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GENE FREELAND
October 12, 1980

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Amelia Kay King

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Oral History Collection

Gene Freeland

Interviewer: Amelia Kay King

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

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Ms. King: This is Amelia Kay King interviewing Gene Freeland for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 12, 1980, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Freeland in order to obtain his recollections concerning his association with the local Dallas Council of AFL-CIO.

The first thing I'd like to ask you about is some background information--where you were born, when, and that type of thing.

Mr. Freeland: I was born in this fair city fifty-two years ago, on the 30th of April, 1928. I grew up here and have lived here all my life, except for two brief times, a total of little over two years, that I was in the Marine Corps.

Ms. King: Did you start working here after high school, or did you go on to some college?

Mr. Freeland: I went to Southern Methodist University for about a year, and then I went to work at the Dallas Power and Light Company in the Distribution Department,

as a lineman's helper. At the time I left in 1965 . . . I went to work in February, 1949, and worked there until October 1, 1965. I was a meter service foreman with service crews, the crews that work in the Distribution Department and install services from the pole lines to the buildings.

King: Were you active in the union during that time?

Freeland: They had a union at Dallas Power and Light, and I joined. The union was not what we would call a strong union. It negotiated contracts every year, and everybody belonged because all their friends belonged. It was a social-type union, particularly the first ten or fifteen years I was there at Dallas Power and Light.

In 1958, I was elected as a union steward for the Meter Service Division. As a result of that election, I was on the negotiating committee. I negotiated first in 1959 and then in 1960.

In 1960, I was elected president of the union but resigned after one month because I had a personal disagreement with the business manager about the direction the union ought to take. In the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, of which I was a member, the business agent, where there is one, is the dominant force. He is responsible for the negotiations; he appoints union stewards, usually the individual that the various sections

elect. The president must work with the business agent, never against, and he conducts the business meetings. Because I could not work with him, I resigned after one month as president, and then the remainder of that time, for two years, I did nothing in the union, and then I was elected business manager in June of 1962, unopposed.

King: It was a personality conflict then?

Freeland: No.

King: Difference in goals?

Freeland: Difference in goals and achievements. As I hinted earlier, the union was a social club. It had started getting business-like with surveys of other utility companies in cities the same size as Dallas. We had statistics. We were prepared when we were negotiating. The Distribution Department was then, and is still, the only division of Dallas Power and Light Company that was organized into a union. The Distribution Department consists of overhead lines, underground lines, meter service, trouble division. The Plant Department and the generating stations were not organized, and I felt that they needed to be organized. The business manager did not want to organize them, and that was the fundamental disagreement--whether we were to grow or whether we were to become militant and more business-like, or whether we would more or less improve the way it was but continue along the same paths. I am not saying

that I was right and he was wrong.

The union had prospered at that time. We were comparable in wages to the average of this region, the southwest region. Houston was about \$55 a month more than us at that time in the base rate. Since that time, our linemen make more than the Houston linemen, so we have gained that ground back. But it has been at a cost--the militancy--and probably there has been a little more separation between the union attitude and the company management.

King: Then when you became business manager you went ahead and implemented your views about how the union should proceed.

Freeland: Yes, we conducted an organizing drive in the Plant Department within the next year. The union has conducted two more that I'm familiar with since then. We haven't succeeded yet, but we still try. But the impact has been that the company knows that if they don't deal with us and the other employees fairly, that union is the alternative, so the company always gives just enough, they think, to keep the people satisfied.

King: It is the idea of using the union as a club in ununionized areas. The threat of a union is sufficient to force management into certain positions that they might not take voluntarily?

Freeland: Yes. And also the company used the union. For instance, Dallas Power and Light is part of Texas Utilities, which

consists of two other companies, Texas Electric in Fort Worth and Texas Power and Light, which has the rest of the rural areas and the numerous county towns in Dallas and Tarrant Counties. The wage rates in Fort Worth are about five to ten dollars more per month than the union rates in Dallas. If we have wage adjustments in key jobs in the Dallas Power and Light Company, they give those same adjustments to Texas Electric. That way, they can tell the employees at Texas Electric, "Look, they have a union, and you make more money than they do." So they keep out the union, but the pressure of the union benefits the employees there. The pressure of us organizing these other companies requires Dallas Power and Light to keep us up to the national average in wages, rates, and benefits paid by companies the size of Dallas Power and Light. It's a synergistic thing; it serves them when they use it right-- and they do--and it serves the union very well.

King: How long did you stay as business manager?

Freeland: Three years, until July of 1965. My predecessor, Allan Maley, was then selected to become the first director of what was then called the "War on Poverty" and is now the Dallas County Community Action Agency. He was notified of that in June, and I was selected to take his place for a six-month interim, giving him a six-month leave of absence. Then the funding came on October 1, 1965,

and I became the executive director of the Dallas AFL-CIO Council, and I was elected as the secretary-treasurer.

King: In 1965?

Freeland: Yes.

King: How long did you serve in that position?

Freeland: From October 1, 1965, until March 31, 1979.

King: What are you doing now?

Freeland: I am now with the Labor Department. I am the staff assistant to the regional representative, responsible for inter-governmental affairs of the Department of Labor. Edgar Berlin is my boss, and he is Secretary of Labor Marshall's appointee in this five-state region of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas, and I am his staff assistant.

King: Then, in a sense, you're still involved with unions but not in the same way as you were before?

Freeland: No. My experience is invaluable in this job because I know the public figures, many of them personally, know the machinations necessary to soothe the egos of elected officials. I'm familiar, very familiar, of course, with labor laws and other departments in the Department of Labor, that is, functions such as OSHA, labor-management reporting, and all those. I'm familiar with it and give some experienced knowledge in the implementation of their programs.

King: I would like now to ask you a couple of general questions

about the labor climate in Texas, although I know you were most specifically involved with the local level. Does there seem to be a specific major problem? What's the primary problem in labor organization in Texas?

Freeland: Let me first say that I was involved with the Texas AFL-CIO as a representative of the Dallas AFL-CIO. We had an administrative committee of the Texas AFL-CIO, which basically consisted of the Dallas and Houston Councils, which had the only full-time AFL-CIO directors in the state, along with the Executive Board of the state AFL-CIO. I am very, very familiar with labor in all parts of the state.

The number one problem is that Texas is fast becoming the number five industrial state, and may be that now, but it's laws are still rural. It's attitude is rural. This thinking can hurt, coming from that rural Legislature passing rural laws. Anti-labor legislation is predominant throughout all rural areas, particularly in the South. Even though the Texas economy is divorced from states such as Alabama and Mississippi, it is still dominated by the thinking. There are about 12 percent of the working people in the State of Texas who are union members. There are 8 percent, perhaps 9 percent now, in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan areas who are union members. Compare that to the cities of Cleveland or Cincinnati, which have

40 percent union members and the strength that they would have in electing public officials considerate of union members' wishes in those states. The national average is 28 percent, and so we are having to do the same job in this industrial state that a comparable industrial state like Illinois does, and yet they have three or four times the union membership.

Chicago, for an example, has union officers in every facet of their city government, particularly in construction and all the other panels. To my knowledge, not one union officer is on any commission or board in the City of Dallas. I was, for one term, in 1973 to 1975, but not in a union-related job. I was on the Urban Rehabilitation Standards Board, which decided whether a house ought to be demolished or not or upgraded to standards. It was a token appointment, but we haven't been involved in the city government at all.

Under Briscoe's administration, we had over fifty appointments. Some of them were very essential. I served on a couple of appointments there, and we became part of the state government under Briscoe.

But Bill Clements is now governor, and I know that he has not appointed any union members. If we do have any left on any state commission or board, it is the result of a six-year term to which they were appointed

under the Briscoe administration.

So in answer to the question, labor has been used as a scapegoat. The Legislature has been dominated by oil, insurance, highway, rural, and business interests. The Legislature is anti-labor, and we've had that hill to climb, and we haven't been successful.

King: Were there other governors that were particularly helpful in labor matters?

Freeland: None in my experience. In fact, most of the governors ran on an anti-labor platform--Alan Shivers, John Connally. Although we endorsed John Connally the first two times he ran, both in 1962 and 1964, he was pro-business, and in Texas you cannot be pro-business and pro-union. You can only be one or the other, and he decided to be pro-business. Preston Smith, I don't think he really ever understood what the job was about. But with his exception and Briscoe's pro-union attitude, no governor since Allred has been favorable to labor.

King: I read a quote by Price Daniel which compared labor unions essentially to a terrorist plot, roughly. He indicated, at least in that quote, that he was very anti-labor. It seemed like the governors' attitudes may have had some effect on union's ability to progress.

Freeland: There are several anti-labor laws. All those that deal with labor in Texas are prohibition-type laws. They

prohibit unions or organizations of employees or employees themselves individually to take a concerted action or certain action. It denies public employees the right for collective bargaining. It denies public employees to even belong to a union that maintains the right to strike, whether or not they ever strike in this state. Other states have labor-management relations acts that govern the affairs of employers and employees in the absence of the federal legislation, which does not cover all employees in any state. Texas merely has prohibitions, and that's the attitude of the State of Texas and the official attitude of the state government.

King: Has the migration that we've heard so much about, of the northern industries into the Texas area, has an impact on Texas unions?

Freeland: Probably, by-and-large, it has had a negative impact, even though the union companies in the State of Illinois that may move to Texas must offer the union members in that area the right to transfer when they establish a new company here. They are often covered by a national contract, and it's just a mere formality to get the local people to join the union because once they join the union, here's this contract under which they will work.

That has helped in numbers, but most of the migration has not been the production-type. It has been, to Dallas

particularly, the insurance and the banking industry. The non-union people from there have come here, and so the attitudinal change has not been union. American Airlines is coming in soon. They will bring a union climate, but they are organized here and they are organized there, so that won't be another new union. It will be merely more members in the same union.

King: One of the other things that several studies done on unionization in the South tend to indicate is that technology quite often has given an assist to union membership. Now it seems that there are large numbers of technologically-associated jobs, data processing, for example, that do not seem to have made any real major steps toward unionization in the South. Is there a reason for that other than just the general resistant attitude?

Freeland: Well, white-collar work . . . and here I am using the term white-collar, and I basically mean non-production blue-collar work that would be classified suitable for union membership. White-collar work is very difficult to organize. You can organize that kind of work when there is fear of losing jobs. When you talk about data processing, you're talking about a growing industry, growing just by leaps and bounds. UCC (University Computing Company) is competitive with EDS (Electronic Data Systems); EDS is competitive with Texas Instruments. A per-

son can be working at a job level in UCC, be recruited by EDS at a raise, be recruited by TI (Texas Instruments) at a raise, be recruited back to UCC at the same job at another \$100 more a month, and so there is progress. They don't need a union for rates. They don't need a union for job security. They don't need a union.

King: What about women in the unions?

Freeland: Women in the unions, in some industries, are there. I hate to stereotype any group, but women, because of the industry, are notoriously hard to organize.

Now we're talking about the garment industry, basically. In Texas the garment industry is really growing. You have Hagar Slacks, Farrah Slacks. All these are Texas-based, and they've grown. Most of the textile industries are in the South now instead of the Northeast, and they are not organized, and there are a large percentage of women who we haven't been able to organize.

Yet at the Telephone Company, which has basically everybody there organized, except their professional people and their supervisory people, about 60 percent of membership of that union is women, and they are militant. They are strong union members, and they participate in the meetings, and they participate in any work stoppages, and they participate in negotiations, and they participate in all facets of it. They are excellent union

members. So they deal with unions about the way a man does, once they become a part of it.

But I think perhaps the heritage, certainly in this area and perhaps throughout the nation, of a woman being trained for something other than blue-collar work all through high school, that stereotype of women, also trains them against the knowledge of union involvement. Because of this, they are hard to organize. But I refer again, once they are organized, they seem to catch up the lost ground rapidly and become very good union members.

King: Along that same line, what major problems do you run into in organizing other minority groups? In Texas, how about the large number of migrant workers, for example?

Freeland: Blacks are not difficult to organize. They're in low-paying jobs and have low job security. It is not the ethnic position which is the difficulty in organizing. Mexican-Americans, where there is an identifiable industry that caters toward them, are difficult to organize. Some of the great efforts in organizing in this state is in the Valley--to organize the Mexican-American citizen. Where migrant workers are, forget it. They're just happy to have a job. If they are aliens, and even thought of a union, they would be fired immediately, or somebody would call the immigration authorities--naturally, the employer--right before payday, and so we've had difficulty organizing them. Where

they are integrated in the work force, at a company, there's no difficulty at all because they have the same interests as the other group of employees.

We haven't been able to determine in any organizing drive that the blacks voted one way--either for a union or against it--universally, or that Mexican-Americans or other minorities voted against it because they were a minority group. That usually isn't the criterion. It seems to be, do they need a union? Have we sold our position to organize them? Are we smart enough to have a black talking to blacks and a Mexican-American talking to Mexican-Americans? If so, if we communicate our message, we win that organizing drive regardless of ethnic background.

King: You've talked some about legislation in Texas that is detrimental to unions and union development. Have there been specific movements made in trying to . . . well, I'm familiar with the right-to-work law. There was an election on it last year, I believe, that was unsuccessful once again. There is strong resistance in doing away with some of the anti-labor legislation. Is the problem in the grass roots or where is the problem?

Freeland: We have to give some credit to labor's opposition. In 1940, when this law that allows people to receive the benefits of the union without having to belong to a union

was first suggested, it was named by William P. Ruggles, Editor Emeritus of the Dallas Morning News, and regretfully he is still alive. He named it the "right-to-work law." Everybody's for the right-to-work. Of course, that's not what the law says, but everybody's for the right-to-work. It was passed in Texas when the Taft-Hartley Act made it legal to pass this law in 1947. We're not going to repeal the right-to-work law with the Legislature that is still elected by a state that has no more than 12 percent union members. We're just not going to be able to do it.

Usually, when right-to-work becomes a referendum, it is not labor that puts it there because we know we're whipped. Usually, when it's before the Legislature, we don't want it brought up. We don't want it out of committee because we are going to get forty votes out of 150. Why do we want to show our weakness? And that's all it does. But it's demagoguery. Here's this Republican or this conservative Democrat that can say, "I'm for the right-to-work," and run on the right-to-work law for his next election or whatever it may be. We were beaten in the PR race when they named it.

Now the State of Oregon, in a recent referendum within the last two years, wanted to repeal the Oregon right-to-work law. The unions there were able to go to court

and say it cannot be called a right-to-work law because nowhere in the law that they were trying to enact did it give anybody who needed a job or wanted a job the absolute right to work. Of course, then, the referendum was defeated overwhelmingly for a right-to-work law in the State of Oregon. If we could do that in every state, the right-to-work laws would be written off the book.

We've taken surveys and asked if they wanted right-to-work laws repealed. Over 80 percent said "no." But when asked the same question in this language, "Do you believe that people who are covered by union contracts, receive the benefits of the union, and must by law be represented by the union ought to pay their share of the cost of running a union?" 57 percent said "yes"--same survey. If that were true about union representation paying for it, it would do away with the right-to-work law.

Now the other anti-labor legislation, the prohibition-type laws, are still on the books, and we're eroding them. There used to be a law that was on the books that said that if there were violence on picket lines, regardless of who started the violence, for the picket, the union member, it was a felony. We had a person serve nine months, an iron worker out of Local 481 here in Dallas, in the penitentiary because there was a fight in the picket line, and he was involved in the fight. He didn't even start

the fight. The other individual, the non-union member, I think a scab, I'm not sure, that started the fight was guilty of a misdemeanor and paid a fifteen-dollar fine, but he wasn't covered by the law of felony. We were able to repeal that with Ben Barnes' help, by the way, on the local calendar, and Senator Mauzy from Dallas was able to get it repealed with the statement that "we want to penalize the union man on the picket line the same as we penalize these 'poor' non-union people," and the anti-union legislation said, "You bet, boy, they're going to get the same penalty." So now it's a misdemeanor for everybody, and the law has been repealed. Those kind of erosions are taking place.

Other laws that we have been able to successfully update have been the unemployment compensation laws-- Texas used to be in the bottom ten--and the compensation paid to injured workers, the Workmen's Compensation Law, Texas used to be in the bottom ten of all fifty states. Now they are in the top 25 percent because Texas is in the top 25 percent of the industrial states. There have been some genuine improvements made in those laws, and for this we are thankful to labor's friends and some other people, of course.

King: Then the various forms of legislation have been basically eroded away. Speaking of legislation, what is the exter-

nal relationship between the union and the city government, such as in Dallas and Houston?

Freeland: Well, Houston's is very good. For instance, the county judge there for many years, Williams, who may still be a county judge, was a union plumber at one time. Judge Hofheinz, when he was elected, was elected with labor support. The AFL-CIO did a tremendous job.

The same thing has happened in San Antonio. There have been successful strikes with the bus system, and they have several city-owned departments that are unionized and have a contract. Even though it is against the law, they have it anyway.

In Dallas that hasn't been true. There is a union member on the city council now, Riccardo Medrano, who is from a union family. His father worked at LTV (Ling-Temco-Vought) for many years and was a union representative there and was on the Dallas AFL-CIO council when I was first there, when the UAW was part of the AFL-CIO. Robert Medrano, his brother, is on the school board and is a union member. He used to work with LTV but doesn't anymore.

But in the city council, this is not true as far as the city government. Now George Schrader is aware of the union. He works with the union leadership when he can, but we're not part of the city government. There are city unions there. They have payroll deductions of union dues

at the city. They do not have it in the school system, so the union is not very strong there. But we have several 100 percent organized union departments that work for the city. The Signal Division is an example. All the men belong to the union in the Traffic Signal Division of the City of Dallas and in other departments. So they deal with the union in the City of Dallas, but not the city council. Union members have had friends on the city council, and we do now.

Union members have had a friend in the mayor, Wes Wise, who was one of the unions' friends. Gary Weber, who used to be on the city council, and who was narrowly defeated when Folsom was first elected as mayor, was friendly toward the unions. Gary is now County Judge. So we've had friendly people. Jim Tyson is a union member, a union electrician, and he's a county commissioner. But we've never really been a part of the decision-making process of the Dallas city government.

Bob Folsom is not union-oriented; he is a realtor. I don't know that he's even anti-union. He sought the AFL-CIO's endorsement when he ran for mayor. He successfully blocked the endorsement of Gary Weber, which probably meant the difference in the election. I think it's not ignorance on Bobby's part because Bobby's not an ignorant person. I went to high school with him, and he's a very

intelligent person. So I'm sure he knows what unions are about, but he's never had any experience with them, so he doesn't know where they belong in our system.

King: On that point, what is the problem as far as the attitude of the public toward unions?

Freeland: Well, I talked to you earlier about the low percentage of union members, so that means that a lot of people are growing up in this state and not in a union family. In the East, where there's a lot of union families, all your friends are from union families. If you're in the right economic group, you grow up knowing about unions.

In Texas you grow up with the Dallas Morning News, and I grew up not ever wanting to join a union. They were the "enemy" because everything you read in the paper, of course, were the breakdowns between labor and management. You don't read that General Motors signs a contract this year; you read that they're on a strike. So everything was negative and mostly still is. So people grow up in the state with a negative attitude toward unions, and their families don't belong to a union. They're just as ignorant as I was when I grew up. So there's lack of knowledge about what unions do and their purpose in our society.

The labor history is not given, certainly not in the Dallas Independent School District. The history books

go to the year 1902, and it's as if the union didn't exist after 1902 because that's the last date in the chapter on labor history in the United States. And so, there is just no knowledge of it. The only experience you get in this state is like me. I went to work at Dallas Power and Light, and there was a union, and my friends belonged, and I joined and I found out.

King: Is there something the union has been trying to do about that problem?

Freeland: Oh, certainly. We're trying to get the State Legislature to require a proper union history for the Board of Education. We haven't succeeded. We've tried to get various school districts to adopt books that have the true history of labor, and I'm told that some school districts have that. I wish I knew which ones; I would like to know about it. Certainly many colleges and universities have very comprehensive union history classes in this area and throughout the state, but except on that level, there is no knowledge. I would think that most students would have to want to know about history even at the universities to find out if we even existed before this year.

King: In this area do you run an education program?

Freeland: We would run basically two facets to the education program. We would educate our union members as to what they could do and could not do under state law and educate them in the

state law and other activities in which we were involved. So one facet was to educate the union members about our heritage and their heritage and let them know they weren't alone. The other . . . I often spoke systematically at almost all the high school and every university in this area from Killeen to Commerce and certainly in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and in the Junior College District. I spoke about labor history, about labor management, about labor law, about labor in politics, about anything the teachers would care for me to talk about. But I was one person, and usually it was in a special class. Usually, I was invited by the teachers that, themselves, felt their students needed to know about labor and had pretty well kept them up-to-date. I added to it, perhaps, but where the teacher didn't know or didn't have the answer, then the students received nothing.

King: You mentioned some of the friends of unions in the State Legislature. Is that common in Dallas for legislators to be pro-labor, or are most of the legislators anti-labor?

Freeland: Usually, it was anti-labor until 1965, when the Supreme Court decided that the at-large system of elections was unconstitutional. So now we have individual districts. Then we had it in the State Senate, and they reapportioned to give Dallas County, for instance, from one state senator who was anti-union to three state senators. In 1966, as

a result of that redistricting by the Supreme Court, we elected Oscar Mauzy--union-endorsed, union-elected, period. He's been our friend all along. Ron Clower of Dallas is our friend. Bill Braeklein, who later on became wishy-washy, was elected with union help both times that he was elected to his four-year terms in the State Senate.

We have what I would call five absolute friends out of the eighteen in the State Legislature from Dallas County-- Paul Ragsdale, Lenell Cofer, Sam Hudson, David Cain, and John Bryant. These were union-elected State Legislators. They vote with us, by-and-large, about 90 percent. Their interests are generally not labor's interest, but their interests are the same as labor's. They believe that working people ought to have a fair shake, that compensation paid to workers ought to be higher, ought to be a living wage. They believe in basically the same things we believed in, and they worked for that.

So we've made some inroads as a result of the Supreme Court decisions on one-man, one-vote redistricting. Because of that we've also made the same strides in San Antonio and Houston and other areas, so we do have a more favorable Legislature. Certainly the Senate is much more favorable, but we still do not dominate because most of the state is non-union.

King: I'd like to ask a little bit about some of the specific

problems during the period of time you served as an officer of AFL-CIO, particularly problems inside the union itself. Did you have a problem with factionalism?

Freeland: Yes. We have it, and we'll always have it. The construction trades, the unions in just about every large city, cannot understand the problems of an industrial union. There are two basic differences. I'll use the carpenters, not to condemn them but as an example. You're trained as a carpenter, and if your contractor ever goes out of business, there's another contractor. You may work for six months on one construction site for one contractor, for one employer, and then you move your business. If there's a work stoppage, you can go to Saint Louis, New Orleans, or Houston and go to work there.

An industrial union works for one employer. I worked with Dallas Power and Light. If there were a work stoppage at Dallas Power and Light, where would I go to work? I couldn't go to work in Houston Power and Light or something like that. I worked for Dallas Power and Light. If I lost my job at the telephone company, I was out of work. If a carpenter did a poor job on one job, and the contractor or the employer said "You're fired," why, I can go to work somewhere else--no problem. So they don't understand the difference between a career skill such as carpenter and a skill where you work for an employer, one employer,

and you're maybe just as skilled.

So the negotiations are different. The carpenters get most of their money on top. They have a very small percentage in benefits--vacations or anything like that. If they want to take off, and they've saved their money, they take off. If they want to work every day of the year, they find a job that they can work every day of the year with an employer that needs overtime. The industrial union, telephone company, tries to get better improvement on their hospitalization. They get a better retirement, and they do other things.

And so you have these two basic differences, and for some reason the leadership of the construction union don't understand this. They don't understand when they put a picket in front of a telephone building why everybody doesn't come out and honor their strike. Now there may not be a single union carpenter working in that telephone building. All the carpenters may be working for some other contractor. Yet they can't understand why the 2,000 employees at the Haskell Avenue exchange won't honor that one person's picket. "What's wrong with you scabs? You're behind the picket." Yet if those 2,000 employees walk out of that telephone building they've violated their contract with the telephone company, and they don't get any money as long as they're out of that building. They can't go

to work across town for another employer. So this kind of friction always has existed and always will exist.

Because of that, you have basically two labor movements. It used to be the old AFL, which represented the craft unions--carpenters, et al--and the CIO. Now you have the industrial and construction unions. Their goals are different--much different. Not that one is any less a union member, any less devoted, it's just that their goals are different, and you have this factionalism.

The building and construction trades will take a promise: "Hey, look, I voted against you, but if I'm elected mayor, I'll see that the unions get all the work." Well, naturally, the brothers in the construction union want that person endorsed. He wants that candidate endorsed for mayor because it means dollars to their members' pockets. At the same time, that mayor may deny the telephone worker a fair hearing on rates or anything, and he may be against the unionization of city and public employees. Well, naturally, the industrial unions do not want to endorse him. So you have this kind of factionalism. It really shows up in political endorsements.

King: What kind of problems do you have working with Houston?

Freeland: There has been absolutely no problem during my tenure--and it wasn't to my credit--with the various cities and states working together because, my gracious sakes, we

had the same goals. Often we disagreed on how to implement that goal, but we always had the same goal. Once the decision was made, we had complete cooperation. In fact, the Dallas and Houston areas would trade. If something was successful here, we would send all our material to Houston. If they'd had a successful battle for a political position in Houston, we wanted to know how they did it when it came our time for that battle. So we cooperated tremendously, and the state AFL-CIO was always a great help to us.

King: Roy Evans said in his interview that he felt the primary reason he was defeated in 1973 was because of a balance of power shift in the Houston and Dallas areas to a more conservative position. Did you observe this shift of power?

Freeland: Roy Evans was a feckless leader. He's dedicated. In fact, Roy is going to be working with me starting next Monday-- not with me, but at Griffin Square--Labor Department in workman's compensation under federal law. I like Roy, but Roy couldn't do the job, didn't do the job. We opposed Roy because of his abilities. Now Roy wanted to win re-election. What is he going to say: "Hey, Dallas and Houston are against me because they think I'm doing a poor job?" Oh, no, there must be some other reason. Well, what's the reason? "Well, I'm more union than they are."

And so there has to be a reason, but is it political? Roy, I think, believes that. But it's not true. It wasn't true then; it's not true now. The Dallas and Houston labor movements are the two labor movements in the State of Texas and the community, and we led the state. Without their help the state AFL-CIO couldn't do much, and, as I said, without the state's help, cities couldn't do much.

We didn't get the cooperation from Roy that we deserved and needed to do a good job. Roy . . . I don't want to get into that. I'll respond to any particulars, but generally he was just not a good president and didn't do a good job.

King: When you first came into office, what specific things or what areas needed to be worked on the most, in your opinion?

Freeland: Labor's story in this city was not being told. If there were a strike or any labor position, television would interview the opponent of labor, the proponents of management, ad infinitum. Sometimes they'd let us respond, briefly. Then they'd let the employer of the proponents against labor respond to our statement. It's sort of like, "Let's see what they say, and then I'll let you answer," rather than a forum.

So we tried to get labor's voice heard. We tried to get labor's story told. We tried to become part of

the city government, the county government, the state government. These were the goals that we had in Dallas. We had no voice at all then, and I'd like to take the absolute credit that now labor's story is being told. And it is being told.

Newspapers by-and-large are fair, except editorial pages, and they are against labor generally. But the newspapers are owned by businessmen, and so they are pushing their point of view. But it's not as vicious as it used to be. I don't think it could be anymore.

The reason is . . . it first happened on Channel 13, the "Newsroom" program. It started getting both sides to most community questions, and for the first time labor's story was being told. From that, there was general interest from other TV news spots to give labor fair stories. There were more panel shows; there was more involvement. As a result of that, labor's story started being told. It still is, and I think fairly.

I had excellent press. Sure, there were times when they used my words out of context to scald labor--you expected that--but by-and-large, I have no complaints at all after the first two or three years. Say, from 1970 on, I have no complaint at all. The labor story is being told both on the local level and on the state level.

King: How, specifically, did you go about changing that attitude?

Freeland: I never had a "no comment." I would always answer the questions; I would always give a story; I would always be quoted. I realized how it could be turned against you. I would quite often write it so they couldn't misquote that. I would give short answers, so they couldn't take part of it or they couldn't just show parts of the long answer. It was a conditional thing. I was available--always available. If they wanted to interview the union representative, I would encourage that union representative that was confronted or that was in a labor strife situation to give their side of the story because management certainly was going to give their side and they did an excellent job.

Other unions saw the benefit of this with the exception of the building trades. They are paranoid about it. They would complain about the other side of the strike in 1975 that went on for five months--how management is always getting its side before the audience on radio and television and in the newspapers, and they never print our side. But you couldn't get the representative from labor in the building and construction trades to even respond to the questions. With that possible exception, most of labor cooperated, certainly on the state level and I think in most communities throughout the state.

They would cooperate, not just on the labor issues

but also on political issues, voter registration issues, community activity issues. We came out for such things as flouridation of the city water. We supported it. We were interviewed about it. The labor movement and labor leadership found out the good relations don't stop just on labor-management issues, but that we've got to be involved within the community, and we were.

I was on thirty to forty various boards of the United Way. Labor was represented in all facets of the community in an unofficial capacity. They still are, and I don't see any pulling back from that. In this way, we met more community people. Many of the appointees from labor were just union members, working at a job, giving their time to helping the Boy Scouts or the Red Cross. Other people who were giving their time on a supervisory level, who had no idea . . . they never had met a union person before, never talked to one before that. While this was happening, the audience is more receptive.

I would like to take all the credit, but I don't deserve it. Many people participated in this. It happened under the leadership of the council when I was there, and I am proud of that, but many people contributed to it.

King: What other goals were there that you were concerned with when you were a member of the council?

Freeland; Elected officials. When I was elected, no one from the

City of Dallas had ever won with labor's endorsement against business endorsement. By that I mean we had endorsed the Democratic ticket in 1960, but it wasn't a labor goal. It was in 1966, the Mauzy election, that one saw the first labor candidate against Establishment candidate, with labor winning.

Now it took a change in the law--the repeal of the poll tax and a good voter registration law. We were then able to register voters in minority areas and low income areas, where the interest is the same as the union member's interest, and the working person's interest, whether or not he or she belonged to a union. We were able to get more votes. We were able to center in on areas like the five that I mentioned in the City of Dallas, where we can elect union friends. We always wanted to elect a union friend, and without exception it was successful.

Jim Maddox was elected against Wes Wise, who ran a labor-baiting campaign--right-to-work, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, the old cliches. Maddox beat him. Maddox beat him with union money from throughout the nation and with union help in this city, He won, Martin Frost, congressman, won with union's help. These were labor-endorsed candidates against Establishment candidates, but because we had enough union members registered in that area and we centered on those areas, we were able to win.

Wes Wise, before he made the decision that the best thing to do was run against labor for Congress, was our friend, and we helped elect him as the mayor of this city. So we've won on every level since 1966, and I'm very proud of it.

King: Did you have other goals that you wanted to work for?

Freeland: Yes, I wanted to organize a hell of a lot more people than we've been able to. We still haven't done it. There are reasons, but not to put the blame. Dallas is a white collar area. I've mentioned insurance, banking. Dallas is it. You can't organize them, and we haven't been successful. We haven't been able to get the unions--our fault--to invest the dollars in this area. They would rather invest it in Cleveland where they get a greater return for their investment. The national unions are just naturally like any business. They want the best return for their dollar.

We haven't done a job that we should have done. We picked up numbers; we picked up maybe a percent or two on union membership in this area. Basically, I was a total failure in that.

King: Would anybody else have been more successful?

Freeland: I don't know. They hadn't been before, and they haven't been since. That's a judgement that I can't make. Maybe history someday will. I don't know.

King: What about the education programs? You mentioned some of the things you'd done. Are the unions still active in that?

Freeland: Not as much. My opponent in the last election--successful opponent--was out of the construction trade, and he used my involvement with the community. He said I was spending too much time with the community, and not enough time with the labor movement, although my job was to represent the labor movement to the community. It was effective, and he was able to get elected under that. He's a decent person, and he's an able person, but he has been afraid to get involved in the community.

King: Who is he?

Freeland: It's Willie Chapman.

King: Who was the union president when you were there?

Freeland: There were several presidents. The president of the local labor council just holds the meetings, appoints committees. The executive director runs the business. The president does not work for the AFL-CTO. He may work for the union, or he may be someone that isn't a full-time union officer. We had several presidents. Dan Wicker, who was not even a union officer, worked for Southwestern Bell as a union member. He was the president during my last term with the AFL-CTO. He was more politically motivated than some others. He never held a union office to my knowledge until he was

elected vice-president of the Dallas AFL-CIO council, the term before. It was generally the idea then to serve one term, two years, as vice-president, and two years as the president of the Dallas AFL-CIO and then step down. This way they changed out the presidents every two years.

King: Was that to keep it from getting too stagnant?

Freeland: We did that in Dallas. Houston stays with the same guy as president, and they had the same system with the executive director as the principal officer. They have a president that does something else for a living. But, boy, they get one, and they keep him there! It's just a difference, and it doesn't really make any difference what system they use.

King: Does the executive director generally lay out the policies?

Freeland: Yes. He's governed by the Executive Board, which is representatives of the various unions. He recommends to the Executive Board that they make the decision. Then he has the freedom to carry out their policies. If there's something new or if there's some problem with the old policies, then the executive director, as I did, gets with the board and asks for new direction. It wasn't left up to the board. I would always make a recommendation.

Some few times, very few times in the thirteen-and-a-half years I was there, they decided another way was better, which was fine, and I did it that way. So I didn't

win every argument with the board, and I ought not to have. I was sometimes probably wrong, which is hard for us to admit, and they were right. Sometimes maybe I was right and they were wrong, but it didn't make any difference. Sometimes we were both wrong, and that was really awful.

King: What do you see as the future of organized labor in Texas?

Freeland: I see a growth in it. The erosion of the laws and the gradual increase of the industrial areas of this state will cause more unions. We need to get a greater voice in public employees' unions in this state, and that's happening. With that we will have a greater participation in the legislative process and all. I see growth--I see remarkable growth--because we are starting very low, and any growth at all will be a large percentage growth. So I see growth, and with that I see a greater knowledge of the labor movement generally by the general public and with that understanding.

King: Were there any particular strikes that occurred during your tenure that were notable in opening the public's eyes toward labor and labor problems?

Freeland: No, not local strikes. We had a farm workers organizing strike in the State of Texas in 1966 that was unsuccessful, but it was part of Chavez's movement at that time. I think, incidentally, of all the labor leaders to be listed in history five hundred years from now, Chavez will be listed

high because he's leading not so much a union movement in California with the farm workers as much as social revolution. He's a very poor union administrator. He wins the emotional battle to organize and then loses the membership because of feckless, weak leadership. He is a tremendous individual. I see that kind of movement, and that was partly here in Texas. I don't think there have been any remarkable pyrhic victories, or however you want to say it, in the labor movement.

We've had defeats--bitter defeats. The printing pressmen went out on strike, I think, on May 2, 1974, at both the Dallas Times Herald and the Dallas Morning News. Both newspapers were prepared for the strike. They replaced the strikers. That union no longer exists. Stupid leadership! Stupid! They started getting their names in the papers and their faces on the television, and they became enamored with being cheered by their membership who were out on strike, and they lost.

That's also happened, incidentally, with the Dallas Transit System--same thing, same script, the stupidity of costing these people their jobs. It is easy to get people out on strike. Emotionally, you can get them out, but the key is getting them back in before they are replaced. The ignorance of these people--and you can quote this--of getting those people out on strike and letting

them lose their jobs and their pensions is appalling.

These two bitter defeats, the printing pressmen in '74 and the recent Dallas Transit Union strike, are the most galling to me, and I think these were the two worst things that happened, even though one is after my tenure. It would have happened if I were in the AFL-CIO because the local union dictates what that union will do, not the AFL-CIO council. I see these two defeats. The victories have been the general victories of the increase in the labor movement.

King: Do you have any other comments you would like to add?

Freeland: No, I don't.

King: Then you are optimistic, essentially, about the future of labor?

Freeland: Yes. Another change, and probably the most beneficial toward labor and certainly, potentially, the most far-reaching, is that the leadership by-and-large is becoming much more aware, much more involved, than what it had been. Labor is a special interest group, and the members elect somebody to represent them. It is difficult, or used to be, to let a union leader know that one of the best ways he can represent his union membership is to benefit them in the community. He just doesn't go to work. He lives in a community. He ought to give time to upgrading that community. Most of the leadership knows that now, or is

aware of it or becomes aware of it shortly after being elected. Either their predecessor was involved in the community and they saw the benefits from it or whatever. I see that kind of leadership. It's a hell of a lot more knowledgeable than it was when I came in, and they do a better overall job for their membership today than what the leadership did fifteen years ago. And I think this is going to be the greatest benefit, the greatest change, in this state that I saw during my tenure.

King: I thank you very much.