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The following interview took place on January 16, 1987, at Airlie House in Virginia with six AFT members who had participated in a week-long AFT conference on education reform. The six teachers, all of whom are involved in professional issues within their locals, were recommended by the AFT's educational issues department.

Interviewers were Trish Gorman, editor, and Roger Glass, associate editor, American Teacher. Those interviewed were as follows:

Rochelle Hutcherson  
Newark Federation of Teachers

Basil Thomas  
Houston Federation of Teachers

Julie Hess  
Toledo Federation of Teachers

Jim Threinen  
Robbinsdale (Minn.) Federation of Teachers

Deanna Woods  
Portland (Oregon) Federation of Teachers

Marsha Osborne  
Brevard (Florida) Federation of Teachers

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**Trish Gorman:** First I would like you to introduce yourselves and tell us what you teach, how many years you've been teaching, etc. My first question is this: You've had nearly a week talking about how we're going to transform the teaching profession and schools. I thought we'd go back to something very basic--your own classroom. If you were empowered to change one or two or three things in your school, if you could go back from here and say "this is going to happen tomorrow" or "this is something that I would like to change," what would you change, and why?

**Marsha Osborne:** I'm Marsha Osborne from Brevard County, Florida, and I teach children with learning disabilities. I've been teaching for six years in the school system and had preschool experience before that. The thing I would like to see us get to do is more time to share ideas. I am also the local site coordinator [AFT's Educational and Research Dissemination project] of our district and I see the excitement that comes out of these sessions. That's the most important thing that we have is our experiences, and we don't get to share those. Here we are in our own little cubicles trying to recreate this wheel, doing all this trial and error, and the lady two doors down has already found a solution to that problem, and we're missing it.

**Roger Glass:** When you say more time to share ideas, would it be your suggestion then that some time specifically be designated when teachers could get together on some formal basis?

**Osborne:** Yes, I would like to see that. I don't have an exact format in mind, and I know some of these things cost money, but we spend a lot of time quote "being inserviced" and [it's] the old thing about an expert is anyone who lives more than 30 miles away...well, you know some of the experts live next door, and we don't get any of their expertise. The premise of the ER&D program is that we share the latest research information. If we can't get the information about the latest research directly from the researchers, then we can share ways of implementing that research. We've taken the best of both worlds--we've got the research, the theory and then the practical [experience].

**Rochelle Hutcherson:** I'm Rochelle Hutcherson from the Newark school system. I am a basic skills teacher--that's a pullout program. I've been teaching 18 years. I would restructure the school. When you restructure, a teacher has more input into how the school is run, from curriculum all the way down to where your students are going to next year. I've found that in Newark, because everything is mandated from some hierarchy or some other group and it's filtered down to us and we have no input into it, that the scores are low and yet we are held accountable for everything that happens in the district. But we

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have no input into how to solve the problem. I would go right into my school tomorrow and start restructuring...but very slowly. I wouldn't go back and just hit the teachers with this brand-new reform, because the teachers just can't make that adjustment right away. Give it to us a little at a time. I believe in peer review, but let's start with quality circles or a group to talk about what our problems are and see if we can help each other one to one. I really am for the reform of restructuring the schools, but over a period of time more than just three months. Give us a long prescription, a year or two, and I think we could pull it off.

**Gorman:** Would there be any one thing that you would start with? Obviously you can't restructure the [entire] school at once.

*Hutcherson*  
**Rochelle:** Yes, I would develop a different communication base with my administration. Instead of the principal dictating these things to us, we would discuss it...make us an equal...an equal communications basis. That's where I would start.

**Basil Thomas:** I'm Basil Thomas from the Houston Federation of Teachers. I teach for the Houston Independent School District in Houston, Texas. My subject matter is correlated language arts for seniors--that's a non-college-bound English course. I have taught in secondary schools for 35 years and two years of college teaching for a total of 37 years. I also am a site coordinator for ER&D.

If I went back and looked in my classroom, the first thing I would change would involve the curriculum, some of the elements in the curriculum and some of the sequencing of that curriculum--the time frame for those elements. I agree with you [motioning to Marsha Osborne] to have informal symposium time where teachers could get together and share things that work. As a result of this ER&D program in our building, we have a lot of teachers who have benefited from it already and we do share one on one, but we miss an opportunity some time to continue to share it.

I dislike and am angry about mandates. I dislike being ordered. Now, I realize that you can have polite commands [laughter]..."please do this, would you do this," but just the formation of "this needs to be done, could we talk about it?" is a whole lot better than "you shall do this at this time." The mandates I find difficult to work with. Since I work with seniors, I try to eliminate mandates to them, since they also found them difficult to work with. Now, the polite requests are still necessities, but it makes the difference.

**Glass and Gorman:** What are examples of those mandates? And from whom?

**Thomas:** All right. Let's say, "You will have your lesson plans in by noon Friday."

**Glass:** Is that a mandate from the principal or the school district?

**Thomas:** From the principal. Now the district does require lesson plans. The time at which they are in is left up to the school. If you do not have them in, this will be tabulated and recorded and documented and used in Domain Five on your assessment, which is a downward evaluation and poses a threat, which I object to because no one stays on lesson plans. I think you need some sort of goal, I thoroughly approve of objectives as to what you wish to accomplish within your time frame. But no one stays on them, and if one is late, that doesn't mean you don't have one. We have experienced teachers in our building, and they have more lesson plans in their heads than you could write out if you spent a year writing them out. They know what they're doing...

As to the reforms, I guess I'm a revolutionary, and have been somewhat lucky. I think I'm in charge of my classroom, and so I take charge of it and I teach in charge of it. But as we become more and more mandated, I am running into more and more friction, and I do think teachers should be in charge of teaching.

In the course of all of this, two things have come about that I think are a little unique in Texas, maybe not in other areas, but certainly in Houston. This year is the first time that faculty members--myself and a couple of other people--have been included on the agenda of the faculty meeting to conduct the meeting. We have conducted two or three meetings this year. We have been consulted even when not involved in the meeting on the agenda and have been asked to be a resource person to help solve problems--problems might not be the right word--but if a teacher has a weakness, to help her--or he--strengthen skills before it becomes a problem. We have been asked to be used as a resource person to avoid problems. And I think this is part of teachers being in charge of teaching and, in a way, I think it's a little takeover of some of the old ground that administrators had.

**Roger Glass:** How did that come about?

**Thomas:** I'm ~~pushing~~ <sup>pushy</sup>. [Laughter] It's something that has occurred just in my school. It comes from the ER&D linkers and activities in my school. This has come as an outgrowth of ER&D.

**Jim Threinen:** I'm Jim Threinen and I'm from Robbinsdale, Minnesota. I teach in the Technology Learning Campus, which is a state technology demonstration site. It's a middle school with 300 students and 14 full-time teaching staff. I have taught 30 years, almost all in the science area.

I have to explain a little bit before I answer the question "if empowered for change, what would I do?" Technology Learning Campus is the outgrowth of an infusion of funds by the state because they believed three years ago that technology would be a welcome addition to the tools of instruction and they wanted to know what was good and what was bad. So they established a number of demonstration sites, two of which were schools. The school was started new, very much like the Saturn project.

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There was no new building; they simply rented 14 rooms from the community center, renovated them and asked the union for the right to have teachers volunteer for the first year and thereby bypass the voluntary pool. This was and is the only exception to the master contract that was necessary.

Now we have participatory management; we have control of performance review, we have control of staff development and control of curriculum and we have the time available for it. It costs \$1,100 more per student--this is for the cost of more planning time, more full-time teacher equivalents, either as teachers or as paraprofessionals, and the technology is expensive.

So I'm in the best of all worlds. But what I would do if empowered to change is, after being here, I'd like to get staff elsewhere in our district to be more aware of and more interested in change, because....it is interesting...any student can be admitted to our school, and yet we do not have a waiting list. Any staff member could have volunteered, and yet we filled two positions from the involuntary pool. Yet I think it's the best of all worlds, and the teachers who are there think it's the best of all worlds. We have an outreach program where we bring people from the rest of the district and they all leave saying, "God, this is great," and that's the last we hear from them.

The imperative for change is not evident in our district, and I would like to build the need for the imperative for change. But the fact of the matter is...and I'm a little frightened by this whole thing. If I could use the parallel: We are used to being sort of gardeners, with a rake and a hoe and some seeds from last year and a little bit of old-fashioned fertilizer and growing some crops that have been adequate until recently....I read A Nation at Risk and we read the AFT's "The Revolution that is Overdue" and the Carnegie report--a bit smugly--but we read it [laughter], and we were prepared for a green revolution that might bring a rototiller and a front loader and some hybrid seeds and maybe some chemicals. We turned around and, my God, there was a bulldozer, an earth mover and plants we've never seen before. And all that we recognize is that there's still a little bit of old-fashioned fertilizer mixed in there.

We are overwhelmed--at least I am overwhelmed--by the magnitude of the task, because to see that task, you have to back up and look at this nation as a whole, and I've had the opportunity to do that. Mary [Granger] in Alabama telling me stories...my God, I wouldn't even be in teaching, there's no way I'd be in teaching in Alabama. And then I get the stories from Louisiana and Utah, and I am absolutely apalled....

So the imperative for change is the first thing I'd try to get out there, and secondly, I'd like to see something like I'm in now continue. It's sundown this year. The state has decided that the "student at risk" is first priority, so my monies are gone. We'll be absorbed back into the voluntary pool; I'll do all right. But I see now that ER&D needs to be part of our teaching centers.

I see know that there is a tremendous need to share the

vision. I see now that it's a national problem. I really fear that the teachers in the district I come from may not be ready to assume the role that is expected of them. I'm glad I will only report to the leadership, and I'm not an officer....I'm not sure they've abandoned the tradition of killing the messenger when the news is bad [laughter]--I would hate to be the one to stand up and advocate, as [Albert] Shanker has courageously done, a change on all these different levels: admission, certification, instructional leaders, which means governance, decision making, our relationship with the business community, our relationship with the taxpayers. But if I had the money to do it and the time to do it, I guess I would like to share the vision and do more than just talk a good story, because I think we need some people to go out and prosylectize this time.

This conference has done one thing...profoundly convinced me that national need is far greater than any of us in Minnesota need.

**Roger Glass:** I want to ask you something about this participatory management. Why is that better?

**Threinen:** It's a difficult thing to analyze. Minnesota is a state that has a tradition of support for education. We never really ran into the situation that would bring about revolution. We had a few benevolent dictators and monarchs, but always we were there for the long haul and they were on their way through. It's very hard for me to analyze why we are where we are and others are where they are. I don't know. I only know that the tradition for supporting education in Minnesota is very strong...in our legislature, the last thing they cut is education and the first thing they restore is education. We happen to be in economically distressed areas, which means they can't do great things like raise us all to \$60,000, but I am confident that if they could, they would. I think we have the one thing that seems to be missing around this nation--we trust that our citizens really believe that our most precious resource is our children. And we have a tradition to support that.

**Thomas:** Which the rest of us don't have.

**Threinen:** But why not? That's why I've been taking my long walks [at Airlie]. Why not? Where did that come from? If somebody could sort that out for me...I feel terribly uncomfortable, almost guilty, about coming from Minnesota.

**Deanna Woods:** I think it has something to do with the fact that we're over 200 years old as a nation and we've got about half a million fads and people have seen too many things fail. The problem has been in the process of developing those fads and going through them is that we've done them wrong. It's time that we stopped that process and we start doing everything right.

**Threinen:** But it's far better to try to do something and maybe do part of it wrong than it is to do nothing.

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**Marsha Osborne:** Part of the problem is that we've started out to do so many things and God knows we've had good intentions. We've started that Saturn project...how long have they spent planning that thing?

**Threinen:** They haven't even produced the car yet!

**Woods:** That's okay, they're taking the time; they're working out every detail.

**Threinen:** Well, I'm not going to buy the first one, I'll tell you that. [Laughter]

**Osborne:** We don't think things through carefully enough. Oh, I pray that this works...you don't know how much I'm depending that this really comes off. There's a part of me that really is frightened. If we blow this one, we're done. We've got this Carnegie Foundation, we've got all the right people saying all the right things, the things we want to hear; we all believe that this needs to happen. Now if we go at this the way we've gone at everything else....I just see everybody out there saying "we've got this momentum now, we can't lose it," but we've got to make sure that we do this right. It's like Rochelle said earlier, we've got to do this very, very slowly. Yes we've got to keep the momentum, but if we just go through this and do change just for the sake of change....

**Woods:** That ties in with what I am concerned about.

**Interviewers:** Wait, can you introduce yourself?

**Woods:** Let me make my statement, and then I'll introduce myself, before I forget this! [Laughter] What I've seen in the 19 years that I've been a teacher is a number of component parts of what we're proposing now and when those component parts have been designed by the people who are the experts, the solvers, who have the knowledge and the skills and the expertise to do it, they did it right and all those component parts worked and they worked right. The trouble is, we've never put all those things together, and I want a package of reforms. I don't want to do it "this way" this year and "this way" next year without having it all part of a large plan.

Okay, my name is Deanna Woods [laughter] and I teach at Wilson High School in Portland, Oregon. I teach high school English, and I've taught at all levels, freshmen through seniors, extremely accelerated college-bound advanced placement students...and the slow ones. As I said before, I've been in the district 19 years, and the thing that saddens me is after seeing all the fads come and go, and all the excitement build up and fall again and watch something fade away, I go back after this week into a situation that is actually worse than when I started 19 years ago. It has not gotten any better, and it's time that we did something right. If I were to go back to my school and find myself empowered, one of the first things I would do is form one of those Saturn groups, because I've seen

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something like that happen before in the school where I worked previously. We had one and it worked for 10 years, and it was within the department I was in--English--so I would establish a Saturn group and I would start talking about what we could do to get rid of those things or modify those things that keep us from doing the job that we want to do, which is teach. That's the bottom line. We walk into the classroom, we see those human beings that we want to work with, and there are all those interruptions--the people pounding on the door, the kids on the fire escape going "whoops" all the time you're holding a discussion, the class next door, which is separated only by a thin door, which is drama, and they're fighting the battle of Baton Rouge or something; the books that are never there in sufficient quantity--all of those things--you can't find a counselor to talk about a student you're very concerned about because she or he is very busy with five or six hundred other students, and your schedules don't match. All those things should have been solved years ago, and aren't. There are the same ones that I found 19 years ago, and they can be solved, because I've seen some of that kind of thing happen.

Now, there are all other kinds of things. I've spent five years of my life reading all the reform reports...what I've learned is that if you put these things together, there are ways, I repeat, of solving the problem. I've watched top quality teachers come; they get discouraged and leave. I don't want that to happen anymore. I've watched children enter those classrooms and get discouraged and leave. I don't want that to happen anymore. I want to see that as a union, we spread the word about these things...how they can work, how they actually apply to the classroom and that the excitement that we get in teaching is something that we can maintain. This is a necessary cost. I'm coming to the point where I'm afraid, too, that if we don't do something now and do it right, that this is the last opportunity we'll ever have.

**Threinen:** We are at the teachable moment.

**Woods:** That's right.

**Threinen:** Let's do it.

**Basil Thomas:** May I make a statement? [Gesturing to Jim Threinen] I really think that what you've said in Minnesota is the basis of this whole reform--that your legislature and your citizens firmly believe in the value of education--that a key issue in all of these reports, that you believe in the value of education, and not just a little song and dance number or lip service that our children are our main resources, but an actual realization that they ARE the only resource that needs continuing and 100 percent of our concentration....

**Julie Hess:** I'm Julie Hess of the Toledo, Ohio, schools. My first 11 years of teaching were all in the primary grades, and the last 15 years I have been a teacher consultant for elementary teachers in our voluntary assistance peer program.



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So my response is probably going to be a bit broader based. Coming from Toledo, I guess we are very fortunate, because we have so many things in place that are already being talked about at this conference, what is being suggested to be done. We have them. We have hardly an area or subject in the school system where there is not teacher input into the decision--curriculum, staff development, school policy such as discipline, I mean, we are everywhere. Our teachers have the right to be there and they are appointed through the union.

Therefore I guess my response would be that I would never want our staff to take this for granted. It is a right that they have earned--it has really given them a large step toward being professional, of being autonomous. That does not mean that there are not needs and problems to deal with....certainly the issue of class size is still there. One of the [other] great needs that exists is one-to-one tutoring for the child that is having difficulty. It is not always the child that is pulled out for the compensatory programs but the child perhaps doesn't qualify. We have pretty good planning time, but I still think that that is something that is underestimated and needs to be looked at--a chance for people to get together and plan and share their ideas.

**Roger Glass:** You said that teachers in Toledo "earned" the right to participate. What did you mean by "earned?"

**Hess:** They had been through a couple of strikes and embarrassing school closings because of lack of money. We went through a time when education was valued but you don't put money where your mouth is...this kind of thing. Through our negotiation process, through job action, through collective bargaining, through the things that one has to go through to gain certain rights. We've been through that.

**Glass:** Do administrators recognize that by giving teachers the right to be more participatory that it's helped the whole school system?

**Hess:** Yes and no. For some administrators who are still concerned with power or who might have been someone who didn't teach very long themselves and really wanted out of the classroom or perhaps was not a good teacher, they might have some difficulty with it. It would depend on the specific area or the particular administrator. One administrator told me very emphatically before I left for the conference, "You make sure you tell them down there that this is one administrator who believes that the union has to be involved in school reform." Even with this kind of cooperation that we now have, you shouldn't be naive to think that you still don't get into adversarial positions. You do, and you deal with them accordingly.

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TRISH GORMAN: I want to follow up on something somebody said and that is sort of our second question. Now that you've transformed your schools, what about your fellow teachers? A lot of teachers complain about how terrible things are, and yet when you start talking about big changes, they get very nervous. They say it's too risky, it's too much responsibility, it's not my job, the union is getting in over its head. Think about your colleagues back in the classroom--how would they react to this, and how would you go about convincing them that this is the right way to go?

WOODS: Actually, returning to Wilson [her high school], I found that sometimes it just takes somebody willing to say, "Okay, we're sick of this situation and we know we can do something about it." You start with a process and build onto it.

HUTCHERSON: In my area, if I returned with the reform, it would depend on my marketing skills. You know your leaders because you've been there so long, and you go to your leaders and you promote this and they buy into it. When they buy into it they sell it to someone else and eventually you become a group of strong people who are willing to change the system. You must understand, we know what it's like there. We all are uncomfortable for one reason or another, so therefore you don't need a sledge hammer, but you have to [do it] slowly. You can't come in there and say, "Okay, we're going to turn this whole thing upside down and start over again." That won't sell. But if you take it slowly and you use your marketing skills, I think you can pull it off.

WOODS: You have to be good teachers...of adults.

OSBORNE: Yes. If people have faith...your peers...like we said this morning, we know who the good teachers are. No one has to come and tell us who the good teachers are, because you can tell by the way their classes walk down the hall, by the way they speak to children. I'm a firm believer that if we try to take this back out to the public and if we push too hard, I'm afraid we're going to turn everybody off. I'm a firm believer in working from within the system. We've got a lot of things about education that are right. I'm very proud of my school; I think we have an excellent faculty and an excellent administrator. I hear some people talking about their administrators, and he does not do some of the things to teachers that others do.

GORMAN: That's true, incidentally of most teachers who are polled....They actually like their administrators.

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OSBORNE: Right. I think we have to build on what's going right. He does include us in some of the decision-making processes. He asks for our opinions. As long as schools are a team...he gets 110 percent out of us. He knows how to handle people. But I'm sensitive to those people who don't come from those kinds of environments. You have to find out where you are and work for change from within the system. If we try to come in and throw the baby out with the bath water, change everything at once, we're going to get nowhere.

HUTCHERSON: I also think you have to customize your restructuring. There are administrators who are excellent and that you really want to involve in your restructuring process; but there are other administrators whom you want to manage paperwork and things like that....if you're allowed to do it...now that we're talking about reform and anything goes.

THOMAS: Earlier I mentioned the growth process, and if I took this changing the school, and I'll use the word change rather than restructure, my faculty would by and large be in favor of it. Of course we've already started a slight--or maybe not so slight--revolution in my school. We decided two years ago--we being the teachers--that if we were doormats, we really couldn't blame other people if they walked on us. So, we have stopped being doormats, and that is probably one of the reasons that membership in HFT is three-fifths [of faculty] in my building, that it's that high. It's seeking to improve our own self-image, self respect, [that] we have developed attitudes of self-worth, which teachers need to be aware of.

I have gone to administrators and pointed out to them--which fortunately they have bought--that if all of us do well on the assessments and do various good things, they look better, our school looks better. The reason for their salary and our salary is student achievement. If we can show that, we're in a much better position.

I'm getting ready to drop a little hand grenade on them--our school in tests results has moved up four points. And while they really aren't giving the teachers and the dissemination [ER&D] program credit for that, I'm going to point out that three-fifths of our faculty is involved in some benefit from research dissemination. Therefore, that four-point growth, while it isn't a tremendous amount, is a beginning and has been enough to call attention to our school downtown. I think since it is a growth process, my faculty would very much be in favor of change--now not throw the entire thing out, but certainly change, modify, restructure, as long as it were in a growth process.

GORMAN: If I could press a little on this....some of the comments that we had from the field indicate there is still reluctance about change, that there are many teachers who just want to go to work [or say] "just let me alone, I don't want all these crazy changes, I don't want to work these extra hours for extra money, I like the way it's structured now." How do you

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respond to that? Or, first of all, do you think that that's not true [and] that most people really do want change?

THOMAS: Speaking for those in my building, we would rather not have to do it. But rather than continue with the current or present condition, we are willing to do it and see a need to do it.

GORMAN: What if it would mean, though, changing hours? What if it would mean changing time off in the summer?

THOMAS: My answer is the same. We would rather not have to go through the effort, but the present system is working to a point but it is not working to either the administration's complete satisfaction or to our complete satisfaction. So to have the input and the control, our building would be willing to do it.

HUTCHERSON: I'm saying something different. Increasing my day or increasing my year will not necessarily make this a better program; what I'm saying is give me a chance to help change what I have right now, without those increases. Research says that an increased day or increased year has not made anything better. I want to go through other changes before I add to my day or add on to my year. Let me go in and be a part of the decision making, and if that doesn't work, then I'll reconsider.

And to the gentleman from Minnesota [gesturing to Jim Threinen]...I want for my system what you say you have for your system. That's why we want reform and change. We want what you have. You were saying why don't other districts have it....The money isn't there, we have poor economic conditions....

THREINEN: It's won't be there for us, either. That's why we're envying Toledo [laughter]. Theirs looks permanent.

HESS: I think you're right about the marketing. It depends on what idea you're pursuing; you don't pursue an idea just to pursue it. Some of the things that we have come out of real problems and needs that existed before education reform was even being talked about. In order for some of this to occur, you have to survey teachers, you have to have committees, because how is one going to want to be part of decision making if they are never given the opportunity and training to do it. Our teachers now have been in decision making for so long that if the administration does not follow the process, they will not use or do what comes out of the committee that has not followed the procedure. They are that far along, because they have had several years of being involved in decision making.

Sometimes you may have to do something in a "pilot" manner, try it out. It depends on what you are pursuing. Just to pursue reform for reform in of itself won't be successful.

WOODS: We've got to remember that we're not working in a vacuum. We may want to avoid change within our schools, but the problem is that there are things going on outside of us. Our economy and our society is changing on us, and the children we're serving are changing. We have to address those very real

Airline interview/Question 2: colleagues/4

and changing needs, and the schools we have now are not equipped to do that. That's the reason we talk about restructuring.

HESS: I also think sometimes you have to have the guts to stand up...your key people who are the leaders...in front of your people and say, "You're going to have to consider this," you've got to have the courage to do it. You might get the tomatoes thrown at you, but you're not a leader if you can't do it.

THREINEN: You talk about your 19 years [gesturing to Deanna Woods]. One has to fight cynicism and paranoia in this business. I say if you've been teaching 10 years and you're not paranoid, you don't understand [laughter]. The ER&D model is a sound model and the way to proceed. We took volunteers--high credibility--and we gave them information on the needs, research, and set up the mechanism for dissemination. What we have to make very clear--it's what Al Shanker talked about--if you want more salary, it means we must professionalize. If you want job satisfaction, you have to get higher status. On the negative side, the plight of education means privatization. Now if we can get those points across, I think the movement will begin, albeit slowly. Once it starts--2.3 million teachers are an incredible mass with an incredible inertia--there are no school boards, there are no legislatures that can withstand it. We've seen it.

WOODS: And we have to stop expecting overnight success.

THREINEN: It has been said that 10 years in education is not a long time period. That's what it takes to move students basically through the system. That's not a big time period. We need some patience.

ROGER GLASS: A lot of the discussion, particularly in the Carnegie forum's report, focuses on teaching as a profession, particularly those coming into the profession. There has been criticism about the quality of those coming in. What do you think of the suggestion--although it's more than a suggestion now--the Carnegie forum has established a committee to develop a national test. What are the things that are needed to improve teacher preparation, or is it even true that teachers coming in today are not prepared as well as they should be?

GORMAN: And what was your experience in your own teacher preparation?

WOODS: Close to abysmal.

THOMAS: What was that an answer to?

WOODS: Are teachers prepared today? Were they prepared 19 years ago? Nineteen years ago it was close to abysmal. Now it's a little bit better. I was on a college evaluation team and had an opportunity to look very closely at what was going on, and what I discovered was--and to be fair I also looked at the resumes for two other universities that train students--that the vast majority of the people, if they had any K-12 experience at all, have had it 20 years ago. These are people who are supposedly teaching classroom management skills, and they are teaching out of outdated and incomplete books.

There was a survey given and finally a conference given for beginning teachers one year after they had begun their teaching experience, and they were asked "How effective was your training?" They said some parts of it were very good, but the practical stuff was missing. They didn't know how to deal with the parents, they didn't know how to deal with their colleagues or their principals effectively, and they were not prepared to deal with discipline problems in the classroom.

OSBORNE: And yet we've got this model in place that tells them about...you talk about the stuff that was outdated...well the ER&D--I hate to keep harping about ER&D--but this was my thing. We've got this model in place, and very often the establishment, simply because it's a union program, feels threatened by it, by the ER&D program. Why in heaven's name could they possibly feel threatened by this program, whose whole premise is simply to give you the latest research information and let you share how to implement it? So the bottom line is that they are afraid that we're going to get everyone in a room and use it as a gripe session. They're threatened also by the fact that it is a tremendous organizing tool. It is the only reason why I'm in the union today. I'm a real team player. And yet this is the complaint we get from teachers, that we don't have enough

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practical....Everyone whose ever been involved in the program has said how fantastic it is, and yet we're not allowed to use it to the extent that we could to achieve the gains that we ought to.

HUTCHERSON: When I went to my guidance counselor in high school, she helped me decide to go into teaching because she said, well, try the armed servies--that's what they told the boys--or nursing or secretary. I mean, black people were channelled into certain areas. I was going to school and teaching happened to be a professional area...so we opted for...very bright students went into teaching because of the direction we were sent. Consequently, we burned down a couple of cities...[laughter]...take that off [the record]! We've had changes over the years and had an opportunity to go into other areas. Some of the brightest people are going into business and other areas, and the leftover folk are going into teaching, and I'm not so sure the quality...or the preparation...is there. I'm not sure where to put the blame.

OSBORNE: I don't think we should be placing blame.

WOODS: Let's talk about what we can do to improve it.

OSBORNE: I think education was created by a lot of well-meaning people who thought they were doing the right thing at the time.

HUTCHERSON: I'm dealing from a black perspective. We were sent certain places, we were channelled into this particular profession. So it didn't matter how bright you were, you were just sent into this area. Now some people knew different and went other places, but as it stands now, the business world has opened up for black people, all these other worlds have opened up, all these fancy words that we didn't know anything about. I'm not sure who's going into teaching now and I'm not sure also if the criteria is high enough for teaching as it is for some of these other areas. I do think we should raise the level of education and the course of study, and the evaluation process. That's one of the reforms.

GLASS: Wouldn't this national test be one way of addressing the criteria question? Like a board...like what a law student would take?

THREINEN: Has it produced better lawyers? I'll turn the question back on you. I disagree with the premise. I think that perhaps we should rest our case on the fact that the law profession has tried it, and it has not necessarily produced better lawyers--certainly not more ethical ones.

I believe that this AFT task force report is, in this particular case, correct. The fact that it's incomplete is to our benefit. Perhaps we should let the colleges teach that part of teaching which is the science, the subject matter. We trust they have professional standards there and

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that they will not let go through the net students who are inadequate. But, the art is ours, and they should come through our teaching centers and our schools to receive from us who are here the components of that art, to practice that art and to be evaluated on it, and if we do not certify them, they are not there. That's where we lack the power in teaching. We have lots of bright people who are basket cases in this profession because they have the science; they do not have the art, for whatever reason.

GORMAN: So the national test isn't going to solve that problem?

THREINEN: No, it isn't going to solve that problem.

THOMAS: Would you allow me--without a battle--to change a word? Instead of the word art, the craft of teaching. And I would agree with you almost straight down the line.

THREINEN: See me after my long walk. [Laughter]

GORMAN: But you have to have something objective.

THREINEN: Yes, and I think those we do have.

GLASS: Such as?

THREINEN: In teaching, one of the things that is important is that you take the techniques and bring the subject alive. If you can't, you'll hear the heads thump in regular rhythm as you start to convey the body of knowledge. There are techniques for meeting learning styles. There are techniques for ensuring that career awareness is there. There are techniques for demonstrating to students that there is a technique for searching out information. There are ways of challenging the gifted and talented, and there are ways of achieving learner outcome. All of these are within the realm of instruction that are known to people who are staff today, who are in the profession.

THOMAS: I would disagree again. Techniques, yes, as taught, but again, a craftsman is a skilled worker who loves his work, and if you want me to be a mechanic and use my hands on the machinery, I can do that, and I can study the techniques, and your car won't run and I'll have to go to the hospital to have my hands repaired, because I'm awkward with machinery. And yet you can give me a piece of clay, and I can come out with something. Whether or not it's art, I'm not sure, but I can produce, through a technique and a certain amount of skill and love or dedication, something of value. Of course, a technique that is just a technique has no life. A craftsman is not a machine, nor is he a dead person. But an artist is great talent, applied craft. If we are to be assessed as teachers, there's no way to assess artistry, and whether or not it is art is purely a subjective thing in whoever views you are assesses you. But certainly on the other hand you are valid--we don't



want these heads to be thumping. Whether you use technique or craft, it's a matter of semantics. But the heads must stay up; there must be interest in the activity going on both from the student and the instructor. If you don't have that, it's a waste of everyone's time. But you do have to objectively evaluate in some manner what you are doing, and art, talent, cannot be measured. You have it, you don't have it. But craft can be measured and can produce results.

THREINEN: Would you consider ER&D a craft.

THOMAS: I consider a lot of it craft, yes sir. Now I do not consider it a dead technique. It is a procedure, but not a uniform pattern. You [gesturing to Hutcherson] have used customizing, which is individualizing it to your own particular style. Now I don't consider style a talent. It's that ability to put together what works well, is efficient for you and looks good on you, if you want to keep it in the realm of clothing. The same in the classroom...you can put together a variety of procedures, some of which I may totally ignore, but we can come up with end results that are measurable and the same.

GORMAN: Suppose the test was just one part?

THOMAS: Which test?

GORMAN: All right...a new, national exam...but it's only one piece of what I think the reform thing is, which is internships or some thing like that.

THOMAS: The national test has a lot of problem with states giving up the right to educate, so we're involved here in a political issue as well as an educational issue. I still think teachers should be in charge of teaching. I do agree that teachers should have a broad-based, general education--four complete years--before they ever enter a college of education. I disagree on trusting colleges of education, because there have been inequities of any number of things that went on. My students change, and I have to continually see if what I am producing is what I have set out to produce or accomplish. But I do think that at the end of that college of education, there should be an exit test, and before they are certified, I do think very firmly there should be an internship.

GORMAN: What was your first year of teaching like?

THREINEN: They threw me the keys and said, "It's room 227!"  
[Laughter]

THOMAS: Mine was different. I had six years of college, two years of education, a year and a half of internship, and that was over 30 years ago. It just happened that I was assigned as a student teacher to a teacher, and the college insisted that we stay with our supervising teacher for the length of time that

supervisor thought was necessary to get all the information about the subject. It wasn't a reflection that you were slow or fast. I was lucky....I had not only the kids in the classroom, I had awareness of school boards, a little knowledge of taxes and a lot of knowledge of how very special every parent's child in the classroom was and they couldn't possibly not have accomplished what you wanted! [laughter]

HESS: If I could pick up on teacher preparation: There is a real need for training in [classroom] management, which we are locally trying to plug in the ER&D [program] with the two universities. We are having difficulty doing this...I'm sure this is the turf question that comes up. But there is a real need--we surveyed teachers. Also, for a lot of people in the classroom, they don't know how to plan, they don't know how to organize. That may not sound like much if you're a planner and an organizer, but it does make a difference.

I think we need to get back to the point where those who are training teachers at the college level have to themselves been in the classroom. I think we've gone through a period of time where we've had incoming teachers who have been trained by college people who have not been in the classroom or who have spent a very short time [there]. We have to have an ongoing exchange at the college level and the local level, because they need to know from us what worked and what didn't in the training. A dialogue has to be there. They need to set up more laboratory settings.

WOODS: I advocate specifically the teacher testing. I believe in the national board because...I like Plato, I agree with him that you need some kind of standard, some measure by which you can judge what you're doing. Now in 1979, NCATE (check initials), which was supposed to set standards for a large number of colleges, had a self-assessment done, and the assessment said that their standards were so low it was worse than having no standards at all. So, educators themselves were setting extremely low standards. Our people were going from those teacher training colleges into baths of fire. It's a miracle they stayed there. Now they don't have to stay there; that's another thing we have to concern ourselves with.

Now the schools I referred to before were not all total failures. People went in there and said, "Yes, I was prepared in a lot of different ways for my classroom," but the point is that for years we've had the tools, the instruments, the research, the experience to make it better, and we haven't done that. We share a certain amount of guilt for that.

HESS: I think, too, that we're at a point where we're going to have to give it a chance to see whether it does makes any difference, ensuring that you have the correct teacher input so that it's put together correctly, so that it is monitored, and that it isn't just one component.

WOODS: We can learn from the mistakes of the legal profession and the medical profession. We can learn from the mistakes of the past. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

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GORMAN: The next question is a tough one for us as a union. There's a lot of pressure in states and some districts for teachers to accept pay schemes that are based on some sort of merit rating or career ladder or at least differentiates. Obviously, some schemes are really quite bad. But overall, there's an idea out there, and I want to hear what you think about it. Is it a loser--obviously it depends on how you phrase it--or it is something that is necessary to keep teachers in the classroom...Is it a political necessity in order to get the money out of the state or the district?

THOMAS: Have they given up tarring and feathering? [Laughter] If they have, I'm going to make a statement. If they haven't, I'm going to be quiet.

GLASS: We're not doing any today, so you're safe.

THOMAS: Well, all of these terms, to many of the teachers, myself included, are like waving a flag in front of the bull, and you're going to end up with some type of charge. Merit pay I don't like; most methods of putting people on career ladders are subjective in the assessment, and I don't per se object to a career ladder, but I do object a great deal to the procedures and the assessment instruments, because I haven't seen one yet that is ~~is~~ objective.

Now the only way to have equality in pay is to give everyone the same thing, and yet I don't think that's an answer, because no matter how good a teacher is--and let's be fair, most teachers are trying to be good, and I think most teachers are good or working very hard to become better--the flat truth is, they are not the same. Some are better craftsmen, because they have a degree of art or talent that produces better results. So I don't think to give everyone the same pay for the same thing is the answer, either. I'm doing something I object to other people doing: If you criticize, you should have something to offer in its place, and I really feel that very validly. So if these are my only three choices--and I don't like any of them--it would be a type of career ladder or steps that would involve an assessment, being fully aware that there is the subjective danger in assessment. I can't buy equal pay for everyone. There should be, in some manner, a reward for excellence. I don't think that merit pay is the answer, because there's too much favoritism, or misuse if you like.

In view of the fact that teachers are really making an effort to be good teachers, this should not be a threatening thing, but used as an awareness that if you get to this level, you have attained a certain degree of excellence.

HUTCHERSON: Do you have one of these things in operation in Toledo?

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HESS: Well, we are basically opposed to merit pay. We do have a committee that is doing very extensive work and research on a career ladder plan, and what they will look at is a voluntary type of situation, and there would be certain criteria involved, and duties. Could I say something as long as your tape is off?

VOICES: It's not. Never mind, it's off the record but on the tape. [Laughter]

HESS: Well, anyway....This is a good example of the kind of issue that is very controversial, so what you are dealing with and how you are dealing with it, you are very careful. I would not be able to say certain things about what the committee is putting together, because it is not time yet....the membership has to be at a certain place before that can transpire. So it really is in the committee process at this point.

HUTCHERSON: There are just so many loopholes and problems. We're afraid of it; we are frightened. We can see all the pitfalls, so we back off. Especially teachers--because of competition, cheating, it brings about thing we really don't want to get involved in, unless it's well done, well structured.

GORMAN: To follow up quickly before we go on to the next question....In the shortage areas, it is happening in districts where this is a shortage of, say, science teachers, and they are willing to pay them more, bring them in at a higher scale. How do you handle that? How do you tell a Latin teacher they're going to bring a math teacher in at a higher scale.

THOMAS: Carefully. [Laughter]

HUTCHERSON: We proposed that in one of our sessions dealing with the Newark school system, and it was totally rejected, because teachers won't appreciate that. But, if there is a shortage of math teachers, what was proposed was that the teacher who does have the math certification will work with larger numbers [of students] but paraprofessionals will be hired to help this person and the person will get more money for the supervisory task of monitoring the paraprofessional. That wasn't opposed.

GORMAN: But you do get to a point, though--and this happens in New York City--where you get this huge shortage of math and science teachers, to the point where even if you put 40 kids or 45 kids in, you still don't have enough teachers, and then you face the problem of bringing in out-of-license teachers. If you are a superintendent, you've got this problem--you have x number of vacancies for math and science teachers, and what are you going to do? How is the union going to respond?

OSBORNE: Okay, math a science may not be a shortage field forever. I disagree with putting them at a different level, because once you put them in, they progress from there. If you have to go to that, then giving them an extra supplement as long

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as it's a shortage area...I teach exceptional education. Some areas of exceptional education were a shortage area, but are no longer.

GORMAN: Is it that simple? If they're one of your members, how are you going to go to them and say, "Well, now you're going to lose it [the supplement], it's not a shortage area anymore"?

OSBORNE: If they go in with the understanding that we're just doing this to build up the ranks of this critical shortage area, and when we have done this, this will be removed. If you do it any other way....

HESS: I was going to say, we had the same thing, and we took it a different way and expanded it in a different way. We, too, had at one time a shortage in special education, so they did receive an additional increment. Then we took the idea and expanded it to go along with specialization. To encourage teachers, [we said that] you don't go out and get your master's degree in administration and supervision; if you want to remain in the classroom, then you should be specializing in math or reading or special ed. So we broadened it so that, say, if I did specialization or graduate work in reading, I, too, received the increment, so that it flattened it out. It was never taken away.

OSBORNE: Or instead of paying the supplement while you're teaching it, paying the supplement for the people to get the additional education that's needed.

THOMAS: We have that plan in place: shortage areas get a stipend, until this year, with the oil price drop, some of them have been cut, but some are still in place. There is resentment of it. There is no resentment if they go back for specialization, because they have made a special effort and [that] is thoroughly deserving. The shortage area does exist and principals do have a problem, but the way the union would look at that is simply this way: the union is there for the interests of their teachers, and that is an administration problem. If they want to attract more teachers, then find some manner in their budget to focus on the purpose of education--student learning--and provide the necessary money that will attract the teachers.

GORMAN: But do you think that's realistic, to have the administration handle the problem, that it's "not our problem?"

THOMAS: Now I didn't say it wasn't our problem....Well, yes I did. My viewpoint, though...we should be involved in it, but if it comes to a choice, our responsibility is to our member.

GORMAN: But if the alternative is to hire a teacher out of license or lower the standards....

THOMAS: Don't hire them.

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GORMAN: What do you do with the 35 students that don't have a math teacher?

HUTCHERSON: In New Jersey, we have a program in place called an alternate route teacher, and this is a person who has a degree. Let's say you have a degree in chemistry, but you're not a teacher. So you come into the system as a chemistry teacher, closely monitored--almost as an internship--with a neighboring teacher and enrolled in a college for teacher credits, until you get your teacher certification.

GORMAN: It's driving the higher education people crazy....

HUTCHERSON: Oh....yes.

HESS: When we did have that special ed. shortage and that increment, our other people did resent it [but] that was ultimately our creative way of dealing with it. It turned out actually to be a good thing, because it led us into the specialization thing.

GORMAN: So, in other words, how you handled it was you did provide additional money for the shortage area, but you sort of parlayed that into a larger career ladder program.

HESS: Yes.

ROGER GLASS: I want to ask about peer evaluation. Can you briefly tell us how you stand or how your colleagues stand on this: Do they support the idea?

OSBORNE: If we could use the word mentor--any time you get into people evaluating--I know what you're saying. I'm not the best teacher that I could be. I like to think that I'm pretty good, but I know I've got things to learn. I think if we can think about peers as the wealth of experience that we can learn from and get away from evaluation....but on the other hand, the present system is not working; there's too much evaluation being done by principals who've been out of the classroom for 15 or 20 years.

WOODS: I like the idea of peer evaluation, quite frankly, because I had it earlier on when I started teaching. There was a department chairman who didn't know that she wasn't supposed to do that [laughter], and so she came in and observed me and did an evaluation that was far more helpful than what I got from the principal, who came in and observed me while I was administering a test and said I had great rapport with students [laughter]. I would favor the Toledo plan [internships supervised by consulting teachers] for the first year; second, it would be helpful if people in the building served as peer coaches and give some feedback. That would not have to be a formal process; as a matter of fact, I think it's wisest if it's not. I would like it if somebody from the district at large came in and evaluated me so that I had something concrete that

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would help me improve as an English teacher--emphasis on both of those things. I know I have good rapport with the students.

THOMAS: I'm resentful of being judged...by anybody. In the last few years, I've had three different types of assessment instruments to be measured by. I have 30 students each class, five times a day--they judge me. I have approximately 60 parents for each of those 30 that judge me; my graduates go out into the public, and I am judged. I even now at this time--I've been around so long--grandchildren that have come back. I think teachers are judged enough.

Now, all through your comments, Deanna, you have mentioned peers as a resource. I think peers are an excellent resource, an excellent aid to improve, but not to write or create any type of judgment. We have mentioned the plan presented to us the first evening we were here--the self-evaluation. I would prefer to change that word to self-help. I'm sick to death of the words judge and evaluate, and that may be an emotional response.

WOODS: I would not use the word judge at all. I like the idea of two evaluation systems--and I use evaluation as a constructive approach--I think there ought to be a Toledo level, where you're dealing with the first-year teacher and helping that person grow, as well as screening out people who really should not continue. The second mode is evaluation of the tenured teacher, whose major purpose is for professional growth. Period. We're not talking about conditions of dismissal--for that you have the intervention program.

THOMAS: Well, power corrupts. Anyone who evaluates and judges tends to think they're a power element. Using your terms, I totally agree with you.

HUTCHERSON: There's some problems in education. We've found that out. Now, there are some incompetent teachers out there, and we have to do something. We can't hard-line some issues and soft-pedal other issues. We have to decide that....there's a lovely lady down the hall who's been teaching for 20 years, and some way she's squeezed through the cracks all these years, but she's really not doing the job. Now what are we going to do about it? Someone is either going to evaluate her....we have to screen her out, we have to do something. We cannot say let's change education and come through with all these reforms but let's leave these terrible teachers in. We have to do something about it if we really want some say-so in our profession.

THOMAS: As a starter, the ER&D, as peers to help them, if that fails, then as the Saturn program presented itself for a screening-out to where you help them in some manner become aware that they need to leave.

HUTCHERSON: Okay, Basil, you know what it sounds like? It's like the mother at home with the children and they've done terrible things all day long, and she says, "Wait until your father gets home." What you're saying is that we'll give peer

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assistance, we'll talk about it, we'll do all these things, but if you don't measure up, who's going to get rid of her? The principal? Then you pass the buck to the administration. Suppose they really have to go?

THOMAS: Let me ask you one question. "They have to go" is our premise. Now, let's come back to, as a union member, let's come back to two words: Have they been offered due process under their hiring system? Did that due process include some assistance for correction? If the answer is yes, then as hard as that may be, then life is hard--we're sinking to platitudes [laughter]--and we're sorry they have to go, but go they must. Our prime purpose for being in school is for the students to learn, and they are defeating the purpose of the school.

HUTCHERSON: But now, who does it? The peer review panel that has done all of these things here, or....

THOMAS: The system that is in place. If it is in my school, in this case, it would have to be the principal. If it is in another school, with assistance, it would have to be the committee.

HUTCHERSON: Does the Toledo plan terminate?

HESS: Yes...for the intern teacher. It is dealt with by the intern panel. For the intervention, which is the experienced teacher, the consulting teacher works with that teacher and makes a report. There is not the same kind of time limit. It then reverts to the personnel department to do what they want...what the program shows us that, unfortunately, there are some people who do not belong in teaching, even if they want to teach.

WOODS: If we do our job as educators of ensuring that teacher preparation is what it should be, that the internships are in place, that the screening process does its job, then we're going to be able to concentrate and look at tenured teacher evaluation as a professional growth thing.



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GORMAN: I have one final question, which has two parts. You've spent a week here being bombarded with this big dose of education reform. Now you've got to go back and figure out what to do with it. What have you learned here, first of all....one thing that would be your message? The next question has to do with the union. The AFT has been pretty receptive to reform--some have argued that it has been too accommodating--and that we need to stick to traditional union issue. My question is, is the union going in the right direction?

OSBORNE: By moving more into professional issues?

GORMAN: Yes, implementing education reform....it is not without its pain, in terms of bringing people along.

OSBORNE: Yes. The biggest complaint as building rep that I get by people who don't want to join the union is that we here to protect Joe Schmuck down the hallway who knows the contract backwards and forwards and uses the union to protect his incompetence....I'm sorry that that happens, but that's the side of the union they see. What do we have to counter that with? To prove to you that that is not what the union is or stands for, here we have the ER&D and the Carnegie planning board and all the other things that the union is doing. I think what we're talking about is the survival of the union, and I'm not--you guys won't like this--but I'm really not a deep-down union person....just because my focus is elsewhere or I don't have the background. I am a professional issues person. That's where my total focus is, and that's where you're going to get your other [members].

The other thing...you asked what we learned...I think the union has to allow us...if we want to make this a profession then we have to be accountable. That was our issue that we talked about until 9:30 last night--accountability. I came away from that....there's a fear on the part of teachers about accountability, but accountability can be our greatest friend. If we can demonstrate to the public that we are accountable, just like a business has to demonstrate that they are showing fiscal responsibility, that's where we're going to gain public support. Public support means money. They're not going to throw good money after bad. So how do we demonstrate accountability in education? Well, we do all the things we've been talking about today. We make sure the teachers coming in are competent, that we increase the standards for teacher college education. You know, medical school is not an easy thing to get through. The result is a doctor, who is responsible for people's lives. Teachers college should not be an easy thing to get through. We are responsible for children's lives. That should not be an easy degree to get nor should it be something that we're not paid well for doing. Yes, I think

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we should test our new teachers, to demonstrate that the people coming in are competent and know their field. Yes, we want to have continued growth. If we can demonstrate that we have all these things in place, then we're demonstrating to the public that we're taking responsibility for being accountable. I feel very strong that teaching right now is not a profession. We've got to do those things.

WOODS: I agree with almost all of what you said. The only thing...I'm more a union member than you may be.

OSBORNE: Then you've probably had a different history.

WOODS: Yes. I think that's the thing. I agree that we have to be changing and that we're going in the right direction. We're not a very old union...how many years are we, when were we born, 1918, 1917?

GORMAN: 1916.

WOODS: 1916. So we're only about 70 years old. We're in the process of growth and as union leaders and members, we have a responsibility to nurture this child, this union, towards adulthood, okay. The point is, it's not going to be any easier than the process of the growth of a human being, and we have to recognize that fact and be willing to go through all that we have to go through in order to make it what it is. We HAVE to grow, we have to develop, we have to undergo these kinds of changes, because we have to meet the needs of our members. Our members are not isolated beings, they're members of society, they're teaching the children of this society, and we're all building society. Consequently, we have to go in the direction we're going.

THOMAS: I would agree a great deal with you. In what I have learned here is that across the nation, there is a uniformity of need to focus on the school and [to ask] is the school meeting the needs of the students, and these needs are changing, to focus on having these students achieve and succeed in a real world environment, which is changing and totally different from the one in which we grew up and were educated in? I grew up...when I went to sleep at night, I would wake up in the morning with the same world. When they split the atom, that concept was forever destroyed, and students go to bed at night, and in just that short a time--seven hours--will wake up and the world is totally different....

I agree with you [motioning to Deanna Woods]--the union is a living thing and therefore involves beliefs and changes of beliefs, and we'll grow. But were we when we first started? We were interested in teacher salary and in working, environmental conditions of the day's instruction. But as we have gone on, the school is more. Those kids, when we were focused on salary and environment, were different from the students that we have today. And the teachers have changed. We have become more mature, more experienced, and rather than just getting a college

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degree, I think we have become educated and are continuing to educate ourselves right now. I think our role as the union in the future is a self-determination of what the profession is and what our goals shall be.

HUTCHERSON: From the beginning of the conference until now, I have heard over and over again, "teachers take charge of your profession." And really, that is what I agree with, that is what I've come to hear and that's what I'm leaving with. Yes, we are moving in the right direction, and hopefully, we will take charge of things that will govern our profession and make us a profession.

HESS: In my case, I already had the very deep commitment to teachers taking charge of their profession and I think that commitment has been deepened and makes me feel that we are on the right track. As far as the union goes...when I started out 26 years ago, I considered myself a professional, and I went with the association [NEA] because I was really brainwashed that that's where professionalism was. After 10 years, I learned that that was not the case, and I went through a real conversion process, and really saw the union was really doing what needed to be done to make a profession. That is still continuing. One of our teachers said to me before I came that the union needs to be the conscience of education reform, that's our role. I really believe that.

THOMAS: Saul has become St. Paul. [Laughter]