

Dolci's

him many years, and got the response from the secretary,
"Domani, domani," which meant he wasn't there. We went on
this tour for ten days. Monica [Weil Schrade] and I drove
back from eastern Sicily through the country, made a couple
of stops that weren't on the tour, and kept calling.
Finally, he was on the phone towards the end of our stay
there. So he invited us over for dinner. He said, "I've
got a group of people coming over. Come on over and we can
meet and talk," which was really fantastic, because I was
really getting discouraged at that point that I'd never
meet him, and this was the chance to do it.

Well, ^{we came} ~~come~~ to find out he'd been in California during
June and July for a month meeting at universities around
here talking about his new project, and that's training
teachers in more fundamental democratic education
techniques, which is now his main interest. So that was
what the meeting was about in his house in Tropeto in
western Sicily.

So we drove out there to a hotel, and the manager of
the hotel knew Dolci and took us over to the house, so we
spent the evening there and had a wonderful time and, in a
way, participated in his meeting with the-- He invited us
over early so we could talk for an hour, so we sort of got
acquainted that way: ^{SH} where was I coming from, where he's
coming from kind of thing. And Monica was very helpful

because she speaks Italian, and I ~~understand~~ ^{was} he speaks more English now than ~~he~~ did before, which ~~is~~ ^{was} very helpful to me. So we then met with the group. It was about a seminar they were organizing about teaching teachers on fundamental democratic education which will be held in the fall.

Then we met with him in the office the next day, and he talked about coming to the United States next year and working with R. Scott Kennedy up at Santa Cruz, who has an institute on non-violence--I believe it's also at UC [University of California] Santa Cruz, and he wants me to meet with him and begin working ~~to~~ ^{them} with ~~this~~, which is a very interesting thing, because it's part of what we've been trying to do for many years in the education process. There's been a strong interest in the labor movement in public education, anyway, and teachers organizing. So it got me back into that. His secretary took us out to visit the dam and one of the schools he got set up, which is based upon his ideas on education, but the municipality of Partinico has taken it over and they've knocked out all that. They're going back to traditional education. He's disappointed about that. So he thinks his main contribution now, at sixty-five, can be to get into basic teacher training and try to spread that word internationally. So to be part of that is really a very good thing.

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Now, one other connection, since I'm now involved in trying to get the Ambassador Hotel property to become a Robert F. Kennedy High School, ~~becomes~~ ^{the} L.A. Board of Education is trying to do that and is in the process of nailing that down-- My own thing is that it would consecrate that ground ^{where Kennedy was killed} to have a public high school there, mainly of Third-World kids who live in that community, ~~but~~ ^{are} ~~are now~~, some 5,000 of them ~~of~~ ^{are} high school age being bussed out of that area. So the kids who would be going to high school-- I think a symbol of Robert Kennedy as a friend of kids and particularly people of the Third World is a really wonderful way to set up that high school. So I'm also trying to find out if the Dolci ideas on education can be worked through the Board of Education and the ^{United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA)} teacher's union into that high school, because I think those kids deserve better education than kids in Beverly Hills who've got more money in their school system, because they're starting from a lower point on the social scale, and I think that would be helpful. It also ties in with Dolci's and our ideas about community organization, that we want to build the high school as a community center so the parents and the students and teachers are working together to change that community around the Ambassador Hotel which is becoming a real hell hole for those families, with heavy crime, heavy drugs, and deterioration. So it's one other

thing that we could be doing.

CONNORS: We haven't really talked about that part of it, the Robert Kennedy High School. Is that part of the Robert F. Kennedy ^{Kennedy} ~~Fundation~~ activity that you'd been--?

SCHRADE: No.

CONNORS: That's different.

SCHRADE: I've talked to people in the Kennedy family about this, and they say it would be a great idea to do. They're fully in favor of what I'm doing but don't want to get into the struggle ~~because~~ Donald Trump is trying to build a 125-story tower there, a new Trump Tower. So it's not that they don't want to take on Donald Trump, but they don't think it's their role to do the community organizing that has to be done to get that to be ~~done~~ a Robert F. Kennedy High School. It ought to be coming from the community rather than from the Kennedy family.

CONNORS: Well, what are the origins, then, of the Robert F. Kennedy High School activity that you were just describing? Was that your idea, basically?

SCHRADE: Yeah, it is. I'm sure other people have had it. But when it was first conceived in the board of education that they wanted--

CONNORS: We're running out of tape here, so let me put on a new tape.

SCHRADE: Yeah, okay.

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CONNORS: Yes, some of the background on the Robert F. Kennedy High School.

SCHRADE: Well, it was either two or three years ago when it was mentioned that the [Los Angeles] Board of Education was interested in that property. I called Jackie Goldberg who is on the board and has become president of the board, very effective leader of the board, and I got her on the phone and said, "Look, why not a Robert F. Kennedy High School? It would consecrate that ground, the horror of that event would be in some way assuaged." And she said, "My god, that sends chills up my spine." She said, "That's a great idea." She said, "I was a Eugene McCarthy supporter in the California primary, and I had a whole bunch of McCarthy supporters in my living room watching the results on TV that night. She said, "When I heard him make that speech," she said, "I just totally flipped." I said, "Here's a guy that should have my support, and I announced to my friends that I'm going to shift over to Robert Kennedy. And we lost him." She said, "It's a great idea. There may be one problem: there is a Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School in the system, and the bureaucracy might give us a problem about that," but she said, "Let's proceed on the basis that we've got

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understanding on it. Let's work towards that."

So I recently went to a debate that she held with [Donald] Trump's executive vice president at the Presbyterian church near the Ambassador Hotel. She's really got all the arguments in hand. The Trump people are trying to say it's an improper location, financially unfeasible, and so forth. Well, she comes back and says, "Look, there's hardly any relocation of people, it's unused property at the present time, the hotel is closed, and the big expense, even though the property is more expensive, it's less expensive because relocating families from the other sites that they suggest would make it much more expensive to go their way, or they're located so far away from that area where the people live that it would still require bussing. So the arguments, the economic arguments and the location arguments fall right into Jackie's position. She also said --and the board has taken this position working with the state legislature on it, because that's where the money is coming from, the board of allocation up there--that the six-acre fronting on Wilshire could be used for commercial development, the seventeen acres in the back fronting on Eighth Street could be used for the school, the area under the playing field could be used for underground parking to service the school and the commercial development." So it comes up as a much more

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practical package than what Trump is talking about. They're talking about being friendly with the neighbors and being community supporters, but how can you hug a 125-story Trump Tower, you know?

CONNORS: Well, would the high school make use of the buildings as they exist?

SCHRADE: Oh, no.

CONNORS: They would be torn down?

SCHRADE: Yeah, there are earthquake problems with that old building, and it should be-- Yeah, there's some movement on this to save it as a historical site.

CONNORS: It's historical, yeah.

SCHRADE: But the lives of those kids in that area seem to be much more important than the Coconut Grove and what that stood for.

CONNORS: Yeah, sure. Sure. Well, we have covered many a topic in these sessions, and I don't really have anything that I can think of that I want to ask about. We might mention that before you left for Sicily, we were at Stanley [K.] Sheinbaum's house for in support of Ron Carey. We might just want to mention something about that. Ron Carey is running for the presidency of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and there was a fund-raiser up here. I was just wondering, maybe, how did you get involved in that? You were one of the Friends of Ron

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Carey, I understand.

SCHRADE: One of the sponsors, along with people from other unions, a few from other unions, but also from the Hollywood TV, radio and television community. I was asked to join by the people organizing it: ^{and} Lois Davis and Joyce Fisk and others, John Randolph, a movie guy, and Ed Asner. We talked about getting involved in it. He had some reservations about it, as I did, about getting involved in another union. But I believe it's justified on the basis that the union leadership has been so corrupt for so many years and so damaging to the rest of us in the labor movement generally that you have to get involved in something like this, first of all, to avoid more government intervention. It's a trade union problem, it's a problem of the progressive forces in the United States, because they've always endorsed Republicans, even the most reactionary ones like [Richard M.] Nixon and [Ronald W.] Reagan and [George] Bush, so it becomes a responsibility to get involved. I don't think that we ought to be so involved that we're interfering in the internal process of the union, but when ^{there's} a candidate like Ron Carey, who's got a good record as a Teamster president of his local and is obviously not part of the corrupt Mafia influence on the Teamsters, then you've just got to get involved. So were doing that effort right now.

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CONNORS: I thought it was interesting that the chairman of his effort is Eddy Burke who headed up the Pittston strike activity--

SCHRADE: For the ^{United} Mine Workers union.

CONNORS: --for the Mine Workers in West Virginia.

SCHRADE: Yeah. And ^{he} it also helped [Richard] Trunka get elected--

CONNORS: That's right, yeah.

SCHRADE: --based upon a more democratic constitution.

It's probably the best constitution of any union in the country, put together by Clyde Summers of the law school at the University of Pennsylvania, who is an old ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] guy out of Buffalo, ~~a New York~~ ~~adviser~~, worked in the national ACLU, and was the guy that advanced that idea of the Public Review Board which the UAW adopted as a way to deal with process questions inside the union. So it seems to me that this is part of the process of more democracy in the unions and getting rid of corrupt leadership like in the Mine Workers and the Teamsters. So it's good to see Eddy Burke involved in this thing because he has all of that background as well as the practical techniques of winning an election. So it makes a really good-- He's a really big help to Carey.

CONNORS: Yeah. So that election is in December of '91, I believe.

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SCHRADE: Yeah, well, the process is in motion: ^{filling} petitions to run for office, getting delegates elected this year, and going through the nominating convention and then through the--

CONNORS: Yeah, which is the first time that Teamster members can vote, too.

SCHRADE: Yeah, ordered by the court. Here again, most union leaderships are opposed to that, including the UAW [United Auto Workers] over the years, ^{has} who ~~have~~ been opposed to rank-and-file elections. It's one of the other questions we're taking on inside the UAW right now, to try to do these democratic reforms within unions if possible, in the Congress if necessary, and the courts, too. The courts do have a role to play when things are so bad that the trade union movement won't deal with them. We dealt with the Teamster problem in the late fifties and expelled the Teamsters as being a corrupt organization. That was part of the deal between [Walter P.] Reuther and [George] Meany to have an Ethical Practices Committee, and the Ethical Practices Committee, under Al Hayes, set up the machinery where several unions were expelled for corrupt activities. But recently, one of the most corrupt, and possibly an FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] informant, Jackie Presser was invited back on the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial

Organizations] Executive Council. So it puts the government in a weaker position when the trade union movement doesn't deal with it's own dirty linen.

The ACLU got involved in this on a national basis, of going into court to try to prevent the government trusteeship by setting up a democratic process which would be handled inside the union and monitored by the court. So the ACLU is playing another democratic reform role here, which may be misunderstood by unions and go against what we're trying to do in bringing the ACLU and the labor movement together. But I think, in the long run, the fact that we were able to get a court-sponsored, democratic procedure set up inside, rather than setting up a government trusteeship, which I think would have been really scandalous, that here's another role that the ACLU can play and is playing. *(Later, Ron Carey was elected president)*

CONNORS: I've asked my questions. Is there anything we've missed? Probably not.

SCHRADE: Probably not. Do we have a chance to do a--

CONNORS: An addendum tape?

SCHRADE: Addendum tape?

CONNORS: I suppose we could.

SCHRADE: After reading all this stuff?

CONNORS: After reading all this? Yeah. Well, you'll certainly have a chance to participate in the editing and

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the clarification of points and that kind of stuff. I just want to say that ^a has been-- I mean, all the oral history interviews we've done, I always learn something. No matter if I'm talking to labor or other people, there's something to be learned, and it's been very instructive. This has been particularly instructive, because what an opportunity to sit with somebody who has been involved in so much and so many of the things that ^a affected me and my own appreciation of things. My own politics I think have changed significantly from this experience, and I just want to thank you personally for allowing this to go on. This has been great.

SCHRADE: Well, thanks for getting all this out of me.

[laughter]

CONNORS: Well, I have ^a deal, though. I mean, today we talked about some of the new stuff, you know, the ACLU and the [Danilo] Dolci education movement activity. Why don't we get together in twenty years and assess what the results of that have been, okay?

SCHRADE: That's a possibility.

CONNORS: I'll be around and you'll be around.

SCHRADE: That's a possibility.

CONNORS: Okay.

SCHRADE: Well, the thing about my life in the labor movement is that I moved out here to California after

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having a struggle with my family, struggle over whether I should pursue a research career, and I think getting involved in the UA was a wonderful thing. It helped create a whole value system for me and a way to live my life that has been productive and creative. Obviously, there have been some serious defeats and some problems, but I can look back--

CONNORS: Brushes with death, for instance.

SCHRADE: Yeah. And losing a guy like Reuther and losing a guy like Robert Kennedy, who were the most important mentors in my life, but also being associated with research chemist like Dr. Oskar Baudisch and friends like Vera Dunham and Laverne Conway and Jack Conway and Cesar Chavez and Ted Watkins and Esteban Torres who I could work with because I found a way to work in a more democratic way inside the trade union movement.

I have serious disappointments about the direction of the trade union movement, but those things happen, and times will change again, particularly if workers begin to respond the way they are in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and South Africa. I think workers in American can rise up in different ways and ^{WIN} ~~be~~ some of the same kind of reforms that are necessary. And, you know, I got to get involved in the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement, the peace movement. All this was possible

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because I decided to leave Saratoga [New York] and get the hell out of a bad family situation, an education thing that I really wasn't pleased with, and finding an open door in the UAW.

Another disappointment was that, being defeated for office in '72, I saw the leadership of my own union turn me to a point where my right to be creative was seriously restricted. But going back in the factory, I was able to work myself through that and find ways to work inside the union as sort of an ombudsperson in the factory and into the ACLU and so forth and was just a--

CONNORS: Sure. Well, you know, the defeats get turned into new opportunities.

SCHRADE: Yeah.

CONNORS: Any number of people who would have that experience would be so bitter towards the labor movement, trade unions, bureaucracies, that they would just give up and go start doing public work against the organizations. This wasn't the case with you. You sort of saw the limitations of that organization, and somehow it was, what you just said, ways of being creative and being able to get back and work in a way that was principled and effective.

SCHRADE: Yeah. And with a lot of help from Monica [Weil Schrade], who I met in the peace movement in '71. So our life together has really been important in getting me to a

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position where I could understand what had happened to me. There was a lot of bitterness there for a while, but then I decided to-- because then there's a lot of negative stuff flowing, and I decided that was wrong. But I had a chance. The factory gave me a chance to get back to basic issues about what we as workers were all about and how we had to deal with our own union in constructive ways. It was helpful until I finally got tired of it and retired.

CONNORS: At which point, you took up cooking.

SCHRADE: Cooking and ACLU activities and--

CONNORS: Was Monica an activist in the peace movement?

SCHRADE: Peace movement, yeah. That's how we first met up in San Francisco, at a party afterwards with some friends and union people and personal friends.

CONNORS: Well, she's a lawyer.

SCHRADE: She became a lawyer after we got married. She always wanted to be one, and I don't think her father really pushed her or thought it was a good idea. Her father was a lawyer and her grandfather was a lawyer, so she thought it was important to become a third-generation California lawyer. She's had problems with it, but generally she's enjoyed it. She first worked with handicapped children in the court, she's a court-appointed lawyer dealing with abused children, and now has a job at the Buhal Center in South Central L.A. dealing with family

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law stuff. But I think she's about ready to change again. She never wanted to be a corporate lawyer. Generally, she's working on people's problems, some very difficult ones. Some of the child abuse things she used to come home with out of the court were-- I finally said, "I don't want to hear this shit anymore." It was damaging to her, too.

CONNORS: You think you're having a bad day, and your wife comes home and you say, "Now, that's having a bad day!"

SCHRADE: These poor kids.

CONNORS: Oh, boy. Well, that takes a kind of heroism, a heroic approach to life, too.

SCHRADE: Yeah.

CONNORS: So thanks.

SCHRADE: Thank you, Tom.

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