stabilization Board regulations, and as we calculate, based on those regulations, all we have to pay you is 4.8976^{per cent an hour}" and he would carry it out to many points right of the decimal point. And the cigarette running across his mouth, it was--

CONNORS: Red [William C.] Aston spoke about this habit that he had, that when he smoked a cigarette it would--

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SCHRADE: He would roll it across-- Yeah. And he was at this arrogant ~~best~~ during that period and just would lay out that line. And we would sit there and sit there, and he would say-- And we would make this argument on the differential, which we estimated about twenty cents an hour on the average between auto and aircraft, which is ⁵ ~~the~~ traditional differential. So we just decided to ride it through down to the strike deadline.

So the locals at that point insisted that we go on a strike. So [John W.] Livingston, [Paul] Russo, and [William] Kircher were arguing, "Well, we can't. We're at war in South Korea against North Korea, and the government's not going to let us do that." We said, "The hell with the government at this point. The government is always telling us we can't strike, always telling us we can't have first-class pay, and we're going to end that." And we just carried that line inside the union.

Finally there was a hearing before the international executive board in Detroit. We're all called in before the board. And so we made our pitch to [Walter P.] Reuther and the rest of the board that we'd been denied first-class pay for the history of the UAW at North American Aviation [Inc.] and it was about time the union took this position. And this was the position of the international union ^{for} of first-class pay. So we got the argument back,

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"Well, the government's not going to let us--" "Let the government tell us this. We shouldn't just abjectly restrain ourselves at this point." So Reuther called me into his office and said, "You know, you might be getting yourself into difficulty here if you continue." And I said, "I don't care. We've got to do this. It's our commitment to the membership, we have this responsibility, and we're going to meet it. I mean, we've had it for years and years."

So he got [Harry S.] Truman on the phone at that point. He said, "Look, we've got a red-hot leadership out there, and those plants are going down. We've got to do something") and just laid it on Truman. So Walter told me that Truman said he'd get back to him. So what happened was we were put on hold at that point. #t The Truman administration then came back and said, "Look, we'll set up a Wage Arbitration Board, and we'll put people on who are sympathetic with your point on the differential, and we'll give you-- they made no commitment on this, but "you've got the chance that we'll come through on this." Well, we took that one on, and we had done a lot of research work ourselves, and we had all this information.

Reuther then assigned Nat Weinberg, who was a crackerjack research guy and special projects guy for Reuther, did a lot of the SUB [Supplemental Unemployment

Benefits] stuff and guaranteed income stuff--lots of great ideas. So he spent time. We had briefs written on this thing that were stacked up before the company and before the arbitrators and held hearings in Santa Monica before this special arbitration panel that Truman set up and went for several days. And the company came in with their research, but we had out-researched them, and Weinberg out-articulated them on the issues. And he was sort of like sitting in a machine gun nest mowing down these company guys and made us really proud, you know, that we had done this, that we had set this thing up and that we actually were doing a better job than the company was. It put us as workers in this kind of at least equal and even superior position to company's approach to these problems.

Well, because of the Wage Stabilization Board regulations, the arbitration panel had to take a little different approach. And even though we had less than a nickel coming under the regulations, they justified ten cents, which was important to us at that point because it was a victory over this company's approach and also gave us a little advantage over the leadership of Livingston and his group in this thing, who were ready to go along with the company at this point. Livingston, by the way, was on the Wage Stabilization Board panel of Truman's, so he was in the position of helping this decision through. So that

was an advantage to us.

CONNORS: Who else was on this Board?

SCHRADE: The panel?

CONNORS: Yeah, this panel.

SCHRADE: I'm not sure of the names at this point.

CONNORS: Was Ben Aaron?

SCHRADE: Ben Aaron was on. I'm not sure whether [Willard] Wirtz was or not. I couldn't find my copy, but I'll dig that out, because I'm interested in trying to--

CONNORS: I think ^{W. Willard} Wirtz was on that board, yeah.

SCHRADE: Yeah, and ^{David Cole} ~~maybe a guy named George~~-- A famous arbitrator mediator type. Those three. ~~I'll dig their~~ ^{names}. But the important thing in the decision was they gave us legitimacy in terms of the principle of eliminating the differential with auto and steel and the other major industries. So that was the important victory at that point. The company was really angry over that, and they became really hardline with us. And that was when the big contest started into the strike of '53. So we had that principle, and we were going to run with it. And we did. We again built the membership up until the '53 negotiations based on that, because we were going to really crack through on the whole system now, now that we had merit review and automatic progression eliminated, we overrode the company's position on the five cents and got ten cents,

and we won the principle of eliminating the auto-aircraft differential.

CONNORS: Just a couple of last points on this and then I think we can end it at '52 and then next time take up to '53. John Allard and Bill Beckham were the two regional guys overseeing this, right?

SCHRADE: Yeah. John wasn't a regional guy. John was a National Aircraft guy in the region.

CONNORS: Oh, okay.

SCHRADE: It's a different status, regional staff and national staff, and Beckham was regional staff from Ohio.

CONNORS: What was their role in this?

SCHRADE: Assisting in the negotiations, coordinating with-- Let's see, Russo headed up '49 and, I guess, '50, didn't he? I'm not quite sure at this point.

CONNORS: I think he did.

SCHRADE: Yeah. So Paul Russo was in as the chief representative of John Livingston, who was director of the aircraft department. He was the assistant director. Allard worked for Russo-Kircher and Beckham worked for Ray Ross, the regional director, region 2A, which represented the Columbus [Ohio] local, 927.

CONNORS: So Beckham was not a West Coast guy?

SCHRADE: No, no, no. He came out of Ohio. *He was from* There was a GM plant in Cincinnati. And he had been on the staff of Ray

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Ross.

CONNORS: Oh, ok.

SCHRADE: Kircher and Beckham came out of the same local and were contenders in that local. And then this began complicating our lives because it's one of the other things in the broader context that we weren't aware of, that they had been contending, and Beckham-- Oh, Beckham had been on the Paul Miley staff early on, who was one of the old [Roland J.] Thomas-[George] Addas^e-[Richard T.] Leonard regional directors. And Kircher was with Miley also and tried to succeed Miley. Ray Ross was elected, and Beckham broke with Miley at that point and supported Ray Ross and beat Kircher. So Beckham and Kircher were sworn enemies. And I think that Beckham could deal with that, but Kircher was the kind of person who once you crossed him, you were on his list, period, and never got off. Because that's the way ^{he} was. And I knew he felt that way about Beckham. So here we were in this situation where Beckham and Kircher and Russo and Allard, those three were part of the Livingston group, but really pretty much under the denomination of Kircher, because Kircher was a really highly intelligent, skilled guy. So I think Allard and Russo looked to him. He was the administrative assistant, so in the hierarchy he was also in a position to do that. But he was a very influential, dominant figure in that

group. As we went into the '53 strike, that became really a serious problem for us.

CONNORS: Okay. That's a good point to end this session on.

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TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

JULY 27, 1989

CONNORS: Last time we were poised to discuss the beginnings of the North American [Aviation, Inc.] strike of '53, but there are a couple of points that I want to cover before delving into that strike. The first is to go back to something we were talking about last week, the offer that was made during the 1952 negotiations. It was called the "wooden nickel" offer, I believe.

SCHRADE: Yes.

CONNORS: You had a quote from [Eugene D.] Starkweather that you wanted to get into the record the phrase that he kept using over and over again.

SCHRADE: Yeah, he kept repeating to us that, under the Wage Stabilization Board regulations, which meant wage control during that period, the company's calculation meant that we could only get, under those wage controls, 4.89 something cents an hour. And he ran it out to many decimal points. Then he would say, "But I will offer you five cents, which I consider generous, fair, and final." And he would repeat that over and over. We went days and days, months of negotiations, and that was his only pitch. Since we were in a wage reopener, that's all we were discussing, anyway. But he became very arrogant and tough about it, and he did not want to bend at all in terms of wages.

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Fortunately, we had a representative on-- And this is a [Harry S] Truman Wage Stabilization Board panel, and they were allowing certain inequities to be considered in terms of wage increases. So there wasn't a total wage control situation. And Jack [John W.] Livingston, who headed the National Aircraft Department of the UAW [United Auto Workers] and was our chief negotiator, was on the Wage Stabilization Board, had been appointed by Truman as one of the labor representatives. And we felt that we had these two advantages: ^{two} one, that they would consider inequities like the one that we were presenting on the auto-aircraft differential. That inequity had been with us for many, many years, and with Livingston there we felt we had some chance in getting it through. So we just toughed it out.

CONNORS: We were searching last time for the names of the people on that Truman board, and I think afterwards we found a document that named them. It was Ben [Benjamin] Aaron, Willard [W.] Wirtz, and was it David [L.] Cole?

SCHRADE: David Cole, yeah. Three really outstanding men in labor management affairs. We considered that a very favorable opportunity for us to present what we had, because we thought we would get a really good decision.

CONNORS: What was Wirtz doing at that time?

SCHRADE: Probably still at Northwestern [University] Law School, I think. Later on, he became prominent in

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arbitration and dealing with these kinds of big questions in the nation, but he also became secretary of labor under [John F.] Jack Kennedy.

CONNORS: Right. And at that time David Cole was doing what?

SCHRADE: I don't remember, but he finally became head of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, then headed a commission for [Richard M.] Nixon on-- I guess it was a review of the Landrum-Griffin Act [Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959]. I know it had to do with one particular subject of union democracy and union rights of ^{union} members.

CONNORS: In '52 you started to get active in Democratic Party politics, and you went to the Democratic Party convention that year.

SCHRADE: Before that, though, Tom, I think the core of the decision ought to be on the record. When the panel gave us the award of ten cents an hour, which doubled the company's offer, and then submitted its recommendation to the Wage Stabilization Board, it came down in our favor on the principle that we're talking about. And these sections of that award is something that we used at the time in celebrating the award as well as using it to advance our position against the serious inequity between auto and aircraft. The award says, on page fifteen, "These

employees have been incapable, practically, of exerting their bargaining strengths when the industry was prosperous, because at such times they have been restricted by law as well as by moral deterrence." That had to do with, in wartime, we had the moral deterrent of striking against a production that was necessary in any war effort, and in peacetime the pressure was off and the company would just thumb their noses at us and not really negotiate. Then the panel also said, "The wage movements and wage rates of the automobile industry should, to a degree at least, be related to those in the air frame industry because of the similarities of operations and products, making them, to an extent, the same industry." And that's the point we're making. We had examples at Chrysler, Evansville, and Kaiser, Willow Run, where they were producing both aircraft and automobiles on parallel assembly lines. This was during the post-war period, which mirrored what was happening during World War II and also during World War I, when the auto industry came through paying the higher auto rates for both auto and aircraft on the parallel assembly lines. The other thing the panel said that I think is important that--and I quote again-- "Automobile raises, earnings, and wage increases are more favorable to the employees than are those of the air frame industry, and the differentials in earnings and rates which

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are now approximately twenty cents per hour will tend to become even greater if the automobile industry is ruled out as a factor in this proceeding." And to us this was a major victory on top of getting rid of merit reviews and automatic wage progression back in 1949, because we were beginning to keep the faith with the strike in 1941 when these issues were first developed by our union. It took years and years to really confront them appropriately and to fight for them, and we won. And this really became the core of what we wanted to get done in the 1953 negotiations.

CONNORS: Okay. Let's cite that document that you're quoting from.

SCHRADE: I'm reading from a report that our local did in 1953. It's a memo that was written by one of the staff people in the [UAW] Local [887] to me. I believe Al Heener. There's no name on it, but I'm sure that that's what it is. But those quotations are also in the arbitration award that was printed by the union. I have a copy of that, too, in my file I found the other day. I don't see it right at the moment, but it's around here someplace.

CONNORS: Okay, that aside for a moment, let's talk about getting involved in the Democratic campaign for '52 and touch on that a bit.

SCHRADE: Well, we first got involved more with the Democratic liberals. And this was one of the changes in our local, because some of the people in the late forties were connecting with the Independent Progressive Party and the [Henry] Wallace movement, and when our group became the leadership of Local 887, we shifted ground and actually were out supporting many good liberal democrats. In fact, we began recruiting people like Alan Jonas and Glenn Anderson, and Dick [Richard] Richards, and we really got into the Helen Gahagan Douglas campaign when the old Left of the union was not supporting her, and she was one of the best of the liberals in the Congress. In fact, it's one of our earliest experiences getting involved with farm workers, because she really campaigned the San Joaquin Valley among farm workers, which was a natural base of support for her. And this was a prelude to our activities in the sixties with the farm worker's union under Cesar Chavez. But we tried our best to get involved in politics, because it's not only connected with union issues, generally, and our own conception of what we should be doing as citizens, but our own special interest as aircraft workers meant that we ought to have political allies in the White House and the Congress, because North American Aviation's main customer was the Defense Department, the federal government. And the government had always been an

intervening party in our negotiations, setting up a really regressive wage system in World War II, intervening in the strike in 1941, breaking that strike. And in 1952 we had seen the value of having an ally in Harry Truman, who set up this wage panel and gave us representation on the Wage Stabilization Board under wage control. So we had really important influence at that point, and we wanted to support that by seeing that people got into the Congress and Senate and the White House who were effectively going along with our values.

CONNORS: Did you pay much attention to local L.A. politics, also?

SCHRADE: Oh, yeah, yeah. I noticed we had Sam Yorty at one of our membership meetings in 1954, when he was a good guy. He was in the Congress. He was a liberal. Yeah, we did, and we built-- Mainly because, during those days, unions got into precinct work. We were assigned precincts in the [Los Angeles International] Airport area: Westchester, Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale, where a lot of the membership lived. So we served as a base for all kinds of political activities. And we put people out in the field for registration of new voters and also for getting out the vote.

CONNORS: Did you live in that vicinity at that point?

SCHRADE: Oh, yeah. I lived in Hawthorne, which is only a

couple of miles from the plant.

CONNORS: As far as the [Adlai E.] Stevenson campaign goes, I guess Stevenson came out here at one point.

SCHRADE: Yeah.

CONNORS: Was it in '52? Or was it after that?

SCHRADE: I'm not sure. We can check that. It was important, because here we had a person that had been a-- I think it was either '52 or '54. He was campaigning for members of Congress and ^{the} Senate during the '54 period, but in '52, I'm not sure he made it out here at that point. It could have been '52--'52 or '54. And he came to our local. We took him to the plant gates to meet workers, and we had a meeting at the union hall. We had coffee with him. I remember--something Stevenson would never do on his own: ^{we} we got him to climb up on a locomotive to shake hands with the locomotive engineer who was a Stevenson supporter. And Stevenson put a bumper sticker on the windshield of the train as it left the Douglas [Aircraft] plant and passed over through the North American Aviation plant. So it was kind of a good experience for us. And I also found, at that point, that when you're dealing with politicians in public, they're very malleable. They may not want to do things, but they won't resist, because they know they're in the spotlight, and they're not going to fight in front of the cameras. So you can really maneuver

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them around. So you make what you think is their best presentation as well as get them to do what you want them to do.

CONNORS: How did you assess his chances of winning at that point?

SCHRADE: In '56?

CONNORS: No, this was the first time.

SCHRADE: 'Fifty-two we thought there was a good chance. He was governor of Illinois, there was an opening against-- There was no incumbent; Truman was not running. But the [Richard M.] Eisenhower-Nixon combination proved superior and we lost, and that had a major impact on the country, certainly, and it certainly had a major impact on us in bargaining in 1953.

CONNORS: How was it that you became a delegate to the convention? That was your status there, is that correct?

SCHRADE: In '56?

CONNORS: I thought '52 was the first convention.

SCHRADE: No.

CONNORS: Okay. If it wasn't, then we won't--

SCHRADE: I don't think so.

CONNORS: Okay.

SCHRADE: No.

CONNORS: All right. The other item in 1952 was the death of Philip Murray--

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SCHRADE: Wait a second, wait a second. Yes, I was a delegate in '52, because-- I was also at the convention in '56, but as a member of [Walter P.] Reuther's staff at that point. I was living in Detroit and campaigning from there and was with Reuther at the convention. That was in '52. And mainly because the democratic party saw our local as a crucial one in the airport area of L.A., because we had a fairly large operation in the southwest area of L.A. county. And we'd become active with what I think were better liberals of the Democratic Party, so that was recognized. They wanted labor people on the Stevenson delegation. I know there was a Teamster on the delegation from Northern California, but they wanted to broaden their base a little more. So I was selected by the Stevenson group to become a delegate.

CONNORS: What were the the mechanics of that?

SCHRADE: At that point, there was a filing with the secretary of state by a group, and then the people who filed a petition put together a slate of delegates that went on the ballot, but chosen by the Stevenson supporters. I was a little bit more in the mechanics of that during the Robert Kennedy effort, when we actually met and put together that delegation. It had to be filed with the secretary of the state of California, and then you go on the ballot, and then you vote for one delegation or the

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other, which determines which delegation goes to the convention.

CONNORS: Okay. So as I was saying before, the other item that happens in '52 is that Philip Murray dies suddenly and Walter Reuther ascends to the presidency of the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]. I'd like to talk about that a minute. First of all, how did Murray's death strike you? It was unexpected.

SCHRADE: Unexpected, yeah. Well, I never really had any contact with Murray except I was at the '52 convention of the CIO, and Walter was elected. You know, Reuther's politics and trade union program I thought were better than Murray's. So we got involved in some way of supporting the Reuther campaign, because he was running against Alan Haywood at that point, and David McDonald, who was president of the [United] steelworkers [of America], was a very important factor in this thing. And so there was a real confrontation between Reuther and Haywood and certain other forces in the CIO.

CONNORS: What was McDonald's role?

SCHRADE: I think, first of all, he wanted to be the--

CONNORS: He wanted to be president of the CIO?

SCHRADE: Be the president of the CIO, yeah. A very ambitious guy, as was Reuther. But Haywood represented sort of a compromise of that sort of more conservative wing

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of the CIO.

CONNORS: So there was a real contest there. It was not an--

SCHRADE: It was a hard, hard-fought contest, yeah.

CONNORS: It was not something that was a forgone conclusion.

SCHRADE: Yeah.

CONNORS: At the time Reuther becomes president of CIO, that's not very long after ^[George] Meany became president of the AFL [American Federation of Labor] when William Green died. And according to Meany's version of things, right away he started talking with Reuther about unity. Were you privy to any of that early talk?

SCHRADE: No, because that's always handled in a very small group in Washington, generally, or Detroit or New York, wherever they meet, that kind of summit discussion. I know that George Meany came to one of our conventions prior to the merger happening in 1955, which was an effort to condition people in the UAW to going along with the merger in '55. But, generally, those things are handled on a high level.

CONNORS: Did this discussion come up, say, at the local, like "these guys are talking about unity" or "we don't want this" or "yeah, this would be good" or--

SCHRADE: Generally, we were in favor of it, because, just

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on the principle of union solidarity, it made sense, even though there were diverse politics and union approaches in the AFL and the CIO. But our effort here was to begin meeting with the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor people, the AFL, and we were generally very positive about the merger and began working with Bill Bassett who was secretary of the L.A. County Fed. and a very progressive guy. We did have difficulties on the state level. Tom Pitts was the secretary of the State AFL--finally the State AFL-CIO when we merged--and we had some really serious problems because of a much more conservative to reactionary kind of approach. And so we allied ourselves with Bassett in terms of making struggles within the State AFL-CIO.

CONNORS: That, of course, would have been later on--

SCHRADE: Later on '55, '56. In fact, late '55, December '55, I believe the merger took place, so '56, late '56, late fifties.

CONNORS: Okay. In 1953, you became ^{the} Grievance ^{the} Committee chairman for the convention grievance committee.

SCHRADE: Uh-huh. [affirmative]

CONNORS: Let's talk about that for a minute or more than a minute. Were you appointed this chairman of the ^{the} Grievance ^{the} Committee? And what did the ^{the} Grievance ^{the} Committee do?

SCHRADE: Yes, and it was an important appointment which I believe resulted from the record we were building in our

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union of organizing more members, winning on the wage struggle in 1952, and working more closely with Reuther and Jack Conway, who was his key administrative assistant. The International Executive Board makes appointments to committees, and each regional director has two appointments, a minor and a major appointment, major committees being constitution at this point, grievance committee, resolutions committee--those are the three important committees. I was appointed by Reuther, not by [Cyril V.] O'Halleran, who was the regional director. In some way, recognition for the record we were making in the local. My function as ^{the}grievance chair was to pull a committee together from around the country appointed by regional directors and officers, a fairly large committee. We were called into Detroit weeks in advance of the '53 convention. And at that time--we no longer have this system--the ^{the}grievance ^{the}committee handled membership appeals to the convention. Now there's the Public Review Board, and those appeals go to the Public Review Board rather than to the convention. It was a very democratic process because any member could appeal a complaint inside the union to the convention with the delegates making a decision. But that's sort of been narrowed and shunted off into the Public Review Board. It did consume a lot of time in the convention and was a problem that way sometimes.

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The major case that we had in 1953 was the Local 600 case. The International Executive Board had put an administratorship over that local for a number of reasons.

CONNORS: The Local 600 is Ford Rouge--

SCHRADE: Yeah, the biggest local in the UAW at that time, the Ford River Rouge plant, large manufacturing and assembly complex, the biggest operation of any auto company, and, certainly, Ford, in the country.

CONNORS: And that's in Detroit, right?

SCHRADE: Well, actually outside Detroit--

CONNORS: Outside.

SCHRADE: Closer to Dearborn [Michigan] and was a scene of major UAW organizing activity, strikes, in the past. And Carl Stellato was a leading old Left president of that local and was a very ambitious guy, and he had a right to be--a very talented, very skilled leader of that local. And the case before us was the case of five members, officers of that local, who had been expelled from office by the international union's administratorship, which lasted several months, on the basis that they were subservient to the Communist Party. And under the Constitution, they had no right to hold office.

CONNORS: Was the administratorship imposed because of this situation? Or was there something else going on? Do you remember that?