



**CUNY Digital History Archive  
Professional Staff Congress**

**Interview with Cecelia McCall  
Interviewers: Irwin Yellowitz**

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**Transcription: Professional Staff Congress Archives Committee**

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Irwin Yellowitz: Okay. Today is March 23, 2016. I'm Irwin Yellowitz, and I'm about to interview Cecelia McCall for the PSC Oral History Interviews.

Why don't we start with the question that we ask everyone: What is your background, your family background, your education background, etc., so that we know something more about you before we get into the actual questions.

Cecelia McCall: Okay. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Neither, my mother nor my father was high school educated, although they were very intelligent people. My mother was very creative; my father was one of the smartest people I've ever known. She was always a part-time worker, and he was trained as an electrician. However, because he was African American, he was never able to get a union card, so he did off the books work a lot of the time.

I went to the public schools in Boston, Massachusetts. I have always felt that I received a very good education from those public schools. It was a very strict system. I don't think I ever had a teacher who wasn't an Irish-American spinster, and they were dedicated to the profession, so I was very well educated in the public schools. However, I do recall when I was in high school, I was never given any information about going to college - how to

apply for college, that I should go to college - even though I was the top student in my class. So, I just sort of stumbled upon it. My mother said to me once, "Aren't you going to go to college?" And I said, "Hmm, I guess I am, but no one has mentioned it to me."

So we went to see the counselor, and because I had a very good academic record, all As, I was accepted into the state college without an exam.

Irwin: Do you have siblings?

Cecelia: I have a brother who is younger and a sister who is two years older.

Irwin: Were you the first to go to college in your family?

Cecelia: I was the first to go to college. My sister went to nurse training school to become a registered nurse. My brother started Boston College, but didn't finish.

Irwin: How'd you get from Boston to New York City?

Cecelia: I came to New York because my then husband had been offered a job in New York City that he felt he had to take. I had started a master's degree at Boston College. When I came to New York, I finished it at NYU. A few years later, I went into a Ph.D. program at NYU and finished that, here in New York City.

I did start teaching when I was still at Massachusetts. I taught in the Newton public schools, and that was a wonderful experience. When I came here, I taught for one year in the New York City public schools, and then when I finished my master's, I went to NYU and worked in their developmental skills lab. It was from NYU that I came to City University, because then open enrollment had begun, and they were looking for people with my background to do the developmental skills work. So that was fortuitous that the SEEK program started at the same time I was ready to make a contribution to it. I actually read about that[it] in the newspaper and decided that's where I wanted to be. And I applied at Baruch College and got my job there. I stayed at Baruch College until I - actually the last six years in my career, I was at the union full time.

Irwin: How did you become involved with the PSC [Professional Staff Congress]?

Cecelia: I actually became involved with the PSC through a caucus that I was working with very closely, the New Caucus. Prior to working with the New Caucus, I was with another CUNY faculty and staff organization called the Concerned Faculty and Staff of CUNY. At that time, I was more involved in the Faculty Senate. I was actually vice-chair of the Faculty Senate and was more involved in governance activities, as opposed to union activity, but the caucus drew me more toward the union, and when we started organizing, I ran for chapter chair at Baruch College.

Irwin: Now we're in the 1990s, and the New Caucus challenged the City University Union Caucus [CUUC], which had been the dominant one since the founding of the union in 1972. Why did you believe new leadership was needed at that time?

Cecelia: Well, I was very, very much a faculty activist throughout the university. As I said, I was very much involved in faculty governance through the Faculty Senate. I was on any number of committees throughout the university. I knew a lot of people on all the campuses. I saw what was going on on the campuses. Then as I got drawn closer to the union, I realized that probably we needed to defend Open Admissions, which was then under attack.

Irwin: Yes, it was.

Cecelia: And I had come to the university to work in the Open Admissions program, and for that [the] group of students who were admitted because of Open Admissions. So, I very much wanted to work in the defense of Open Admissions and in defense of the university, which was also under attack at that time. The city had a fiscal crisis and constantly - that was in the '70s. But after that fiscal crisis, our finances were ceded to the state. The state never really lived up to its commitment of fully funding the university and kept continually withdrawing funds and gradually, when the university had to make decisions about where to put its money, it decided that it was going to put its money in the academic side rather than the developmental and began withdrawing funds from those programs.

Irwin: So you didn't believe that the union leadership was doing enough to offset these negative factors?

Cecelia: I was not in the Delegate Assembly, but I knew a number of people who were in the Delegate Assembly, and I knew the union leadership was challenged in [by] the Delegate Assembly to do more in defense of the university, and I was influenced by a

number of those people who were my close allies in the various organizations that I was a member of.

Irwin: Now you're at Baruch, and you say you ran for chapter chair. Did the New Caucus have an established group at Baruch, and did you run for chapter chair once, or was it a cumulative process?

Cecelia: No, I ran for chapter chair once. We did not have a lot of New Caucus people at Baruch, but there were a few who did run with me. Marilyn Neimark, when I ran for chapter chair, she was vice-chair of the chapter. I wasn't challenged. We had had one chapter chair up, at the time that [when] I ran for chapter chair, and that was Fran Barasch, who was a very strong chapter leader. I have to say that. She also was the grievance counselor for our chapter at Baruch, and she saved my job, and she saved the job of many people then. But she decided not to run, so I was not challenging Fran Barasch. She just stepped down and the office was open, and I don't think there was anyone from the CUUC caucus challenging us, so we actually won an uncontested election.

Irwin: Right. Now this follows the pattern of that time, because the New Caucus won at almost all of the larger senior colleges, including, say, Baruch, but also City, Brooklyn, Queens. I'm not sure about Hunter at that time. It did much more poorly at the community colleges, and I wonder if you have any thoughts about why there was this divide in the way the faculty responded to this challenge of the New Caucus?

Cecelia: Yeah. Well, that question actually surprised me when I took a look at these questions, and I asked about that, because I do remember that the leadership of some of the community colleges was actually New Caucus people. It was Bill Friedheim and Jim Perlstein at Borough of Manhattan Community College. John Hyland was at LaGuardia. I don't think we ever had anybody at Kingsborough. Queensborough, I don't think, and I'm not sure of the Bronx or Hostos. I do remember being among a group of people who were talking with people at Bronx about starting a New Caucus chapter, so I think we had some leadership there, but it started late. They didn't have the time that both the people at BMCC and LaGuardia had to organize.

So we did lose one election. We won the second time we ran. So I looked at the figures for the community colleges, and we did win the vice-president for community colleges. Anne Friedman was elected vice-president. She got 552 votes. Her opponent was Katherine Stabile.

Irwin: From Queensborough.

Cecelia: Queensborough. She got 457.

Irwin: And what year was that?

Cecelia: This is 2000. Then we got two of the other officers for the community colleges. Sam Farrell was an officer at large and Ingrid Hughes. The other one was Norah Chase, who eventually stepped down. She didn't hang in there.

So we didn't do that badly at the community colleges. Where we lost was with the cross-campus chapter. That was a strong chapter led by Peter Hoberman, I believe.

Irwin: Peter Hoberman, yes, although by 2000, I think Peter Hoberman had retired - by 2000. These figures are for 2000, and there had been a change. The New Caucus grew stronger as you came closer to 2000. We'll get to the election of 2000, so we can talk about that.

Cecelia: Yeah. Well, we weren't strong, anyway, at the cross-campus level, I think because of their leadership and because there was a lot of tension then between higher education officers, CLTs, and the faculty. I think there was some resentment that the union was largely faculty-oriented and wasn't really paying attention to the needs and demands of the HEOs [Higher Education Officer] and the CLTs [College Lab Technicians].

Irwin: I think this a longstanding -

Cecelia: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Irwin: - belief. Okay. We had two general elections as part of this conflict. We had 1997, when the New Caucus did not win the general election. Irwin Polishook was still running at that time, and he won about two thirds of the vote, and Steve London won one third. But in 2000, he had retired.

Cecelia: That's right.

Irwin: So it was an open seat, and Barbara Bowen was now the candidate, and she won by a significant but not overwhelming margin.

Cecelia: Yes.

Irwin: So how do you explain the 1997 result and then the 2000 result?

Cecelia: Well, I think we learned from 1997 how to better organize, and we did continue organizing until 2000, and we grew stronger on the campuses. I think we won - I'm not sure, but we might have won more chapter elections at the campus level.

Irwin: I think you did, yes, between '97 and 2000.

Cecelia: Right. We really went at the 2000 election as though it was a real election campaign. We fundraised. We got a lot of people to volunteer, to do house parties, so we were able to raise money to do a lot of literature, to pay for our literature. We were able to pay for a real organizer, who showed us what we needed to do, and that was one-on-one contact with people, and that's what we went to the campuses [for]- each one of us had a list of people to talk to at our campuses, and we went and we did that.

I also think that part of the reason we won is that Irwin wasn't running, Irwin Polishook wasn't running, and he didn't endorse a successor. So he didn't really back, I think it was Richard Boris.

Irwin: Yes.

Cecelia: So we didn't have that to contend with, and I think the strength of our organizing, and maybe our message, which was, you know, every once in a while, you do need change. And that was the moment where people felt there was some change needed, and they gave us an opportunity.

Irwin: And the fact that he didn't run - there's a tendency among unions that's been well documented that they don't change their leadership very much. Especially presidents: they stay in office for very long periods of time.

Cecelia: Yes. Yes.

Irwin: So I think that the situation in PSC was not unusual at all. But once he retired and it's an open seat, then it's an entirely different story.

Cecelia: That's right.

Irwin: Okay. In that 2000 election, you stood as the secretary -

Cecelia: Yes.

Irwin: – and we can now move to your involvement as an officer. When did you leave office? You came in in 2000.

Cecelia: 2007. I retired in 2007.

Irwin: 2007. All right. So we're talking about the first seven years of New Caucus leadership. What were the major issues that the union faced in the period that you were the secretary?

Cecelia: Well, first of all, as new leadership, we came into pretty much a blank slate, an office where there were very few records, so we didn't have past experience to fall back on. Even when we went into bargaining, all we had was a boxful of handwritten notes on yellow paper. So we had to teach ourselves how to run a union, and that's what we set about doing.

We worked very closely as a team of four, and with our executive committee, Executive Council, we worked through. We followed the constitution very strictly, so that we wouldn't get into any trouble. I think that was the main hurdle we had: teaching ourselves how to be union officers and to represent our constituency.

Then we had to go into bargaining, and of course, that was something new for most of us also. We had to sit across the table from management and stare them down and win what we thought was a pretty good contract, because I think in our contract, we actually used the money differently. We actually raised the people at the bottom in a higher percentage than people at the top. We also won something for adjuncts that they had not had before, which was that office hour. And that's what we actually - the bargaining went longer than we thought it would, because that was the one thing that management wouldn't yield on until the very end. So that kept us out for a long time.

And then, again, the defense of the university - That was the era of Giuliani, and he really was not a friend of the university. He demeaned the university and its students whenever he could. There was very negative publicity. And again, we were facing a state that didn't want to fund us. So we had to develop a really strong lobbying and legislative program, which was one of my responsibilities, and we did develop a good team for that. We really wrote all of our own literature. We never asked for less than what the university was asking for. We always asked for more, and we had the data and the figures to show why we needed the money that we were after for the university.

Irwin: Now, the staff was pretty much the same. Was the staff helpful in this transition from CUUC to New Caucus?

Cecelia: Well, as I said, we didn't have a paper trail to look at. We didn't have a history to look at. We didn't have files to look at.

Irwin: And you had a new Executive Director.

Cecelia: We had a fairly new Executive Director. He had worked for Irwin, I believe.

Irwin: Frank -

Cecelia: Frank Annunziato. Yes.

Irwin: Yes, but he was replaced by Deborah Bell at some point early in your -

Cecelia: Not for a while. Frank was with us at least for a year.

Irwin: Oh, I didn't recall that.

Cecelia: But he was different from the New Caucus people.

Irwin: Right.

Cecelia: And some of the staff were strong supporters of him, as opposed to strong supporters of us, and a few did actually resign, have to leave. Not many. I can think of three people, actually: the editor of the Clarion, the woman who was the secretary for -

Irwin: That was Carol Sims, the editor?

Cecelia: Carole Sims was the editor of the Clarion. The woman who had been Irwin's secretary and Frank Annunziato's secretary – She worked in that center little -

Irwin: Oh, Robin Forman.

Cecelia: Robin. And then the office manager also resigned, and I can't remember her name, either.

Irwin: Yeah.

Cecelia: So there was some hostility, but by and large, people like Debra Bergan who was there before us, she's still here.

Irwin: Still here. And Nick Russo stayed on.

Cecelia: Nick Russo, he was terrific. I always enjoyed working with Nick.

Irwin: Clarissa stayed on.

Cecelia: Clarissa stayed, and she retired just a few years ago. She was very helpful. She knew her job, certainly. And I think gradually other people left, but that wasn't because they felt they had to leave. I think it was just attrition and retirement. We got a wonderful executive - oh, before we got Debbie Bell, we had an interim Executive Director, Leslie Kagan, who was an activist that we had known through community work and work throughout the university. So she helped us over a period of time, and then we finally found Debbie Bell, who you know is - I mean, she's an absolute workhorse. Yeah.

Irwin: Right. And had a lot of experience in New York City unionism.

Cecelia: Yes, a lot of prior union experience.

Irwin: Yes.

Cecelia: I think she came through DC 37.

Irwin: Yes. Yes, she did. And what about the issues that you faced? Other than getting acclimated in running the union, what were, do you recall, the major issues that the union had to face, beyond the contract? Having Giuliani as mayor was an issue in itself, but...

Cecelia: Well, we also had to face our constituency. As I think I mentioned earlier, there were great divisions among the various members that we represented. The HEOs felt we weren't representing them strongly enough, that we were terribly, you know, too oriented toward faculty. The adjuncts, of course, felt that they were not at all represented and what the union offered them was very limited. So we needed to build support among those constituencies, make them feel a little more comfortable.

I don't think we have as much angst among the HEOs anymore, but there has always been tension between the full-time faculty and the part-timers. Though they're the majority, you know, we still feel we have to represent them as a part-time working force. They

are a part-time working force, and we want to maintain that difference between them and the full-timers while trying to give them parity and as much representation as possible and as much security as possible. But it's still a part-time working force, and we see them as such.

Irwin: Did you find in the negotiations - as I had done negotiations when I was in the leadership - did you find that the university was more resistant to making changes in the adjunct area than in any other area?

Cecelia: Hands-down.

Irwin: Because it is cheap labor to them, and they did not want to change that in any significant way.

Cecelia: Right. Hands-down. Absolutely. The management was very disparaging toward part-timers - not only the adjuncts, but also HEOs, the full-time HEO staff. They were adamant about not yielding on many of the issues that were important to them as well. So in some ways, it wasn't easier representing the full-time faculty, but I think management understood the needs of the full-time faculty better than they were willing to have empathy for the needs of the adjuncts.

I think one of the first negotiations that we had, we put on the table a healthcare system for part-timers, and they thought that was laughable. So from 2000 to, I guess, 2014 or '15, that was an issue that we had been negotiating. And it took us that many years to win healthcare for part-timers because the university was adamant in not allowing that to happen.

Irwin: Yeah. Well, they did have healthcare in the welfare fund.

Cecelia: Through the welfare fund, but that was a drain. That was a drain on the welfare fund.

Irwin: Yes, and it was limited.

Cecelia: Yes.

Irwin: A limited program. Now they get their healthcare through the New York City health plan.

Cecelia: That's right. Yeah.

Irwin: On the legislative side, you were a major force in that for the years - and even after you left as secretary, you continued to head the Legislative Committee. You say it was a blank sheet of paper when you came in, with contract negotiations. Was it also a blank sheet in Albany, or did you have experience in Albany beforehand, and how did you just handle that whole legislative area?

Cecelia: I was flying by the seat of my pants, basically. No, I did not have any - well, I knew a lot of people. I did know people, but I had never worked as a lobbyist. But through community work and social activity, whatever, I did know some people in Albany, and I think that was strength.

There was money that we had to spend. The money that was rebated by NYSUT-COPE [New York State United Teachers - Committee on Political Education] funds had never been spent, so we had a pool of money that we could start with. So, I organized a conference to bring in our members from all over the university, from every campus. We developed a legislative book, a huge binder of materials with all the information about the City Council and the state representatives in that. That was the beginning of how I tried to organize a group that would fight for the union and defend the university.

So that was really how it started, and then of course from that conference, we were able to develop a strong committee that we met with monthly. We tried to develop - we weren't as successful as developing legislative committees on the campuses. That was one of our goals, but that really never came to fruition. The best we could do was to try to get a representative from each campus to our central legislative committee.

Irwin: I think your legislative efforts were stronger than any that I remember from my days in the leadership.

Cecelia: Yeah. As I said, we used the money that was rebated to us for our lobbying efforts. That year, I noticed that we did have that fund, so that's what I used to develop the beginnings of the program.

Irwin: In Albany, did you find that there was generally support for CUNY, or was it a struggle?

Cecelia: You know, that's a difficult question to answer, because when you meet individually with legislators, of course, they're welcoming and they listen politely and they offer comments. I think it probably was easier on the Assembly side of the legislature than

the Senate, because the Senate had been typically Republican. I think one of problems we had was - I'm not sure if this is a problem, but then, when we began, NYSUT believed in a divided legislature. They believed that the Assembly should be Democratic and the Senate should be Republican, and they tried to work both sides of the aisle. That never really worked out too well, I don't think.

So we did work to try to persuade NYSUT to change some of its role and the way that it approached elections, and I think that finally has happened, also -

Irwin: Yes.

Cecelia: - because we have a much more, I would say, aggressive and militant leadership on the legislative side in NYSUT. And I think a lot of that was through the influence - not so much me, but Steve London and other people.

Irwin: Right. Okay. In terms of the leadership, what was your role in the leadership? That is, was the leadership a leadership in which the president did most of the decision-making? Was in a cooperative leadership? How did the leadership operate?

Cecelia: Well, I always tell this story. The first day we all came into office - literally, walked into the office - I was coming in early in the morning to prepare materials for our first Delegate Assembly. When I went to the copying machine, Barbara Bowen was there already, doing my job. So I had to tell her, "Barbara, this is my job. According to the constitution, I'm responsible for this, that, and the other thing." So I knew what my job was, and I really attended to that, as the secretary of the union. Beyond that, I really was responsible for doing the recording of all of the deliberations during negotiations, which really was tough, and that really wore me down. But we were a collective. We did work as a group of four in decision-making. And that's the most important thing, I believe, for the officers to realize, that though you may have that role of treasurer, of looking after the funds, and you may have a certain responsibility as secretary, the real role is to make decisions that affect our membership. And so we did. We worked as a collective. We had a lot of arguments. I have to say that. We did not always agree. There was a lot of yelling across the table. But we really worked through that.

Irwin: Do you think the leadership, the four officers, were able to lead the Executive Council and the Delegate Assembly, or was it a more chaotic situation once you went out?

Cecelia: Well, of course it was much more chaotic in the Delegate Assembly, because even though we had won the leadership, we did not have a lot of delegates who were New Caucus. So the first several meetings were really chaotic because, I think, there was still a great deal of resentment on the part of some CUUC [City University Union Caucus] people toward us, and they really wanted to gum up the works. They didn't want us to - I guess they didn't want us to be successful, basically. But gradually, through successive campus elections, we got the majority of the delegate assembly, and that made it easier.

The Executive Council was not so difficult because we had a majority on the executive council from that 2000 election.

Irwin: Okay. Is there anything else you want to say about the PSC before we leave it and go to some of your other activities that were going on at the same time?

Cecelia: Not really. I think the leadership works very hard for not just the membership but for the students and the university at large. They feel responsible for getting as much funding for the university as possible. They struggle around that issue each and every year, through the legislative work, working closely with NYSUT and bringing people up to Albany to lobby.

And then, of course, they're persistent and stubborn, and even though it might be easier to give in, they hold out for their principles. They've certainly held out on this last contract, because they don't want to settle for anything less than what our members deserve. A six percent increase, which is below the level of inflation, certainly isn't something that they're going to accept. So this is a very trying time for the leadership, but I have a great deal of admiration for them.

Irwin: Okay. You mentioned NYSUT [New York State United Teachers] several times in connection with legislative work. Was NYSUT a major asset in legislative work, or did the PSC primarily work on its own?

Cecelia: Oh, no. We never worked on our own. We always tried to work through NYSUT, although there were many differences, ideological differences, between NYSUT and the New Caucus leadership. But

NYSUT was very helpful from the very beginning, because, as I said, we were trying to figure out how to run a union, and they had a conference for us, a small conference for us, at a little hotel in Tarrytown. They had sessions for us, workshops, sort of taught us the ropes.

Irwin: Did their lobbyists follow your lead? As you were the head of the Legislative Committee -

Cecelia: Yeah. Yes, they did.

Irwin: - and they have full-time lobbyists in Albany, did they follow your lead in lobbying?

Cecelia: Yes, they did. Yes, they did. Yes, they did. They certainly did. There was never any antagonism there, even though we did hire our own lobbyist for a while. We felt for a long time that the predominant constituency for NYSUT was K through 12, and that's really where they put most of their energy and lobbying, and we were sort of second-class citizens. And it took us a while to get NYSUT to shift and pay more attention to the needs of higher education, but gradually, that did happen, and I think we're very well represented now.

Irwin: One other thought that occurs to me is that we have a sister union in SUNY, and they also lobby in Albany and work on legislature. What was your relationship to them and were you able to work cooperatively with them?

Cecelia: We did work cooperatively - We had to build a relationship with the UUP [United University Professions], because until the New Caucus became the new leadership - PSC, the UUP was predominantly the major voice in higher education at the state level, and the AFT [American Federation of Teachers]. And when the PSC started to become more aggressive in that arena, UUP had to take notice and maybe change its strategy.

I remember once overhearing one of the leaders of UUP say, "Well you know, before this election there was no PSC, but now there is a PSC." So I think the fact that we made our presence known - and the other thing we did at the RA [Representative Assembly], we were a factor at the RA -

Irwin: The [New York State United Teachers] United Representative Assembly -

Cecelia: Yes, because we went to the RA with many resolutions, representing various needs of different committees of whatever for the PSC, and that was one of the first times that we were recognized as a force, because prior to that - and I had remembered looking through some of the RA material before we went to our first one, and there were no resolutions from the PSC. So we totally changed that. We made that part of our strategy.

Irwin: Okay. Do you think that one of the problems with working with UUP is that they have term limits and their president changes every six years and often many of their other officers, whereas PSC does not have term limits and therefore has a much more stable leadership?

Cecelia: I'm not sure it's term limits. I think their structure there - You know, they're so huge - I think they're so huge, and they have to operate differently from us. We're here in the city, we're a smaller union; we see each other every single month in the Delegate Assembly. They don't have that. So they're so widely dispersed, I think it's much more difficult for them to really be able to have the kind of presentation that we have - the kind of presence that we have.

Irwin: Okay. Let's turn to the AAUP [American Association of University Professors], which is another affiliate of PSC going back to 1981. You were very active in the Collective Bargaining Congress of AAUP. Would you tell us about your role there and what you think the Collective Bargaining Congress could accomplish?

Cecelia: Well it was very difficult when I was on the Collective Bargaining Congress [CBC], because there was a great deal of friction between AFT [American Federation of Teachers] and AAUP at the national level. And the Collective Bargaining Congress of AAUP was very confused as far as I was concerned. One moment they say we are a union and the next one we're not a union.

Irwin: They're supposed to be a union, a collective bargaining congress -

Cecelia: They didn't know that. It took them a long time to realize that. So there was that friction. And I was the only African American on the Collective Bargaining Congress, and some of those guys - and it was mainly men - some of those guys were really right-wingers,

whether they thought so or not, even though they were collective bargaining and they negotiated contracts. Some of the things they said were really beyond the pale.

So I thought it was very difficult, but I always - I spoke up. I defended my positions. Gradually, the situation between AFT and AAUP grew better, because they started working more cooperatively instead of opposite one another. They started organizing collectively, you know, together on various campuses.

Irwin: Joint ventures they called them.

Cecelia: Joint ventures. And their relationship became much better. So we always felt that the PSC should be a presence on the Collective Bargaining Congress. I think I didn't just represent this union, I think I represented, you know, generally the constituency of AAUP.

Irwin: And did attitudes change among the men who you first met as time went on? Because you were there well beyond 2000.

Cecelia: Yeah, I think the biggest problem with AAUP is that they don't have term limits on the CBC [Collective Bargaining Congress], and the positions rotate from - though they do have term limits - but what they do, they rotate from one position to another. If their term is up as secretary or person at large, representative at large, they'll go to other one, so that they just keep - it's the same voices, over and over again. So I think that's really not a good thing for AAUP to allow that to continue, because I haven't been active nationally for a number of years, but when I go to the conferences, the spring, the June meeting - the same people. The same people are there.

Irwin: Can they accomplish anything as a Collective Bargaining Congress? Do they have money that they can use to help affiliates in hard times? What is it that they think they're doing?

Cecelia: Well, they do collective bargaining. They have collective bargaining chapters. They do have money. They only part of AAUP that's growing actually is the CBC unit, not the - what's the other one?

Irwin: The advocacy unit.

Cecelia: Advocacy unit. That seems to be dying. So the money that's coming into AAUP is really coming through CBC. And they do have an organizing staff that is hired nationally - at the national office - but

they do send them out to the various campuses where they're needed. They do offer great support, and I think they have been able to negotiate some pretty good contracts for their people. So they do offer their affiliated chapters a lot of assistance.

Irwin: Did you have any problems with the other side of AAUP, [American Association of University Professors] the advocacy side, because that's always - they've always had the split? It was only in the early 1970s that they accepted collective bargaining as a legitimate function of faculty. Did you have any problems in that area with the people who do not have collective bargaining?

Cecelia: No, I worked on some committees with them. Some of them were very pleasant people, very committed people. But my feeling about that side, it has no reason for being as far as I can see. I was a delegate to their session during the June meeting, and there was no business conducted at all whatsoever at that meeting. They have nothing to talk about. So I don't see that continuing much longer. They don't have a role; they do not seem to have much of a role in the congress [AAUP].

Irwin: What about their academic freedom work or the Red Book which has these principles -

Cecelia: Well the Red Book is - Yes, but that's not just the advocacy side, that's CBC as well.

Irwin: Yes, but it did come from the advocacy side, and they depend on it more heavily because they don't have a contract.

Cecelia: I know that, yes. And they do cite the Red Book a lot when I guess when issues occur at their campuses, but I just don't see that they have any strength.

Irwin: Well, there have been attempts to take them over by AFT [American Federation of Teachers] and NEA [National Education Association] in the past, but it hasn't happened.

Cecelia: Yeah, they want the CBC chapters -

Irwin: They also want the academic freedom part of it.

Cecelia: Yeah.

Irwin: NEA was very interested in that back in the 1980s, because they believe that the academic freedom role - Committee A as they call

it in AAUP - that that was very valuable, and that NEA did not have anything like that. And they tried to take that over, and it came very close to happening.

Cecelia: Yeah, most of that work is done at the national level. It's not done at the local level.

Irwin: Yes, it's national. Now the New York conference of the AAUP, you've been active in that for - I guess from the time you took office in PSC in 2000, and you're still active in it. So I've also been very active in the New York conference for many years, and I guess the question that somebody would ask both of us would be, "Why do you need a New York conference?"

Cecelia: I'm not sure, would be my answer, unfortunately, because again that is a small group of people from very committed campuses, really, talking to one another, and they've never really been able to bring in all of the other chapters in the state to become active in it. You know, if we somehow or other could wake those chapters up and get them involved, maybe that would become a more vigorous state conference. But it isn't, and I'm not sure what's going to happen there.

Irwin: Okay. When you were in Washington at CBC meetings, did you hear any discussion of whether conferences had any value to AAUP? Because there's always been a feeling among the conference leadership that the national leadership does not really pay much attention to them or even think that they're of much importance.

Cecelia: I've never heard that said explicitly, but I think the feelings from particularly the New York State Conference is well founded, because it seems that when there are issues related to chapters here, affiliates here, we're not consulted, and that's always been the problem. I think they tend to be forgotten. I think they're just forgotten. They [are] left to do whatever it is they do. Maybe they'll take an issue to national, but other than that - I don't think national considers them at all. I've never heard anything said disparagingly, but I think basically they're out there doing their thing, and national's going to do its thing anyway. There have been attempts to negotiate agreements - you know, the state conference would be consulted or at least informed about a local issue - but that isn't consistent at all, I don't think.

Irwin: Yes, I would tend to agree with you from my experience. The conferences are not taken very seriously by the national organization, and that is a weakness of AAUP.

Cecelia: But I think the strength of the conference is that CBC and advocacy do have an opportunity to meet at the state level and talk about issues that are important. So, I think that is one strength of the conference, that it is both CPC and advocacy.

Irwin: Yes, and many of its leaders have been from the advocacy side.

Cecelia: Yes.

Irwin: Okay, that concludes the questions that I had, but is there anything else that you want to expand on or add? Any areas that I haven't covered that you think are important?

Cecelia: No, I don't think so.

Irwin: Okay, well, thank you very much, Cecelia, for giving me this time and for putting it in the permanent record of the PSC. Thanks.

Cecelia: Thank you.

[End of recorded material 47:13]