The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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Labor Series

JAY MAZUR

Interviewed by: Morris Weisz
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INTERVIEW

Q: The date is Wednesday, April 26, 1995. This is Morris Weisz and I am interviewing the current President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), Jay Mazur, who is scheduled to become the first President of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Workers, upon the ILGWU's merger with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. First, I would like to [cover] your personal background including your family and social situation; secondly, your career in the ILGWU; thirdly, your involvement in the political work of the ILGWU in its broadest sense and in international work, etc., and fourthly, your outlook on international economic issues including trade.

MAZUR: When you leave, my secretary will give you a copy of the speech which I gave to the Work in America Institute, my speech to the IUD (Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO), and my bio data sheet.

Q: Okay, let's begin first with your personal background. What sort of a family did you come from?

MAZUR: My father was a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), Local 35. He was a coat presser. He was not an ideologue. He described himself as a "plain yid," an average [Jewish guy]. He was a short man. He was never very active in the union, but he believed in the union. He criticized it like every other member. He left Poland when he was 18 [years old] and went to Palestine, where he lived from 1918 to 1922. He lived in one settlement after another for four years, then left Palestine in 1922 and came to the United States. He brought his wife with him and raised a family of two girls and two boys. I have a twin brother, who is a lawyer. My father was always a member of the ILGWU and when he retired he became a "friendly visitor." He did that for about ten years and then ultimately went and lived at the Workmen's Circle Home in the Bronx.

Q: You say he was a "friendly visitor." Would you please explain what that means?

MAZUR: When Dubinsky retired in 1966, he became the head of the Retirees' Service Department of the ILGWU, and we set up a "Friendly Visitors' Program," which is still in existence. It is very successful. The ILGWU presently has 142,000 retired members, and we maintain one of the most efficient and professional retiree programs in the country. It's a model.

Q: My sister is a member of the Florida group.

MAZUR: We have two full time people in Florida, and we have 120 clubs around the country. The head of [our] retiree service work is a gal named Judy Wineman, who is a social worker and quite remarkable. At some point you might want to interview her if you are interested in getting a sense about some of the seniors. Judy is a very good woman.

In any event, [my father] became a "friendly visitor" and visited other retirees. He loved doing that, and then ultimately he ended up at the Workmen's Circle Home in the Bronx, where he lived until he died. As for me, I came out of high school and went to work for Local 22 of the ILGWU in the Sick Benefits Department.

Q: Right out of high school?

MAZUR: Yes. Local 22 is the dressmakers' local. I went to work in the Sick Benefits Department when I was 18, and I worked there from 1951 to 1955, when I went to the ILGWU's Training Institute. I graduated in 1956, and after that lectured to each class until they disbanded the Institute in the middle 1960s.

Q: The Institute was one of the first wholly-owned union [training institutes, and it] trained people not only for the ILGWU. I am going to interview Marty Forrester, another of its graduates. Do you know Marty?

MAZUR: Yes. I knew Marty well, and I knew his wife. He worked for Local 62 for Matthew Schoenwald, then went into the Diplomatic Corps. He came back [to the labor movement] and is now working for the SEIU [Service Employees' International Union].

In any event, I graduated in 1955 and then went to work for Local 40 . During the training course, I also went to City College [of New York] while I was working for the union. It was very difficult, but I managed somehow.

Q: Evenings?

MAZUR: Evenings, of course. I went 13 years to get my bachelor's [degree]. I started in 1951 and graduated in 1963, and then went to graduate school.

Q: What was your major?

MAZUR: Personnel and Industrial Relations. Even though City College is a very liberal school, that was the only thing there that was close [in content] to labor. [My studies] were frequently interrupted by training institute and other duties. Some years I went to summer school. Then after that I started graduate school, finished about half of it, dropped out for a while and then went back.

Q: Graduate school where?

MAZUR: I went to City College for a while, then to Rutgers University , where I received a Master's Degree in labor studies. I finally finished school when I was 47 years old. They offered me a [doctoral program], but I had had enough by then.

Q: Did you have a family?

MAZUR: Sure. I got married when I was 25. I have a son (Marc) born in 1959 and a daughter (Ilana) born in 1962. I was going to school while working for the union. I was Director of Organization and Education for Local 40. Then in 1959, I went to work for Local 23. I was an organizer, an educational director, a business agent, assistant manager, manager, vice president and subsequently secretary-treasurer. I became a Vice President of the ILGWU in 1977, General Secretary in 1983, and President in 1986. That's the story.

I did everything in this union. You name it. I've done every job in the union, and I have no regrets. When I was in the training institute I worked in the South for some six months. I worked in Richmond, Virginia, and in Tennessee. I worked up in New England for a while. Then in 1955 after I graduated, I went from Local 40 to Local 23, and from Local 23 I came here. I have been in the union since 1951, so I am in my 44th year.

Q: Were you ever tempted to do what Steve Schlossberg did, which was take a law degree and become a professional [legal advisor to unions]? He has done very good work for trade unions.

MAZUR: I know Steve well. I met him when I went to work in the Union's Upper South Department during my training period.

Q: But you didn't take that track?

MAZUR: No, I stayed with the union. It is the only job that I have ever had. I have never been unemployed a day in my life.

Q: [What was your] involvement in the political work of the ILGWU?

MAZUR: First of all, my father was very politically conscious in that he would never miss a vote. He always voted Democratic. He thought that Roosevelt was the king of the world. He lived through the Depression, and we were very poor. Even as a member of the union, my father rarely worked 25 or 30 weeks a year. In the best year he every had, he may have made $8,000.

Q: He didn't come out of the milieu that. . .

MAZUR: No. He wasn't an ideologue. He was just a plain worker.

You asked me about my political involvement. Obviously it was basically for the ILGWU. I was very active in the Liberal Party and ran a number of campaigns for people. I wasn't active in the Labor Party, because it came after that.

Q: What about international [labor] work?

MAZUR: Yes, I have done extensive international work. In the early 1960s I spent some time in Mexico with a friend of mine, Morris Paladino, who was an assistant manager. . .

Q: Oh, my God, he succeeded me in Local 91.

MAZUR: That's correct. Morris had been in Local 91. He left the ILGWU to go to Brazil in 1960. He subsequently went to ORIT, which is the regional arm of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions). I went to Mexico in 1962 and 1963.

Q: This was for AIFLD [American Institute for Free Labor Development, AFL-CIO]?

MAZUR: No. This had nothing to do with AIFLD. I don't think that AIFLD was in existence.

Q: Oh, no. He was active.

MAZUR: He became active. He was the number two in AIFLD and when Serafino [Romauldi] died , [Bill] Doherty took it over, and Murray [Paladino] went to AAFLI [the Asian-American Free Labor Institute]. There was a struggle over who would [be named Executive Director] and Doherty got it. Murray stayed with AAFLI until he retired. But in between that, he had gone to the ICFTU in Brussels.

Q: What did you do in Mexico?

MAZUR: I did some lecturing. I lectured to women's groups, men's groups. I did that kind of international work.

Q: Were you ever tempted to become a Labor Attaché? You're the type of person who [would do well].

MAZUR: Yes, I was offered the opportunity. I was tempted but because I was married with two kids, I was sort of anchored into being [a union official].

Q: Who offered you the opportunity?

MAZUR: I don't remember.

Q: Jay Lovestone?

MAZUR: No, I never had any dealings with Jay. Jay was another one of those very aloof guys. He was like a ghost. I didn't get to know Jay. . .

Q: Was he [unfriendly]?

MAZUR: No, he wasn't unfriendly. I was young and he was [very senior]. We dealt at different levels. In 1973, 1974, and 1975, I spent six weeks, five weeks, and a month [respectively] traveling around Asia for AAFLI to about 25 countries. So I did that kind of international work, and I have since been involved heavily in other international work, also. I am on the Presidium of the International Textile and Garment and Leather Workers Federation, and I do all kinds of international work. That's one of my [strengths]. At least people think it's one of my strengths, and I'd like to believe that too. I serve on all kinds [of boards]. I'm on the Ditchley Foundation. I'm on the Trilateral Commission. It gives me a broad sense. They are not my type of people, but in any event it gives me a chance to participate. Secondly, Al Shanker [of the American Federation of Teachers] and I are the only two labor leaders on the Trilateral Commission, and on Ditchley, I'm the only one. While they are more conservative than we are, we always felt that we should be in places where our voices may not represent the majority, but at least we have a say and hopefully we can persuade them to move in [our direction].

Q: Do you go to the Ditchley conferences?

MAZUR: I go to some of them, not many. I'm going to one in October on South Africa. I went to others on immigration. I try to go to those things in which I can have a say and make a contribution. They are both reasonably conservative organizations [with many] academics and former public servants, but I think they play a role. Most of my efforts in those meetings are on behalf of the AFL-CIO.

Q: Do you have anything to say about Bill Gomberg's international activities?

MAZUR: No. I knew Bill very peripherally. I knew his successor a little better.

Q: Now, [let's turn to] economics: trade and all that.

MAZUR: Economic issues are the issues that really impact on our union most seriously. That's the big debate. *The New York Times* ten days ago talked about the one percent of the families in this country that control 40 percent of the wealth, the [elimination] of three or four million manufacturing jobs, and the erosion of the middle class as a direct result of our trade and economic policies, which I think are ill-conceived and are [at their] worst in what we have introduced into GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and now this Caribbean Basin Initiative. I think that these are very dangerous because they are ripping out our infrastructure. We have behaved since the early 1980s -- It may have started in the late 1970s, but certainly Ronald Reagan accelerated the process. -- what I would characterize as "economic slumlords." We are tearing out the innards of the economic system by destroying the middle class, by destroying [middle class] jobs. You can't have a market without jobs and you can't have a viable society without a middle class, without people making money, because they are the people who buy. Actually *The New York Times* article, which was not produced by the AFL-CIO, tells us that wealth [in the United States] is in the hands of fewer and fewer people. [By comparison] England at one time had 57

percent of the wealth in the hands of one percent of the people, and this is now 18 percent, while we [in the United States] are talking about 40 percent, so there has been a complete reversal. Wages in Germany and Scandinavia are now higher than they are in the United States. We were number one in terms of wages and now we are probably tenth or twelfth. We are in a country where 40 million people are without health care. We have millions of children living in poverty. I am not a doom-sayer and I don't think the society will collapse, but I think that we are in for some very difficult times, and I think that has impacted on our [garment] industry. I think that we were the first manufacturing industry to sound the alarm.

I remember my first demonstration when Stulberg was President [of the ILGWU] in 1971 or 1972 in Herald Square. That was almost 25 years ago. In the early 1960s, four out of every 100 garments that were sold in this country came from overseas. Today it is probably closer to 65 percent. Some people say that it's higher. In 30 years we have had an increase in the population of about 20 to 25 percent, and we have had a decrease in the number of jobs in the [garment] industry and an increase in the penetration level of imports sold in this country. This combination clearly reflects the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs both in apparel and textiles and clothing. This goes across the board not only in [garment] manufacturing, but in the manufacturing sector.

Q: Let me ask you. . .

MAZUR: Let me make two other comments. In the early 1960s, people like [those] in the steel industry and the automobile industry never thought about the impact [of international trade] on them, and today close to 30 percent of all cars sold in this country [are imported from abroad]. People think that this hurts the labor movement; the fact is that this hurts America. When people ask me how the union is doing, I ask them how America is doing. Unions can't do well unless America is doing well.

Q: Well, I had an interesting interview with Jack Sheinkman [this past] weekend, and of course he made many of these same points, but the question I wanted to ask. . .

MAZUR: But he wasn't as funny as I. Jack is more serious than I am.

Q: He is quite a bit more serious.

MAZUR: Yes, I know. Jack is very up tight. He is a good friend and I like him, but he's really different. He's very serious.

Q: Well, he is one of the people who went into the professional side [of the labor movement] by becoming a lawyer. He has a political base in the union.

MAZUR: Jack and I are old friends. We have known each other a long time. I actually met Jack some 30 odd years ago in the early 1960s, when I was at [Local] 23 and we were having some jurisdictional disputes with Local 169 headed by Tom Fravell.

Q: The problem is that the political constituency which our President is following believes in the trickle down theory.

MAZUR: Well, President Clinton is surrounded by guys like Bob Rubin and the former good Senator from Texas [Lloyd Bentsen] and others, who have a Wall Street or business person's bent. I think he is influenced by that, and I think he is influenced by his own background. We supported him in 1992, and we will probably support him in 1996. I don't see us supporting anybody else. I like him on a personal level; I think he is a very decent guy, and I think he means well, but his economic policies, certainly with respect to trade, whether it is GATT or NAFTA, I violently oppose and he knows that.

Q: Does the present situation permit this sort of bootstrap operation that we had in the New Deal? Our balance of payments and our trade deficit are such that we cannot afford to have enough public investment to employ all these disadvantaged people. A Civilian Conservation Corps and all these new things would increase the deficit.

MAZUR: Well, you have to go back to your original question. I am not going to argue whether we should go back to the 1930s, but I think there are interesting lessons [to be learned from] the New Deal. I was in Warm Springs with Lane Kirkland the week before last. He was receiving a Freedom Medal along with Jimmy Carter. I am a member of the Eleanor Roosevelt Foundation headed by Bill Vanden Huevel. Lane made an extraordinary speech. If you can get a copy of it, it might be very worthwhile for you. He spoke about the New Deal. You know, I am a New Dealer myself in the sense that we are getting a raw deal now, and I would harken back to the New Deal [even though] times have changed. You can't have a civilized society without significant government intervention. The question is how much intervention and where.

But going back to the question of our trade policies, they are ill-conceived, and I am not hopeful that they will turn around. Now with a Republican [majority in Congress], I am not very optimistic. I think what we have to do is simply enlarge the area of our concerns. We have to do more with our sisters and brothers in solidarity overseas. We have to enhance their ability to negotiate agreements and bargain collectively and so on and so forth.

You talked about worker rights and trade union rights. We can't ever expect, certainly not in the foreseeable future and I don't think in my lifetime, that we can equalize wages, but we can give those workers some more leverage and improve their lot in terms of wages and working conditions; the right to organize, which is basic; and the right of free association. I think that is something we have to do more of, and that's why Lane [Kirkland] appointed me the chairman of a committee that deals with that. We are in the process of doing some surveying and getting an idea of what other unions do. Talk about this new world paradigm. If we live in a global village in a new world economic order, we ought to have some new laws that relate to that. The problem is that the laws are not

following this new world economic order or this new global village, and I think that's really a mistake.

Q: During the Marshall Plan period when I was abroad, Nat Weinberg came to Europe and told the German Metalworkers that they were not getting enough money, because they were increasing the profits of the Volkswagen [Company] without getting their share. They said to him, "Don't worry about us. We are using our political power in order to see that we don't lose out. . . -- You know, Mitbestimmungsrecht (Co-determination Law) and other political paybacks. -- but when we recapture our markets from you people, then we will go in for higher wages," which they have [since] done.

MAZUR: Well, the Japanese did that. The Japanese have been very good about capturing market share and controlling markets.

Q: How do you deal with the problem that I encountered back in 1933 when we [ILGWU organizers] went to Newark, New Jersey, where the jobs were going, and those people whom we tried to organize said, "Now wait a minute. You just want us to raise our wages, so that the manufacturers will go back to Seventh Avenue [in New York City] and produce [there]. You are not interested in us."

MAZUR: Well, that's a problem that you have in the world today. I believe that you can no longer stop at the shop door or the shop floor or the shores [of the producing country] and that we have to extend [our involvement]. It is a contractor industry. If work is going from here to the Dominican Republic or Haiti or Guatemala or Honduras or to wherever else, some effort has to be made to follow the work to the end and try to deal with it. One of the things that you have to do when you try to help those workers is to reassure them that you really are not trying to bring the work back. First of all, in a place like Honduras or the Dominican Republic, the wages are [very low]; if you make $20 per week for 50 or 60 hours [work], you are lucky. So you are talking about 20 cents hour or 30 cents an hour if it is that high. In Mexico you are talking about 50 cents or 60 cents an hour. So the thing is to reassure those workers that you are really reaching out in solidarity, but you have to go beyond the concept of solidarity in terms of a verbal expression but do what I call "some greater efforts on the ground." We are exploring that now both with the Federation and in terms of our own union. We don't intend to organize workers in Honduras or Guatemala or the Dominican Republic or Mexico. They are sovereign states and while we organize workers in Canada, that was an exception and a whole different story. And we have workers in Puerto Rico. But I think short of organizing those workers in affiliation, *direct* affiliation. . . -- because I believe in affiliation in the same way that I am a member of the Presidium of the International Textile and Garment and Leather Workers' Federation, which has six million members around the world in some 125 or 130 countries, which are as many countries as there are in the United Nations. -- there are things that can be done, and we have to do them in terms of the new reality; we have to do them in terms of the way the industry is changing; we have to do them in terms of

protecting them and protecting ourselves by protecting them. So we are rethinking that and we have been doing some work on that and some of it has been slightly successful.

Q: Do you feel satisfied. . . -- frankly, I don't. -- that they understand that your demand is not to bring all the work back?

MAZUR: Yes, they understand that. They know that the disparity in wages is so vast that there is no possibility of bringing the work back. Employers try to tell them that, but workers don't believe that. I can't say that all workers believe that, but I have not detected any strong sense from these workers that [they feel we are trying to bring the work back to the United States]. It is one thing to talk about Hong Kong, where the wages may now be now $2 an hour, if that high. I don't know. I can't keep up. The work has left Hong Kong, and it is now going off shore, mostly to Thailand and to some extent Bangladesh, where the wages three years ago may have been twelve cents an hour, if that high.

Q: How many American unions are members the ITS (International Trade Secretariat) that your union is a member of ?

MAZUR: The Amalgamated, ILGWU and there is some slight affiliation with one of the textile workers [union].

Q: But basically it's. . .

MAZUR: The ILGWU and the Amalgamated.

Q: Is there a separate shoe workers union now?

MAZUR: Not in the United States. There isn't much of a shoe industry left. Well over 90 percent of all shoes sold in this country come from overseas.

Q: You said that the ITS has six million members. How do you know it's six million?

MAZUR: They are affiliated.

Q: The unions that are affiliated with the ITS from India which I know about from my work there [from 1965 to 1971] used to exaggerate their membership.

MAZUR: They still do, but we accept their figures simply because we accept the manner in which they function. They affiliate and pay per capita based on wages [and the size of their membership].

Q: And they are active in the ITS.

MAZUR: Yes, we don't count them unless they are paying per capita. We aren't just gathering people [in the ITS]. They don't have the dues structure we do.

Q: Which countries are most active in the ITS?

MAZUR: The Germans, Japanese, Americans, Scandinavians, and Italians. There is a direct correlation between the industrialized countries and their participation, [between] the level of unionization and the level of strength within these countries [and] their degree of participation. For instance, on the Presidium there are 13 members: an Argentinean; a South African from the Clothing and Textile Workers Union in South Africa, which is affiliated, an Italian, two Americans, a German, a Brit, and a Scandinavian. This reflects the industrialized countries.

Q: Your work in South Africa is quite impressive.

MAZUR: Yes, we did a lot of work there. I went to South Africa early in 1980. We were the first. It was an unofficial labor delegation and it was the first black-white delegation ever to visit South Africa. We had some difficulty getting in there, but we arranged it. I was Chairman of the labor desk of the youth council established with Roy Godson. Roy and I are old friends. You knew his father, Joe Godson.

Q: Yes.

MAZUR: He was an old Jewish Labor Committee guy, and a [former] Labor Attaché in [Canada and the United Kingdom]. In fact, I met another friend of yours recently who I see quite [often]. He's also on the Ditchley Foundation, and a former Ambassador to Hungary.

Q: Oh, Phil Kaiser!

MAZUR: How come you know that? I see Phil quite often. Phil came to Warm Springs and he serves on the Ditchley Foundation. He is my ally and colleague. He is a remarkable man. I like Phil.

Q: Phil and I are going to be on a program tomorrow. He's talking to a conference [organized by the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project and sponsored by] the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. He's is going to talk on the American end of the Labor Attaché Program during the Marshall Plan period, and because I was in Europe, I am going to talk about what we did [in Europe]. Yes, Phil is an old friend and he is a great supporter of our project.

MAZUR: He is an old friend of Dubinsky's. In any event, we on the youth council arranged for a black-white delegation [to go to South Africa]. There were three ILGWU'ers and three teachers from the AFT (American Federation of Teachers). It took a lot of courage on Lane [Kirkland]'s part to push [the visit] ahead because the South Africans resisted, but in those days there was Apartheid and very strict rules of getting in and out of the country, but we went. I went back last year.

Q: Was there any American opposition to your becoming active [in South Africa] before [blacks] had complete freedom?

MAZUR: No, not at all. Look, even the black Africans were trading with South Africa and then condemning the rest of the world, so there was some of that. There was some hypocrisy. South Africa has the potential for being a great society. The Republic of South Africa can be to the continent of Africa what the United States is to North America and what Germany now is to Europe and Japan to Asia, but I think South Africa is about 25 years away.

Q: Well, comment on what we should do about labor behind what was the "Iron Curtain"? You know that there are very different views on the degree to which we can trust their unions.

MAZUR: We don't have much of a choice. I think it's important for us. We know that you can't have a democracy without strong and democratic trade unions, whether it's the former Soviet Union and now Russia or China. I think that there is a fundamental requirement of trade union behavior that you try to support workers' right to organize. The problem in what you call the former "Iron Curtain" or the Soviet Union is that a lot of these former Communist unions have "double-breasted" and now turned into democratic unions. Some are legitimate; some are not. We in the International Textile and Garment and Leather Workers Federation have gotten a significant number of applications since the fall of the Soviet Union and the "Iron Curtain" from countries like Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, etc., for membership in the ITS. We send people there to investigate. Some [applications] we wait on. Some we try to check with other affiliates. The AFL has an office there headed by a guy named Dick Wilson. We do the usual "due diligence" [investigation].

Q: Has Wilson moved to Europe?

MAZUR: I think so.

Q: Dick Wilson was head of organizing. An old Yipsel! [Young People's Socialist League].

MAZUR: He gave up [the Organization Department] and he's probably still in Europe. I don't keep track. The AFL does yeoman work in terms of its international efforts. I don't think that we have much choice nor should we. We have a responsibility to encourage free, democratic unions. Also people can change. Gorbachev and Yeltsin are former Communists and now heads of state, and you deal with them -- one, because they are heads of state and power brokers, and two, because they may have seen the evil of their ways. People often talk about what happened in the Soviet Union. It's not so much that democracy succeeded. It's that Communism failed. Reagan would like to take credit for it. That's nonsense. Communism failed for all the reasons that we all understand. It should

have failed. It just took a little longer than we thought, and now that we look back, we see why it failed. It was an empty shell.

Q: I contrast your views on the need to be more pragmatic about dealing with these people with those of my old friend, if I can call him that, Jay Lovestone, who worked for the ILGWU for many years or at least for the Free Trade Union group. Jay had such an arbitrary view, in my opinion, about not dealing with anybody who was politically "tainted."

MAZUR: I don't think he would say that if he was alive today. I think Jay recognized. . . I think Jay had a mania about Communism. I used to talk to him about it on occasion. Everything led to the Soviet Union. He could get up and talk about the threat of Communism for three and a half hours and never mention China. Then invariably at the end of the meeting, I would say, "Jay, you know we have a billion people in one of the most repressive societies. They make the Russians look like Mary Poppins. They have more gulags and more political prisoners, and even during the Cultural Revolution, but . . ." (End of Tape I, Side A)

Q: [In the context of German Co-determination,] what is your reaction from talking to some of the German trade unionists who are on boards [of directors]? They must have a frustrating sort of a split personality, because they have to sit on boards in which they have to advocate either an increase in wages or an increase [in competitive price policy].

MAZUR: Well, that's the conflict I spoke about. There are two problems here, Morris. In America, our objectives are different, and they should be. As long as employers do not accept the role of unions, it is very difficult to set up a German [style] system. The German [employers] are a lot more open to trade unions. I'm not saying that they are happy about them, but they accept them to a greater extent. They understand their role. For instance, in a very large steel company, this guy can't function because they could kick him off the board because the unions have three votes out of six, and he has merged with another company, so there are twelve members on this board. He said if any of the labor guys go over to the parent company, he's out of a job. So there's a great degree of participation; there's a great degree of partnership.

In this country [employers] only want you to be a partner when they are losing money and when things are bad. The Dunlop Commission report reflects this, although the results were not what we would like and I don't want to go into that. That's for another time and that's another subject. But in this country. . . I think it's like treating a patient. You treat the patient based on the diagnosis. In this country the system of labor-management relations is somewhat different from the German [system]. So if you want to compare us to Germany you have to have the same ingredients, but the ingredients are different. There is a greater acceptance of unions there. There was a different evolution here. Our trade union movements have had extraordinary struggles of death and battles and mayhem and brutality and it still goes on. I remember when I was a kid I was arrested in Richmond, Virginia, and I was accused of assaulting somebody. I went on trial and they

found me guilty and I didn't like that because I thought I might want to be a lawyer some day, so Dubinsky called me into his office and he said, "Do you want to go back?" I'm imitating him with his Yiddish accent. He looked at me and he sat behind his desk. I was like 22 years old, and I told Arthur Elder, who was the Director [of the ILGWU training program], that I wanted to appeal it, because first of all, I wasn't guilty. Hey! Even if I was guilty I might have wanted to appeal, too. I didn't want a criminal record. But here I was set up, and the cops put me in the wagon and put me in jail, and so I said, "I want to appeal." He said, "You know it's going to cost us $400 to $500." This was 1955. I said, "Yes, President Dubinsky, I would like to go back." I went back and I appealed it and I won.

Q: It's strange that in Europe labor people believe in class struggle and all that, but they don't apply it, whereas here there seems to be a class struggle, but that concept is not accepted.

MAZUR: Yes, right, but the point is that I think it will change there. I think it's beginning to change. If the bottom line continues to be profits, and you are dealing with world wide competition, [it has got to change]. Except the Germans have better sense. They are ready to make their expansion overseas and try to maintain a base in their own country for a while, because the unions are stronger, but I think ultimately if profit is your only motive, and one need not be an anti-capitalist in this day on that, or a socialist, there is a class struggle and there always will be a class struggle, but it will be based on economic objectives, not so much in ideological terms. I think that the system here is different, so we have to apply labor laws and different labor-management relations, but I think that if we are to survive into the future, in terms of industry, we have to work closer together. I established a Council on American Fashion, where the employers contribute to a fund, etc., etc, etc. I can give you all that material. You might talk to some of our people. We are trying to do all kinds of innovative things. We've established a garments development corporation with a budget of over $1 million, and a board on which the union, the industry, the government are all represented. It's a tripartite [operation]. There are even some public members. The head of the board is the former deputy mayor of the City of New York and so on and so forth.

The ILGWU has always been involved in one form or another in labor-management cooperation. We set up the first management engineering department with your friend [Bill] Gomberg.

Q: We both went to engineering school at City College [of New York], and later worked in Local 91.

MAZUR: So you know Bill Gomberg, and Mitchell Lokiec was later the head of that. There has always been that kind of cooperation but now it's gotten to be more formal. It has to be more institutionalized, and employers have to accept the benefits of it and they still are not ready. They know they can go overseas and pay wages which are one-tenth or

one-twentieth of what they are paying here without having to put in any effort, because to develop [the necessary] effort [takes] about three, four or five years to make it work.

Q: You said that you did not want to discuss the Dunlop Commission. I understand that.

MAZUR: No, I want to discuss it, but it would take another hour.

Q: Do you remember [Commission member Doug] Fraser's dissenting opinion? Do you have any feeling about why none of the academics on the Commission agreed with him?

MAZUR: Because they have no guts! Because they are academics. They are friends of mine. Ray Marshall is a friend. Richard Freeman I met when I went up to Harvard to lecture. Kochan from MIT. The problem is that you couldn't have put together a better Commission, and that's [both] the good news and the bad news. Maybe because they knew too much about the labor movement and because they were academics, what they came up with was nonsense, a terrible mistake. I think [the recommendation re Section] 8(A)2 [dealing with company unionism] is a disaster. None of the employers asked for it. There was no movement for it. They came out of left field and put it on the table. So this Congress will take the bad stuff and try to pass it, and the good stuff they will leave out. I think that their effort and their work was a disaster. I think it was not a missed opportunity. It was a lost opportunity, and I told this to Dunlop. I said, "You had an opportunity to go around the country and see what's happening and attempt to redress it without being politicians." But they tried too hard to come up with some kind of compromise, and being academics, they felt that they had to come up with something new. They wanted to be *creative*. Just fixing what was wrong was for them too mundane. They wanted something *new*, something *different*. It's a disaster.

Q: I gave Sheinkman a [copy of a petition being circulated in the Industrial Relations Research Association] by Kate, Wheeler and other academics, who have now found this effort -- Whatever they call it. -- is really dangerous to collective bargaining.

MAZUR: Yes, the "team concept."

Q: As an IRA member I signed the petition and sent it off. I gave a copy to Sheinkman for his information.

MAZUR: I would like to see it. I think [the Commission] was overloaded with academics and former Secretaries of Labor. You had three [former] Secretaries of Labor on this Commission and I think they thought that they would come up with something creative and novel and [appropriate for the] 21st Century. That's fine with me, if they [had only] redressed every other [labor relations] problem. I think what they underestimated was that the objectives [of American employers and workers] are different. Employers are still anti-union and hostile, and [the Commission] should have been working more in redressing the problems of that relationship than trying to create new things. They are building a house on quicksand. That's the best way that I can describe it.

Q: Well, I interviewed [Professor] Jack Barbash, one of the academics with a solid trade union background-ILGWU, Amalgamated, and AFL-CIO top staffer-before beginning his long University of Wisconsin academic career. This was just three weeks before he died, and he made some of the same points you have made about academics, and specifically about Tom Kochan, now at MIT. He was always a good friend of Jack's, and a former student of his. Nevertheless, he was described by Jack as having become sort of a "neutral" on the issue of whether a union was absolutely essential as a proper representative of workers' interests in such "advanced" outfits as IBM. Jack's interview gives an excellent analysis of this trend among some of the most prominent academics in our field.

MAZUR: God help us from our friends. You would have been better off if the Commission had had fewer experts trying to examine issues from an "impartial" point of view. It's like picking an ex-cutter from our trade or an ex-labor guy who is now representing the other side to come up with some "fair" policies. He thinks he knows everything. Give me a straight guy who may not come out of the labor movement, but whom I can deal with from my side of the table. I can deal a lot easier with a guy like that, who understands that he has a role as an employer and who fights as hard as he can. I never had any problem dealing with employers who fight hard.

Q: Well, Bill Gomberg was another ILGWU staffer who began a prominent academic-at the Wharton School-and then became an impartial arbitrator, who was called in by labor and management to decide issues arising between them in interpreting their collective bargaining agreements. Early on in that arbitration career he was frequently nominated by trade unions to serve on arbitration panels, but he refused to do so.

MAZUR: Yes, I remember that.

Q: He would say, "You should want somebody who will tend to lean over backwards in your *direction. If you appoint me, with my labor background, I'll be worrying about whether employers will believe I am favoring* you*, so I might lean over backwards to establish my impartiality, in the eyes of the employers, who might therefore be inclined to nominate me for future arbitration assignments. I might even be better, from your point of view to nominate an arbitrator with a* management *background, who might lean over backwards to favor* you*."*

MAZUR: Yes, well, here we are. He'd have to lean over backwards; that's the point I was making about accepting the reality of different interests.

Q: Gomberg was wonderful.

MAZUR: He was also funny; he had a great sense of humor. There was this great combination we had in our union: *Bill Gomberg*, [who became the first trade union industrial engineer]; *Beanie Seaman*, [the cartoonist for the ILGWU's publications, whose

art was to serve the entire trade union and liberal cause for close to a half century]; and Gus Tyler, [who re-fashioned the union's educational, leadership training and political programs]. All three, handsome young idealistic socialists, expressing that idealism by serving the trade union movement and American society as a whole for so many years. They were extraordinary people.

It's been nice meeting with you, Morris.

Q: Thank you very much. You were kind in promising me an hour of your limited time these days, while you are preparing for the first UNITE Convention, and we've exceeded that time by now. As soon as feasible we'll send you a transcribed draft of the taped interview for you to edit and approve for inclusion in our collection.

Good luck to you personally and to all your future colleagues in UNITE!

End of interview