

Daniel Leahy
Interviewed by Tony Zaragoza
The Evergreen State College oral history project
August 29, 2017
FINAL

Begin Part 1 of 2 of Daniel Leahy on 8-29-17

Zaragoza: Why don't you just start by telling us your name?

Leahy: My name is Dan Leahy.

Zaragoza: Give us a sense of when you were born, where, where are you from?

Leahy: I was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. My dad ran a gas station in West Seattle, and we lived there for the first few years; then we moved to Queen Anne Hill. I was raised in an Irish Catholic family. Both sides were Irish Catholic. Went to Catholic schools. Ended up going to the Roman Catholic seminary for four years at St. Edwards to be a priest. Did that for four years, and then I left and went to Seattle University, and graduated in 1965 in economics and philosophy.

Zaragoza: Some events from your childhood, siblings, schools, turning points you'd like to talk about?

Leahy: I guess probably one turning point was the seminary. I was told the seminary was a place of great academic excellence and blah blah, and that I should be a priest. I had priests in my family—my cousins were priests, I had cousins that were nuns—so the idea of being a priest was something that, I think, just flowed naturally as something I was going to do. But the seminary turned out to be an extraordinarily cruel place, probably the cruelest institution I ever lived in. I think that really was a major shift, when I left the seminary. Then, going to Seattle University, I became an organizer of events. I don't know where the organizing stuff came from, but I became a major organizer of student events on campus, university events.

Zaragoza: What kind of events?

Leahy: Oh, Homecoming? I was the chair of the Homecoming Committee, which was a big deal. I was the chair of something called University Day, which is a day in which everybody comes to campus to learn about Seattle University. I chaired that. I also ran for student body president against a guy who later became the great restaurateur of Seattle, Mick McHugh. Mick and I were contemporaries, and opponents for student body leadership. I lost that election.

Zaragoza: Was it close?

Leahy: I have no idea. Mick was a great campaigner. He was one of the best hustlers Seattle's ever seen. Good guy.

I think probably the main event there that changed my life was I was an ROTC drill team guy. I went every morning to practice at ROTC drill team at 7:00 in the morning. I was the guide-on of that troop, and we marched all over Washington State, in formation. I started getting interested in the Rangers, becoming a Ranger.

Zaragoza: What years are we talking about?

Leahy: We're talking about 1961 to 1964, just before the buildup of Vietnam. Then, I think, the critical point was one morning we were standing there in the gym, ready for inspection, and our sergeant had put up a huge paper mâché person in front of us. As we stood there, he came charging through that paper mâché person with his bayonet drawn, and he came up to each one of us and said, "The job of a soldier is to kill, kill, kill." Then he moved down to the next person. "The job of the soldier is to kill, kill, kill." And I walked out of the gym that day and said, "Whatever the fuck this is, I'm not doing it." The reason he was so hyped us was he had just gotten orders to go to Vietnam.

Anyhow, I got out of ROTC commitments. Then I heard about the Peace Corps. Of course, John Kennedy, in our family, was close to God, and Jackie Kennedy was the Virgin Mary. When John Kennedy said things like, "Ask not what the country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," and he had started the Peace Corps thing in 1963, I asked my economics professor what country I should go to, and she said, "Afghanistan." She said, "You want to be one of many experts that know something about India, or do you want to be the person that knows about Afghanistan?" I said, "I want to be the person that knows about Afghanistan." She said, "Then apply for Afghanistan."

So, I applied for Afghanistan, and they said, "You could go to Turkey." Of course, I had no idea where Afghanistan or Turkey was. I looked up Turkey. It looked like it was close to the water, and I figured, well, as long as I could get to the water, I'll be fine. I took my first jet ride, from Seattle to Portland, on a 727, which went up in the air, and then down, in about a half hour. [laughing] Got to Portland, and I trained in Portland for a month, trained for two months in a village near Ankara and then I went to live in a Turkish village for two years.

Zaragoza: Was this '64-'65?

Leahy: I lived in a Turkish village from '65 to '67. I was two years in the Peace Corps in Turkey. That was another just total mindbender, because I was an Irish Catholic boy, and I lived in a Turkish Muslim village. I didn't know what Muslims were, actually. I remember some guy—I don't know if you want to hear this shit—

Zaragoza: Yeah, definitely. Key stories from that Peace Corps time.

Leahy: The key story there was by the end of six months, living by yourself in a village, my Turkish was pretty good. There were five mosques in my village. My village was pretty wealthy. And this one imam asked me to explain the Trinity, in Turkish. I explained the Trinity in Turkish to him, and he looked at me and he says, “That doesn’t seem to make any sense.” And I thought to myself, Jesus, you know, I think you’re fucking right there. [laughing] That was the beginning of the end of my Catholicism. [laughing] That, and sleeping with my first woman. That pretty much did it. That was the end of the church. Well, not quite. I had to come back to the United States, and the church was supporting the Vietnam War, and that pretty much did it.

The Peace Corps was an amazing thing for me, because it’s like when you travel overseas, you learn not so much about the place you’re in, but about the place you came from, so I learned a lot about the effect of the United States on the rest of the world, even in my little village.

The other thing about the Peace Corps was that it was a brand-new institution, and so all these graduate programs were interested the Peace Corps volunteers—some odd breed of American—that they could have in their programs. In my village, I actually got letters from graduate schools, asking me to come to apply. I never imagined thinking of going to graduate school. But I got one from New York University graduate school, public administration, international comparative public administration, with a four-year straight doctoral NDEA Title IV fellowship, which was \$300 a month, and all expenses, to go to New York University.

Zaragoza: Before we move on to NYU, are there any other stories from that two years in Turkey that you’d like to offer up? I only ask because I know that Turkey has been such a consistent part of your life, at least the last several decades.

Leahy: Yeah. Well, I don’t know. There’s so much about Turkey that I learned. One was I was extremely lucky to get to work with this person named Ibrahim Dokutkan, who was an agricultural extension agent. Turkey was doing five-year plans, and the programs went all the way down to the local village level. There had to be a certain number of projects you got done, and Ibrahim had all these projects. I hustled \$5000 dollars from CARE to support community development workshops for 50 village leaders and bought myself a motorcycle. I was the only motorized Peace Corps volunteer in Turkey. I had my own motorcycle, a Czechoslovakian motorbike, Jawa 250.

Ibrahim basically used me as his field agent. I went and visited these 50 villages and said, “Which project do you want to do?” Then Ibrahim would come out and do a project. One of the things about Ibrahim was he was a dedicated developer, and loved the farmers. But he was also a man, in

some ways—I mean, he was—so he would go out and do a slideshow presentation on different agricultural projects, and his presentations were always packed with villagers, and I never really knew why. So, I decided to actually go to one of his projects. This probably isn't a good story.

Zaragoza: Go ahead, keep going.

Leahy: Okay, so I went to one of his things. The villagers would be looking at how to produce chicken, new chickens, turkeys, or cheese course, and this, that and the other thing. It was a slideshow, and every once in a while, Ibrahim would put in a pornographic slide. [laughing] The villagers heard about Ibrahim's programs, and they would come, packed to the gills, waiting for that slide to pop in. He was an extraordinary person, and changed the whole face of that valley.

Zaragoza: It seems like his technique was effective.

Leahy: His technique was effective, and we had chicken projects, turkey projects. That whole valley now is an orchard valley. He got an irrigation dam built. That orchard valley produces fruits of all kinds and fruit juices. It went value-added stuff, right up the line. Watching Ibrahim work was really something, and I loved working with him. I went back to see him oftentimes, when he was alive. Even when he was dead, I went to his graveyard.

Other things in Turkey? I don't know, there's just so much about Turkey. I traveled. I went to the Kurdish area in 1965, and hung out with the Kurds in eastern Turkey. I really liked the Kurds a lot. Their women weren't covered. In eastern Turkey, the women wore sackcloth dresses—they were head-to-toe covered—but not with the Kurds. I always liked the Kurds. I've been back to the Kurdish area a lot over the years. I really enjoyed Van, Tatvan, Diyarbakir, and stuff. I don't know what else about Turkey.

Oh, I know. Yes. [chuckles] This actually shaped my life quite a bit. When I first got to my province, which was Antalya, we were told to report to the governor. In my very modest Turkish, I prepared my little presentation. I went into this huge office, and there was this man sitting down at the huge desk, and I started speaking in my broken Turkish. He interrupted me by about my second or third sentence, and he said to me, in perfect English, "How many states have you been in your own country?" I said, "I've been to two, Washington and Oregon." He said, "Isn't that interesting. You come all this way to help us out here in Turkey, and you don't know your own country. Let me give you some advice. After two years, why don't you go back, and learn about your own country?"

I was, of course, totally embarrassed. But when I left Turkey, I promised myself that I would travel to every state in the United States, which I did during the time I worked at Cornell. Every summer, I got in my car, and I drove to every state in the continental US.

Zaragoza: Have you since completed that?

Leahy: Oh, yeah, I did it right away. I did it in the '70s. As soon as I had a job with a car. [laughing]

Zaragoza: You've been to Alaska and Hawaii now, too?

Leahy: I've been to Alaska. I have not been to Hawaii. But the continental, I did pretty good.

Zaragoza: You did.

Leahy: I definitely drove every state, once I got the money and the car, which was '73.

Zaragoza: Let's get into that period after, when you go to NYU, and Cornell. In New York state, what were some of those stories that are important for . . .?

Leahy: Well, New York state, I came back from Turkey, and I got married to my college sweetheart Marge Passanisi, in San Francisco. We both had scholarships to NYU, and we came and got a rent-controlled, furnished apartment in Flatbush, and started going to school.

At the same time, I got an induction order to be inducted into the US Army in 1967. A lot of people thought that the Peace Corps was an exemption to the draft, but it wasn't. So, for the next two years, I faced the prospect of whether or not to refuse induction into the US Army. That was one of the contexts.

The other context, of course, was the Vietnam War, which I, like most of my generation, had read every book that was on the Vietnam War. Also, the black rebellion was going on. I just noticed that there's a movie about the Algiers Motel incident, and that was one of my first books. I read Malcolm X, I read Claude Brown, Piri Thomas, all the books about—my newspaper was the Black Panther Party paper. So, it was a combination of opposition to Vietnam, and to the growing—I was not aware of the civil rights movement when I was in college. Not really. But I learned about it, and my context was kind of the Black Panther Party, and antiwar movements, and building takeovers at Columbia University. Mark Rudd was at NYU. He came down. I remember him talking at a rally.

NYU was occupations. We occupied buildings all the time at NYU. We occupied the Courant Hall, which was a mathematics hall. We held it for four days. There was federal marshals outside. It was a tumultuous time at NYU, from '67 to '70-'71. When we had taken Courant Hall, William Kunstler came. This was during the Cambodia nationwide strike. There's just nothing but stories about that time.

I was a full-time student in a program that was made up of part-time people. They were primarily New York City administrators, and UN diplomats, and then me, with my fatigue jacket. The dean, Dick Netzer, said he wanted to make a special door for me in the back of the college, so that I

could walk in that door rather than the front door of the graduate program. He was joking, but he wasn't really joking.

I was just wide open to learning about Vietnam, about Black Panther Party. My dissertation was on the National Welfare Rights Organization, which, of course, nobody gave a damn about—black, women—in the NYU program.

Zaragoza: And you have some early organizing during this time. Do you want to talk about some of that?

Leahy: I was living in Brooklyn, and I guess probably my first—I started this thing called the Community Advocates something or another. I started realizing the resources that were contained on my block alone could be advantageous to the community. I organized a thing called Reopen the Armory Program, because there were a bunch of kids that used to play outside my door next to an armory that was completely closed. The armory was a huge facility, and never used, so we started this program called Reopen the Armory Program—RAP. That was pretty funny. We held events there.

We learned there about a Catholic technique. I remember that. That was the first time I learned about that thing, because we had a program about the Reopen the Armory Program in the armory. We invited everybody to come, and it was free. We put the two largest guys that we had at the back of the room, and if somebody wanted to leave, they were supposed to make a donation. I remember thinking it's just like the Catholic Church. That's one of the best fundraising techniques. You invite people in for free, and then you charge them to get out. I think I really learned that in the Reopen the Armory Program.

Then, I heard about some women that were being evicted from their homes because a hospital wanted to expand. The Methodist Hospital, which was the first Methodist hospital in Brooklyn, was in my neighborhood. So I went down and said, "Who's being evicted?" It was a rent-controlled building next to the hospital, and I asked for the eviction notice. It was a letter from the hospital, saying that they were going to build a new medical facility, and "would you please leave?" I said, "This is not an eviction notice, so I'll settle this, no problem."

I spent three years of my life fighting that. They eventually tore the buildings down. But that led to my work for the Quaker Project on Community Conflict, because there was a plan to designate certain medium-sized hospitals to be the hospital for the borough. All the 100-bed or smaller hospitals were being closed, and a particular hospital was designated as the magnet hospital, and that hospital was going to expand. That was happening in all five boroughs. We eventually found each other, and that became the Citywide Save Our Homes Committee, and I worked with that. My project, the Tenants

of Methodist Hospital Association, was a part of that. That was a major organizing work. We pretty much bankrupted Methodist Hospital, and certainly stopped it from expanding. It never expanded. It torn down the unbelievably cheap rent-control buildings, but it never expanded. By the way, it wasn't a medical facility they wanted. They wanted a fucking parking lot for their doctors, who drove in from Long Island.

I learned a lot about community organizing there. Built all kinds of coalitions. I also started writing for the newspaper, the *Park Slope News*, which was a part of the *Brooklyn News*. That was one of the ways I got extra money. I got paid \$25 for an article. I basically wrote articles about all the organizing campaigns, so it was our own little media thing. Then, of course, I'd print the article, and reproduce it and pass it out.

I learned, I think, a lot of the community organizing techniques during those three or four years. The Quakers were quite good at helping me learn about the question, is your work a movement-building activity? Does your organizing work build the movement, or retard the movement? They were really quite good with me. We did this poster once. I had this artist draw a poster of Methodist Hospital. On one side of the poster was this kindly doctor, looking out in the community; and on the other side, it was this pig, who was tearing down buildings, and making money for the medical industry. So, it was a two-faced doctor, and it was a great piece. I still have it.

The Quakers saw that, and they brought me in and said, "Dan, is this a movement-building activity?" To make a long story short, we agreed that it wasn't. The next poster we did was about people in the community creating a preventive healthcare system that served the community, and also preserved low-income housing. That became our poster, and that, to me, was a movement-building activity. I sometimes disagreed with [the Quakers], like sometimes they'd offer workshops with the Pentagon on how to have non-violence. I didn't believe that shit, nor did I believe in getting arrested. They loved getting arrested, but then they also had attorneys who would get them out of jail, whereas if I got arrested, nobody was going to come for me, so I've never really believed in getting arrested. But I learned a lot about community organizing during that years.

I also refused induction in September 1969 at Whitehall. That was postponed a lot by the great work of Jane Alpert and the guy that died in Attica. What was his name? They blew up an induction center, which slowed down the induction process. God, what was his name? Sam Melville.

So, I refused induction. Had to go up to see the FBI. They had an office at Hunter College, and I walked in there. It turned out the FBI agent was from the University of Washington, and, of course, I

hated the University of Washington because I went to Seattle U, and the University of Washington was a place, like my dad said, where you'd lose your faith. [laughing]

He wanted me to sign this form. He was really friendly, until he pushed this form over to me and asked me to sign it, which was a waiver of rights form. I said, "You know, I'm sure you're trying to help me out here, but my attorney said I really shouldn't sign anything, so I'm not going to sign this." After that, his feet came down off the desk with his fucking wingtips, and he said that I had to be available to report to the FBI at any time, and all this other bullshit. There was a five-year statute of limitations on that, so I decided to not get arrested or show myself to the cops for five years, because I was afraid they'd pull up the fact that I had refused induction.

By 1969, really, it was no longer, I don't think, a political event. I mean, when people refused in '65-'66, that was a big deal. But they also got five years in federal prison. But by '69, the Tet Offensive had already happened. In the US, everybody knew it was an extraordinary waste of Vietnamese lives. So, I was never prosecuted.

They tried to take my fellowship away, though, because when I was under an induction order, they said that I was going to leave to go to Vietnam. My card, by the way, I had a red tag on it, and that meant I was going to Vietnam, in my physical. When you go there in the morning for induction, they ask you, "Who is going to refuse today?" It was bureaucratized. I raised my hand, and a bunch of other kids raised their hands. I went and sat with them. Then we were separated from everybody else when we refused, and we went in, one by one, into the officer's office, and he'd ask you three times. "Daniel B. Leahy, please step forward." "Daniel B. Leahy, please step forward." "Daniel B. Leahy, please step forward." I didn't, and then he said, "Go see the FBI."

I think New York was about organizing, and it was about a tremendous learning experience for me. Also, I was doing my graduate work. Even though I never imagined that my graduate work was basically in organizational theory and administrative systems, and I really learned about how administrative systems and formal organizations work, I never really imagined that I would use that against those same institutions and organizations. But I did. Because I can screw up organizations. I really can. I can use their administrative process, to the extent possible, to slow them down, screw them up, make the developer cost more money, all this other stuff. I learned administrative systems and organizational stuff, and I think that became really helpful, both in labor organizing and community organizing, which I basically ended up doing for the rest of my life.

Zaragoza: Then, from NYU, you go to Cornell. Key moments there?

Leahy: I worked for the Quakers for a couple years, organizing shit. And then, I got a job at Cornell University. Cornell . . . [sighs] . . . you know, in 1969, the black students took over Willard Straight Hall with shotguns, and they demanded changes in Cornell University's approach to black people, communities, and people of color—although I don't think there was that term then—but poor communities, in general. Cornell University pretty much exploded with centers to absorb it. They weren't going to change their internal curriculum, but they were going to create centers. They created an African American Center, research centers.

Then they created this thing called the Human Affairs Program, which was, there was a demand that universities be "relevant," in those days; if the African Studies Center was for African Americans, the Human Affairs Program was for the white radicals. It was a really interesting program, because it had sections, and sections were projects in various communities in Tompkins County, even beyond Ithaca. You would get 10 students into each one of these sections—10 to 12 students from different colleges at Cornell—and they would get credit for a year-long work in that section.

They experimented with sections throughout '69 to '73, and I was the first full-time director hired, in the summer of 1973. I became the first full-time director with a salary of \$14,000, which was an amazing amount of money for me, because I had been living on \$300 a month from the Quakers.

Zaragoza: What kind of work did you do?

Leahy: I was the director. We had an assistant director, Virginia Jinx Dowd, and we had, I think, up to 10 at least, section leaders. We did everything. We were in the prisons. We were in Elmira prison. We did cultural programs in the prisons.

I think we started the first—people say it's true—women's sexual harassment [program]. I think our program coined the term sexual harassment. This woman I hired named Lin Farley, who was a radical lesbian cab driver in New York City, I hired her. Even though she didn't have a college degree, I got her hired at Cornell. She started this women's sexual Speak Out thing, in which only women could come; which was a big deal because I defended her against the university that said it had to be open to men and anybody else who wanted to come. I said, "No, it's just for women."

We had a Women and Work project; we had a Prison project; we had a Redevelopment project in Elmira, New York; we did a project on Utilities and Energy, in which we researched all the private utility companies, and started public power campaigns—municipal takeover campaigns—throughout New York State. What else? We had a criminal justice—well, that was part of Prisons. Women and Work. Banking and Finance. Energy and Utilities. Stuff like that.

Zaragoza: Any stories that highlight this period?

Leahy: There's no reason to go into the main story, but the main story was a shift from servicing to institutional attack. When I got there, the program was primarily about services. Like we had a Blue Bus project that went with libraries throughout Appalachia. We had a downtown storefront that was a service thing for welfare people. We basically shifted from service projects to focusing on institutions, and attacking the institutions with either labor or community. That's why it was on finance, utilities, stuff like that. It was a big internal shift and a terrible internal fight that I led. I fired four people one day, at the end of it, on the same day.

Zaragoza: You radicalized the program.

Leahy: I think I did, I'm not sure. But I definitely, I think, radicalized the program. I don't know if that's the helpful term, but big fight. I learned a lot about that. I learned about firing people. I learned about the necessity of supervising radicals. I hired radicals from all over the country, but I also learned that once you get people hired, you have to supervise them. You can't let them go on their own because they don't necessarily know what you've been thinking, or what the possibilities are.

But we did a lot of work. I would say the main successes were certainly the Women and Work, with Lin Farley and Karen Sauvigné. They ended up starting a thing we started before they went called the Working Women's Institute. It started in Ithaca, and it became an organization in New York City afterwards.

But I'd say the biggest thing was the public power fights. We started a Labor Action Coalition of New York, made up of local labor unions. We started the People's Power Coalition of New York. Eventually, all of those organizations started focusing on the necessity of taking over private utility companies and creating local, publicly owned systems at the municipal level. We were heavy into organizing that.

One day, my administrative board, which was made up of all the deans of Cornell University's colleges, called an emergency meeting. The corporation counsel for Cornell University, who was a conservative man—Neal Stamp—comes into the meeting and says, "Dan, I don't know what this utilities project is you have, but I want you to sterilize it."

And then, the liberal, Alfred Kahn—Alfred Kahn was the guy who did the Utilities Act of 1934—and he was a thespian, and he was the dean of Arts and Sciences College, and a liberal, nice man—he said, "Dan, I wrote to Niagara Mohawk"—Niagara Mohawk was one of the seven major private utility companies in New York State, and the one that was based in Syracuse—"and I said, 'What has Niagara Mohawk done for Cornell University?' lately?" And he said, "Dan, they wrote back. They've done quite a bit, and you're going to have to get rid of this utilities project." That was the liberal.

Of course, I went back to my staff, all these radicals, and we said, “Cornell wants us to terminate our utilities project.” Of course, they all said, “Well, fuck Cornell.” So I wrote back and said, “We’re not going to eliminate our utilities project.” About a month later, Cornell University sent out a press release saying the Human Affairs Program was terminated as of June 1976.

So, we basically had a year, from January to June ’76, to spin off all of our programs, which we did successfully with several of them—the women’s one, the criminal justice one, the labor one. The People’s Power Coalition got spun off. It was already in the process of spinning off. But we spun off most of them.

Then I got into my little car, with my typewriter and a credit card—since I didn’t have any money—and drove across the United States [laughing] to Waterville, Washington, and got a job working with my cousin in the County Fair, cleaning restrooms. [laughing]

Zaragoza: Let’s start the return to Washington. What’s the kind of work you do? What are the highlights of this period?

Leahy: I think one of the highlights of that period was working at the County Fair for several summers. I first started out working for the carnies in the dime pitch, and that didn’t make any money after eight or nine hours of standing there hustling kids to throw the dimes at things they couldn’t hit. So I asked my cousin for a job, and he said that I could clean the restrooms, so I ran a crew of kids cleaning the restrooms, and I did that for a couple of summers, and made money.

One of the nice things that happened there was—this was after I was no longer doing it—I was called up to the main stage of the North Central Washington Fairgrounds, and I was presented with an award for having cleaned toilets. It was a lacquered toilet seat they gave me. I still have it.

And then, I was living in Wenatchee with my aunt, and I heard that the Chelan County Public Utility District was having troubles with their public. I suppose I can tell this story. I got an interview with the manager of the Chelan County PUD. The Chelan County PUD is the public organization in Wenatchee, Washington for the county. They’re very rich. They own three dams. They pay extremely well. It was a big organization. It had a unionized workforce, IBEW. It was quite the place. To get a job with the PUD was a big deal.

I was proposing this project analyze the relationship of Chelan PUD to the public. I had been taking these public policy classes at NYU, so I figured, well, I guess I’m a public policy consultant. I made up this firm called Burke Leahy Associates—my middle name is Burke, but there’s Burkes all over the place in Chelan and Douglas County, my mom’s family. I got an appointment with the manager, and then I called up all my relatives and said, “Who knows this guy?”

My uncle, Joe, who was an insurance man in Spokane, said, "I know that guy." He told me this story. "At some point during the conversation with this man, mentioned that you know Joe Burke." What Joe had done was this guy's brother had died without having signed his insurance papers, but Uncle Joe took care of it anyhow. So, during the interview [laughing], I mentioned that I was the nephew of Joe Burke, and I could see him click.

Anyhow, I got this job, \$100 a day and all expenses, to analyze this thing. I, of course, worked every day, because I was broke. I was making three grand or more every month. Cash money. I did a six-month study, and in the course of doing that study, I discovered how the Bonneville Power Administration, in alignment with the PUDs, were building five nuclear power plants, and why the rates, for the first time in the history of Washington State, were going up rather than down.

I presented the report. This guy, who was kind of my manager or supervisor, said, "This is better than a Ph.D." And it probably was, actually. I did surveys of communities; I did a statistical survey of the employees; I read every minute from the founding of Chelan PUD in 1937 the first vote; I read every commission minute from then to the time that I did the study. Original documents. I went back and I read all the original documents about why that thing was formed. Then, I made suggestions about how to relate better to the community.

The commissioners asked that every copy of my report be brought in, and they destroyed most of them, except for the people that printed the thing, which were the workers. They really liked me, so they saved a bunch of copies for me. [laughing] But the commissioners wanted every one in, and they got rid of them all. I wanted to send them back out to all the people that I had surveyed, but they refused to do it. I basically was out of work, and I was never going to be hired as a consultant again in the Chelan area. I was "irresponsible."

I went looking for work, and I heard about this thing called the Nuclear Information Resource Service—NIRS—which is still, as far as I know, a big one. It was going to be a foundation or rich-person's-funded organization to monitor nuclear power plant building in the US. I knew a lot about Washington Public Power Supply System, and the effort to build five nuclear power plants. Actually, they wanted to build 20 1000-megawatt nuclear power plants.

So, I went back to look at a job in New York, and then I heard about NIRS, and I flew down to Washington, D.C. I was interviewed by this guy named Stanley Weiss. Stanley Weiss was a multimillionaire guy, with homes all around the world. Young guy. After I interviewed, he said, "I don't trust anybody who doesn't drink. Do you drink?" I said, "I certainly drink." "You want to go drinking?"

We went drinking, and then, sometime in the late evening or early afternoon or something, he said, “I’m going to go to Mark Raskin’s for a dinner. You want to come with me?”

Bethany Weidner: I’m just appearing as part of the story.

Leahy: To make a long story short . . . I’m not going to tell you that story . . . but I met Bethany there. A couple days later, I flew back to Wenatchee. Then I got a check from Stanley Weiss for, I don’t know, several thousand dollars, saying, “Come back to Washington, D.C. and get to know Bethany.” So I did.

I set up an office there, because Dennis Kucinich, in February 19-something, must have been . . . where are we anyhow?

Zaragoza: He becomes the boy mayor of Cleveland in ’76.

Leahy: Okay, he was the mayor, but in February, he successfully defended the municipal electric system against the bankers. That was a big deal. Me and Bethany were living with Gar Alperovitz and his wife in D.C., and I came down, and I said, “We should take Dennis Kucinich’s victory and spread it across the United States.” Gar said, “Let me make a phone call.”

He made a phone call to a guy named David Hunter, who was the main money mover in the United States probably after the war to when he died. He ran a thing called the Stern Fund, which was an indicator fund. In other words, if David Hunter gave you money, everybody else was going to give you money. He called up Hunter—I didn’t know Hunter at the time—and Hunter gave me \$5,000.

I set up an office in the same building that the Nuclear Information Resource Services was, because it was run by this young woman named Betsy Taylor, who had gotten the job. I had an office there in this brownstone in Washington, D.C., and one day, Stanley Weiss walked into my office and said, “I’m thinking about setting up a new political party. You want to do that?” I said, “Fuck, I’ve been waiting my entire fucking life to set up a new political party. Yeah.” He said, “I’ll raise a bunch of money, and you set up a bank account.” I said, “Okay.” I set up a bank account in Washington, D.C., and we started to organize the Citizens Party. Do you want to talk about that?

Zaragoza: Yeah, highlights.

Leahy: Okay, highlights. We set up a Citizens Committee first. Got a guy named Jim McClellan, and a whole bunch of other people—Denny May—and set up an office, bank accounts, and started having meetings around the country. Then we turned into a Citizens Party convention, which was in April 1979. We had over 300 delegates from 30 states, the majority women. We had a disproportionate number of African Americans, Native Americans. It was one of the best events I’ve ever been to in my life, and I organized it. We had a big staff by then. I had a huge staff in Washington, D.C. I don’t know a long story short.

Zaragoza: It would be good to hear one victory, one good moment. Then it would be good to hear about the obstacles, or what ended up preventing it from reaching its potential.

Leahy: I would say that the dynamic is the same that you see today, so I'll tell you about that. The dynamic is, what part of your party organization wants to build the party? What part of your party organization wants to run campaigns for elective office? The dynamic there was, all those people that wanted to run Barry Commoner to be president of the United States, along with LaDonna Harris and all those people that wanted to build party organizations, and have down-ticket people running for office in states that had ballot status. Overcoming the ballot question in the United States is an enormous, logistical difficulty, because it's by each state, and each state has different rules and regulations. Getting on the ballot with a new party is an enormous organizational task, so what happens is you default to running as an independent. That's what Nader ran as, an independent.

That was the tension throughout the party at all times, up even to the convention. Nonetheless, that convention in Cleveland was an extraordinary event. I think that was the last time that a new political party was available to the American people since that time. That was '79-'80. I really do believe that. I don't think there has been anything equivalent since.

Zaragoza: Labor Party? Green Party?

Leahy: No, no. None of them came close to the organizational depth, range, coalitions. The Labor Party was not that. I was at the Labor Party with Mazzochi. It was not that. The Green Party is a façade. But I think that was the last one. It was an extraordinary example of coming together. Also, one of the things that was very interesting about the Citizens Party is that a lot of the sectarian political groups were, I think, so impressed by the possibilities of it that they stayed out of it. They came to the convention; they were there, but they weren't delegates. They were on the side. They were literature and stuff.

I appreciated that. Carl Davidson, for instance, was there, the old SDS leader. Others like that. But they were on the side. I really thought that was an extraordinary—and I didn't organize it that way. I think that's one of the things that it reflected. There was really extraordinary potential there. You had Frank Black Elk. Black Elk gave an oration there. It was extraordinary.

Zaragoza: Are there any recordings of that still around?

Leahy: It's all recorded, I think, as far as I know.

Zaragoza: I mean, there's a dissertation in this for somebody, or a book?

Leahy: Yeah, there's a book. Dan Lieberman wrote a book about it. I have all the files, by the way. I have all the files of the Citizens Party—all the resolutions that were presented, all the organizational shit—everything—downstairs, if somebody wants to write a dissertation.

I think that was an organizational achievement that was extraordinary. We had a lot of great issue organizers around the country who believed that at some point, you've got to take government. At some point, you either neutralize it or take it. And a lot of those people were anti-nuclear organizers, renewal energy organizers, labor people, and I think that convention in Cleveland was one of the best things produced.

The difficulty that crashed it was a charge of racism. Black leadership decided that Barry Commoner was a racist. So, even though we had this extraordinary election of two women to be co-chairs of the Citizens Party, one of whom was a black woman law professor, who later committed suicide—beautiful woman, smart—she and another woman became the two co-chairs.

Then, right after we had this extraordinary election, on the floor and everything, the next day, that young woman came to the podium and said she could not serve. Which I can't tell you what a fucking downer that was to everybody there. Of course, nobody would take the chair afterwards, and so I chaired a two- or three-hour discussion afterwards, when she resigned. I don't know what that dynamic was. I don't know where it particularly came from. There's various people who believe that that issue was used to stop the formation of a party. Don't know.

The other thing I learned from organizing the Citizens Party was that the institutional function of the Democratic Party is to prevent any new political party from taking place. That's its institutional function, and it's done very well.

There's another lesson, I think, that has to do with the relationship of funders to movements. That's another dynamic in the United States—especially in the United States—that prohibits, that prevents, political parties from forming. Because in the United States, the rubric is still the same. Fifty percent of the eligible people register. Fifty percent of those who register vote. So we have minority elections all the time. My argument was the reason people don't vote is there's no political party for them to vote for.

Here's a story that illustrates that. A guy named John Anderson ran as an independent in that election. He got eight percent of the vote. He did it with quote-unquote direct mail campaign, which was a big deal at that time. New innovation. His fundraiser, the guy that designed his campaign, came to me afterwards and said, "In looking at the returns, I noticed that a lot people said, 'Why doesn't he form a new political party?' So, I think it's a moneymaking proposition. I don't know what your political party stands for, and I don't care. But you give me 25 percent of the returns, and I will raise money for your political party." I took that to my board, and I said, "See? This is what I've been arguing all this fucking time, and this person is backing me up. Let's give him a contract and raise the money."

What happened? Did they want that to take place? No. Do you know why? Because that money would have flowed into the party structure. Up until that time, I was dependent on people who would give me \$20,000 checks, or \$10,000 checks. An example of that is, prior to going to Cleveland for the convention, I needed money to bring my staff and everything else to set things up. So the funders came to me and said, “Dan, we understand you’re not all that pleased about Barry Commoner being the nominee.” I said, “We have a nomination process. If there’s someone else that has gone through that process, there’s going to be an election, whether or not if it’s Barry Commoner or this other person.” They said, “We want you to guarantee that it’s Barry Commoner.” I said, “I’m pretty sure Barry Commoner won’t have any problem beating this guy—he’s a nobody—but I’m not going to guarantee it.”

Was there any money for me to take my staff to Cleveland? No. So, I did it on credit cards, and then I set up a separate bank account in Cleveland where all the money from the registration fees came into, which I controlled, and I paid off the staff that way. The point I was trying to make is that there is all this money dynamic around movement organizations. It does make a difference where your money comes from. You can’t say that it doesn’t.

So, I guess, those three things—one, the organizational accomplishment of the Citizens Party was extraordinary; two, the question of whether or not race can be used to stop left movements from advancing; three, the relationship between funders and movements—are three big lessons. And the fact that the Democratic Party—I guess that’s the fourth lesson—is, in fact, institutionally—the way that they function is this: a lot of Democrats, who were ready to move on, they said, came into the Citizens Party formation. They would make arguments about your platform, or this, that or the other thing, and they’d tone it down, or say, “You can’t really be that radical,” blah blah. After they toned all that shit down, then they said, “Oh, we decided to stay with the Democratic Party, the good old Democratic Party.” So, that’s what happens. And then, of course, they do their best to torpedo you. I think those are some of the lessons of the Citizens Party.

Anyway, to make a long story short, I stayed on the executive committee, but eventually, I quit trying to influence it, and started focusing on building a political party in Washington State.

Zaragoza: When a lot of folks think of you, they think of the Evergreen Labor Center, and we haven’t talked any about labor. When does your involvement in organized labor begin?

Leahy: It began in June of 19 . . . 76, when a UE organizer named Ed Bloch wrote me a note and said that he understands there’s this Peoples Power Coalition fighting nuclear power plants, and fighting for rural energy, and he wanted a labor clambake of the same, and he wanted it separate.

I met with him, and he gave me books about the UE. I started reading about the UE, and a New York kid gave me a book about the Seattle General Strike, which I had never heard of, even though I'd been born and raised in Seattle. I started reading labor stuff, and learning about craft union versus industrial unions and blah blah. By November, we organized this thing on labor, energy and power. Out of that came the Labor Action Coalition of New York. I became the organizational director of it. It was made up of primarily UAW, Machinists locals, furriers in New York, with Henry Foner, one of the Foner brothers. I think it was primarily UAW and Machinists across New York State, from Buffalo across to Albany. Our program was public power, full employment, and safe energy. Those three things.

It was during the time in which the utility companies were chasing manufacturing out of New York State, and was going to the South. Supposedly it was going because of increased electric rates, based on the increased reliance on nuclear power. People were looking for ways to keep the rates down, and a UAW worker, who, as he said, swept floors in an auto plant in Massena, New York, led a campaign to create a municipal electric system, and get power directly from PASNY. PASNY was the Power Authority of the State of New York, which was created by Roosevelt. If you got power from PASNY, you got it at cost, so you could reduce rates by 30 percent, which he did. His name was Max Ryan, and we took Max Ryan's example and decided to hold a municipal power campaign by labor.

So, that's how I got into labor, and learned about labor. I had an excellent educator, this UE guy, Ed Bloch. It wasn't a big union. It used to be. It was the union that organized the electrical industry in Schenectady, New York—Westinghouse and stuff—but it got red-baited out of existence, almost, after World War II. But Ed Bloch, as a result of his position, knew how to work with other unions. He taught me about how to work with other unions. We had 40 locals in this thing, and it existed way beyond the time I left New York, run by a woman named Jinx Dowd, who was my assistant director at the Human Affairs Program.

I learned a lot about labor then, and about this structure—craft unions versus industrial unions, and what they could and could not do, and their histories and all that stuff. So, when I came to Evergreen, [I] learned that Joe Olander had been at Florida International University or something in Florida, [and] there was a Labor Center there. So, when we started organizing the Labor Center with Olander, I, of course, said, "Hey, you had one of these things, so you know what they are." And Patrick Hill loved the idea of labor. Anyhow, that's how I learned about labor.

Zaragoza: Between New York and the Labor Center, in the narrative, we were just getting you back to Washington after the Citizens Party, back to building a political party here in the State of Washington.

Did you carry forth your labor background? Maybe you could talk about that homecoming in the early '80s.

Leahy: Yeah. And the other thing that from New York, the thing that I did in the Citizens Party, I brought labor into the Citizens Party. That's one of the things I brought in because of my experience in New York. These guys, they needed to have labor. William Winpisinger was not going to vote for Carter. I was in touch with William Winpisinger. They had a million-member Machinists Union. I met with him and his assistants. They almost came completely into the Citizens Party.

I came back to Washington State, and the first thing I did was I went down to the Central Labor Council in Wenatchee, Washington, and I thanked them for my education. Because the reason I was able to go to Seattle University was that during the summers, I worked as a union laborer in Wenatchee, Washington, for my uncle's construction firm. Instead of making 75 cents an hour in Seattle, I made \$3.10 base, and sometimes almost \$4.00 if I was blowing rock or laying pipe. So, I went to them and said, "Thank you for my education."

In my work in the Chelan PUD, when I got that job, I don't know that other consultants would have surveyed the workers, but I did. I surveyed all the workers. I didn't just talk to the people out in the community, I internally surveyed the workers. So, I think that was another expression of it.

When I started organizing the political party, I called it Progress Under Democracy. That was my idea of organizing the political party, and it was listed as a minor political party in the state. What we were going to do was we were going to, first, take over nonpartisan, non-party offices.

Because one of the things that happened to me in Washington, D.C. was I'd get into cabs and say, "We're organizing a new political party." "Really? What's it done so far?" "Well, [laughing] nothing yet. We're just kind of on our way here." "Well, let me know when you've done something."

So, I came to Washington State, and I thought, okay, so what we'll do is we'll take over PUDs first, and show we can stop nuclear power plants and shift to renewable energy. Then we'll take over ports. PUDs are even-year elections, and ports are odd years. So we'd go from PUDs first, ports odd year, and then we'd build up a record of what we've done, and we'd build up elective political leadership. Then, we'd shift to a partisan party, and take on the Democrats and Republicans. That was the idea.

There were 21 electric PUDs in Washington State, and I had a file on every one of them. Because one of the things I learned was that sometimes people don't run for office because they're afraid of being a fool. People that do run for office also don't know how to run. They think it's an issue campaign. So, I had a file on all these things, and then I started looking for allies. Of course, one of the

allies was labor. Labor is exactly the same. The craft unions were out at Satsop and down in Hanford, making money hand over fist, building projects that they had no respect for. Then, you had Machinist Unions and other industrial unions, who were paying the price of higher rates.

I made an alliance with the Machinists Union, for instance, to help fund a campaign to take over the PUDs, and stop nukes. It wasn't the only one, but my labor politics was definitely involved in the construction of Progress Under Democracy, and we ran a young machinist for office in Snohomish, which was Matt Dillon—he won—and a pulp and paper worker out of Longview, Steve Farrell, who won. We also ran other people. But part of Progress Under Democracy was that labor part, too. We were very successful in 1982. We ran in '80 and were not very successful, because a lot of people were running like they were bringing around treatises about nuclear energy, and fusion, and fission. You know, you need to learn how to fucking shake hands, and to have pictures of your family with you and all that other shit.

By '82, we had pretty sophisticated recruiting mechanisms, and also educational programs, which we did in Wenatchee. We won 14 races in '82. There were 26 commissioners up for election, and I think only six left after 1982. We recalled two at once in Mason County. That was the first time, I think, anybody ever recalled two people at once. That was led by Laurie Porter in Mason County.

It was an incredible victory, but here's the thing that I'm thinking about right now. We elected all these people, and then we were never able to reach them again. What happens to elected officials, especially ones that are going to change policy, is that all the institutional forces surround them—their managers, their attorneys, their consultants, their trade associations. They surround them, and make sure that they won't implement new policies. That's the case now when we're faced with Port races here, right now. We have the possibility of majorities in Vancouver and Olympia, but I tell you, if they get elected, they're going to be surrounded by these institutions. And unless you move to the question of governance, and how you're going to get new managers, new attorneys, and get rid of the trade associations and the rest, you will not be able to implement a fucking thing.

Zaragoza: Is it the local version of the Deep State? [laughing]

Leahy: No, it's not the Deep State, because the Deep State is supposedly not seen. This is seen. You can see these things. You know what a manager, attorney, trade association—the trade association for ports, for instance, promotes fossil fuels. It's obvious. They join lawsuits to stop citizens from stopping these things. You know.

Anyhow, Progress Under Democracy won these great things, but we were characterized increasingly as only interested in stopping nukes. And that's what happened. We stopped nukes. We

stopped four and five nuclear power plants, but we couldn't maintain the movement toward a new political party.

At that particular moment in time, I came to Evergreen. I probably, along with Jim Lazar, was probably the person most knowledgeable about the entire hydroelectric energy system of the Pacific Northwest, as well as being intimately knowledgeable about the Washington Public Power Supply System, the municipal bond market, PUDs in the state. The whole history of public power. I was full of all that shit. When I came to Evergreen, I brought that all with me.

Zaragoza: What brought you to Evergreen?

Leahy: I got famous for a moment, which was definitely a mistake, as a part of the Washington Public Power Supply System campaigns. I went on *Town Hall* at KOMO—Channel 4—with people that supported the nuke plants. I got instantly famous, even to the extent that people would recognize me on the streets of Seattle, and that was definitely a mistake.

What happened was that I could not get a job anywhere working as a consultant, because I was simply too famous. Every time I'd try and get a job somewhere, there would be all this press about "This was the person that created the \$2.5 billion bond default, which was the largest municipal bond default in US history." Of course, I was proud of that, but that was when WPPSS plants four and five defaulted. It was a \$2.5 billion outstanding debt, and it became the largest municipal bond default in US history. As far as I was concerned, I was part of creating that. That was just fine with me. But every local government is dependent upon the bond market, so I wasn't going to get a consulting job with any local government anymore. Period. Even people that liked me weren't going to touch me.

We left and went to Portugal, because we had to get out of the country, with a five-month-old baby and a three-year-old boy. We went to live in Peniche, on the coast of Portugal. It was also the 10-year anniversary of the Portuguese revolution, and to me, that was cute, so we went there.

The Sunday that I left for Portugal, I got the *Seattle P-I*, and in the paper was an ad for teaching in the Masters of Public Administration program at Evergreen. And I cut it out. And when I got to Portugal, I wrote a letter on Bethany's Smith Corona portable typewriter, and asked for the job. That was in April.

By June, I was in touch Ken Dolbeare, who was the director of the program, and they were trying to fly me over for an interview, but they couldn't make arrangements. So they told me to go on a particular day to call Barbara Smith, who was the Academic Dean. So, I called Barbara Smith. I had to go to a different village, because we didn't have a phone in my village. Barbara said, "I've never hired a person sight unseen before in my life, so don't screw up." [laughter]

I remember, I went to Coimbra later on, and there was a picture of an old-fashioned altar boy, with a total white thing on it. I sent that to Barbara Smith [laughing] and I said, “I’ll be a good boy.”

Anyhow, unbelievable, I got a one-year contract teaching the MPA program. We came back home in August, and I started teaching in the fall. Ken Dolbeare had already set up what I was supposed to do in the MPA program, and my first class—do you want to talk about this stuff?

Zaragoza: Yeah, early experiences, first impressions.

Leahy: Yeah, I’ll tell you a story. Ken Dolbeare had this idea of recruiting people from Tacoma into the MPA program, so he wanted someone to go to Tacoma to teach class, and get them to come to the MPA program later on. So, I taught a class called Democratic Management at the Community Level, a four-credit class, on Saturdays at the Tacoma campus, which at that point was below Pacific Avenue in a second-floor building. I don’t know where it was.

I remember walking in there, and I was told I was supposed to report to someone named Maxine Mimms. So, I walk into this classroom, and it’s full of these old grade-school chairs, with the arm that you wrote on. I said, “I’m supposed to report to Maxine Mimms.” There was this woman sitting in this chair, this grade-school chair, and she turns around and she looks up at me and says, “I like black men, black women, white women and white men, in that order.” I said, “Yes, ma’am. Where’s my classroom?” That was Maxine Mimms. [laughing] I loved that woman.

I started bringing in speakers. That was one of the things I did. I just looked at my notes. I brought in 66 speakers in, from 1984 to 1987, half men, half women, into Evergreen during my classes. One of the people I brought in was a commissioner for the Port of Tacoma. He was in a wheelchair. In order to bring him up, they had to lift him up in the wheelchair, and bring him up, because there was no nothing on the second floor, which is where the campus was. And I remember Maxine Mimms saying, “We’re going get a new building.” [laughter]

That was really great, because I was teaching Vietnam vets—non-coms—who had retired. A lot of them were non-coms, and they were retired Vietnam vets out of Tacoma, out of Fort Lewis. They were going to my class.

Zaragoza: Did you ever talk to them about your induction refusal?

Leahy: I don’t think so. I remember some of the conversations were pretty fucking deep with those guys. I was learning a lot.

What else I did, I taught a four-credit Public Policy class for full-time students. I did that twice, in the fall and winter. I also sat in on the Political Economic Context. I wasn’t teaching, but they asked me

to sit in on the eight-credit class, because the MPA program was composed of six eight-credit sessions at that time.

There were two things about my Public Policy class, my four-credit one for full-time students. My first class was 10 weeks, and I had 13 books. At the end of my introduction of the class, I had two questions. One guy said, “Are you kidding?” I said, “No, I’m not kidding. You’re full-time students, so read these books.” The other person—his name was Ashu Rashuandari; he was a Pakistani kid or something, I think—he said, “Listen, who is the public in public policy?” [laughing] I said, “Jesus, we’re just starting this class, kid. Give me a break. It’s my first class. What do I know?”

What that did for me, that question, pretty much determined how I did my coursework over the next two or three years. I started this bulletin board outside my office that said, “Who is the public in public policy?” I did a class once called *When the People Make Policy*, in which I had what happens if industrial labor makes policy? What happens if farmers make policy? What happens if women make policy? I had books listed for each one of those, and people got to select a book and read it, and tell me what they thought.

Then, I started researching the Washington Roundtable, because I thought it looked like it’s the public.

Zaragoza: Business Roundtable?

Leahy: Yeah, it’s called the Washington Roundtable. It was modeled after Business Roundtable. It was set up in ’84 by George Weyerhaeuser. I started tracking it, and it became a part of my classes. I used to make a list of everybody that was in the Washington Roundtable, and I’d present that list. It was really interesting. I’d present that list every year to my Public Policy class and said, “Who are these people?”

Some people would start listing them, saying who they were. A couple people would continue, and they’d go farther in depth about who they were. In other words, everybody knew George Weyerhaeuser, you know, the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. But then, there was a couple of people that would know more of these people, who they were. And you know who they were? They were always the people that were in government. They were the ones that were in government. They knew who these people were, because they’re the policymakers. It was always interesting. It was always the case.

I did a lot of research, and began to take—one of the things I noticed was a guy named Dye and Domhoff. Nye said that they were elites that ran things, but basically, the elites are the way world works, so here they are. Then Domhoff was critical of the way elites ran a democratic society. But they

both used the same chart to show how policy was made. So I, over the course of a couple years, translated that chart into Washington State, and showed how it functioned in Washington State, from the money, to how the policy is shaped, and then how it's transmitted through various organizations to the Legislature. So the Legislature became the proximate policymaker, but not the initiator of policy. That's pretty much what I did in Public Policy classes for three years.

Initially, I basically knew everything about Washington Public Power Supply Systems. That meant I knew everything about energy, public policy, the populist history of Washington State. I knew all that stuff, and I put a lot of that stuff into the classes.

Zaragoza: This is the '80s, so this is a time in which we see emerging, and beginning to take over, what we now called neoliberalism. Given your study of the charts, and the way that that worked in Washington State, maybe talk just a little bit about that early neoliberal history, as you saw it, as someone who was studying policy initiation, implementation and the impacts.

Leahy: First thing was there's no new money. Whatever you do, you have to do with existing money, which meant no new taxes, no new structures. Whatever you have to do, you have to do with existing money. That was one thing.

Then, there was a direct assault on public education by Weyerhaeuser and the Washington Roundtable. What they chose was public education, because public education was a major cost of state government. They determined to first change the curriculum. A, make sure that there was no new money, and then, B, change the curriculum within that squeezed budget. They did those two things successfully in Washington State. And, three, they eventually integrated Bill Gates into their group—he wasn't in it to begin with. It was still primarily utilities, manufacturing sector, and finance. But finance got eliminated pretty quickly, because a lot of the banks got taken over. Rainier Bank, Seafirst Bank, they all went out of business, and got taken over by larger entities, so the banking sector evaporated. Then, the manufacturing sector slowly evaporated, and on came the information technology, Bill Gates and boys.

So, they eventually integrated him into it, and he pretty much was the way in which they shifted education from thinking to information gathering. They had a video that they used to promote their education reform package, which was—I counted it. What's the number of times a student faced a computer, and the number of times a student faced a teacher in that video? It was 20 to one.

So, the assault on public education by the Roundtable, beginning in 1984-85, was certainly a part of it. The no new money was certainly a part of it. Then, of course, the assault on labor, which was ongoing, in terms of the construction trades. Construction in the United States used to be union, and

their first attack on the national level, and then here locally, was on the construction trades, on the crafts. After the crafts, they went after the industrial unions—the IWA, the Machinists. That was taking place during the time that I had come back here.

So, those three. No new money, no new taxes—whatever you’ve got to do, do it with existing money; the assault on public education by the Roundtable, and then the assault on labor by national forces and the Roundtable. I think those three things were indicative of the move, in terms of neoliberalism.

Zaragoza: Were you studying these in your classes? How were you approaching this as you designed programs, and the education that you offered at Evergreen?

Leahy: I did a chart. I used to do “How is public policy made?” I used the Washington Roundtable and public education policy as the example of how policy is made. They were putting out reports on the education system in Washington State, of the new curriculum, all this stuff.

I brought into the president of the Washington Roundtable to talk to my class. He later went on the board of Evergreen. His name was Dick Page. I brought him in and said, “How come you’re interested in education?” “Oh, it was a good field. Everybody loved education, of course, on the Roundtable, so we thought it was a good feeling thing.”

I don’t want to shift, but also what I learned in looking at WPPSS—I think I probably did the only class on the municipal bond market taught at the graduate level in the United States—but there, you could see the shift. I never thought about this in terms of neoliberalism, but you saw the shift. Because initially, they were going out to the municipal bond market to build nuclear power plants. But, by the late ‘80s, they were building nuclear power plants in order to go out to the bond market. In other words, finance had become dominant, just in that time. They were selling municipal bonds because they were enormously enriching on the part of the people holding them, even though the underlying thing, the nuke plants, were no longer viable. [chuckles] It was an incredible scam. It was one of the biggest transfers of wealth in the United States from a regional, publicly owned asset, to private bondholders. It was extraordinary.

Zaragoza: How does the default figure into that?

Leahy: The default was about two plants out of five.

Zaragoza: But did they get their money anyway?

Leahy: They got some of it, but not all. But the thing that’s still paying is the first three plants, because those first three plants were embedded into the Bonneville rates. So, 50 percent of the power cost at

Bonneville is paying for three nukes. No one knows that, but it's still the case. They're paying for the interest on those bonds.

Zaragoza: So finance is still making money off of it.

Leahy: Yes. Anyhow, I think the no new money, the public education assault, and the assault on labor were certainly three critical parts of neoliberalism, and they were taking place here in Washington State in the early '80s and mid-'80s. I remember the State Labor Council had a convention during that time, and the banner said "Organizing." And I thought to myself, really? You want to organize? So, a part of that was, okay, set up a labor education center and teach organizing.

Zaragoza: What year do you begin the Labor Center?

Leahy: When I was in the MPA program teaching. The MPA program was really great, because you taught an eight-credit class, but you weren't teaching 16. The other eight credits, you were supposed to do community service as an MPA faculty member. My community service became organizing the Labor Education Research Center.

First, I went around to every labor council in this state, and got resolutions passed, saying, "We a labor education center at the Evergreen State College." Then, I got a proposal for \$139,000 inserted into the Evergreen State College budget. Oftentimes, Evergreen really didn't know that it was getting in there, but I got it in anyhow. I think they were as surprised as I was that it was in there, but it got in there for the '87-'89 biennial.

I was doing classes. I started doing electives, and one of my electives was on the organized labor changing situation for workers and their unions. That was on Saturdays, and I did a labor lecture series, in which I brought in labor leadership from around the state to give lectures. I did labor films every Saturday.

I started actually doing projects before the Labor Center was even funded. Because one of the things labor union people were saying is "I'm kind of interested in labor education, but what would it actually do?" So, for a year prior to 1987, we did Labor Center Previews, which we did on our own. We did things about drug testing, and we did stuff about stewardship. There was a whole list of things. We did about eight things during the course of the year from '86 to '87. The last thing we did in '87 was a summer school for union women, which actually turned out to be the founding event of the Labor Center, because we had gotten the money.

Then we did a huge project for the Machinists Union. I had a staff of seven or eight people that I hired. The Machinists Union at Boeing got, in their '83 contract, a union contract. They had 1,000 stewards, and I don't know exactly how, but I went up there and said, "We'll do a steward education

program for you.” They hired me, and I hired a bunch of other people, and we designed their steward education program for the 1,000 Machinists, including books.

John McCann, who was a student of mine, wrote a history of the Machinists Union as his MPA applications project. I had another person that did a study of firefighters in Washington State, and that became the beginning of the history of the State Council that’s called *Fully Involved*. But it began with an MPA thesis on the firefighting organizing in this state. That was done by a woman; I can’t remember her name. But John McCann’s book, called *Blood in the Water*, the Machinists Union printed 2,000 copies of that, and every steward got a copy of the history of the Machinists Union 751. McCann did that as an MPA project. So a lot of the MPA people were doing labor stuff for me, too.

It was a full-fledged, all out movement to create a Labor Center, and we did it. Then, of course, there was a big fight about who should be the director. By that time, a lot of formal labor people didn’t want me, but they got me anyhow.

Zaragoza: Do you want to speak about why they didn’t want you?

Leahy: I think the State Labor Council, Larry Kenney, didn’t want me, primarily. He was the main opposition. He didn’t want me because he wanted the Labor Center to be an affiliate of the State Labor Council, which meant that if anybody came to a Labor Center event that wasn’t an affiliate of the State Labor Council, you had to charge them more money. He didn’t want the Labor Center to be doing anything, any work, for any labor union that wasn’t a part of the State Labor Council. Okay, well, that eliminated probably a third of the labor—probably more than that, because the Washington Education Association, which is 60,000 teachers, are not a part of the State Labor Council. The Teamsters, at that time, weren’t part of the Labor Council. The Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers—all the paper mills and pulp mills—they weren’t a part of [the State Labor Council].

Zaragoza: So, in some ways, it was about independence. You were fighting for independence, and they were trying to keep you from being independent.

Leahy: Yeah, so what we said was, “We’re available to anybody that bargains collectively.” That was not something that Larry Kenney wanted, so he didn’t want me to be the director, and neither did some of the other people, who were more conservative, people who—I won’t say this, but I will say this, they certainly were not interested in having a Labor [Center] start off with a summer school for union women. They didn’t want a Labor Center that organized an African-American Leadership Conference.

Our analysis was that labor does not move unless it crosses gender and race lines. When it does, there’s expansion; when it doesn’t, there’s contraction. The Labor Center was dedicated to crossing those two lines. We spent a lot of time bringing women in, and we spent a lot of time with

African-American Leadership Conferences, and also working with the farmworkers in Yakima. So, we crossed those lines.

Another thing was that our Labor Center was not a labor-management cooperation center. If you look at what labor centers were, including the one in Oregon, they are labor-management cooperation centers. That pretty much was the model after World War II. The deal was made in 1955, with the AFL-CIO joining. What was taught was labor-management cooperation. Any focus on ownership, for instance, that was not a part of labor education. You were supposed to train people about how to talk to management. Our analysis was that management wasn't going to talk to labor anymore [laughing], so something else is needed. If you remember right, there were lockouts. In this time period, management wasn't talking to labor, so we thought that labor probably should talk to ownership, the capital. So that was another problem.

And then, we were focused on rank-and-file rather than on staff. We never had one education program, in the time I was there—which was almost 10 years—that was for staff. Staff dominates most labor unions, but we didn't put on programs for staff. We put on programs for rank-and-file members of unions. That was another rub.

So, it was a rank-and-file orientation; it was anybody that collectively bargained; and it was the notion that we talked to capital. The Machinists Union is an example of that. Does a Machinist Union business agent know their contract, chapter and verse? Yes. Do they know it cold? Do they know when a violation takes place? Can they file a grievance? You bet your ass. But what if Boeing doesn't want to talk to you anymore? Who do you talk to? You need to know where Boeing's going. You need to know if they're going to China. So, we were into corporate research rather than management research. That was another thing.

There were lots of things, but it made our Center extraordinarily dynamic. We had enemies everywhere. We had enemies in the Legislature, we had enemies in labor, and we had enemies at Evergreen.

Zaragoza: That's where I wanted to go next. How was this Labor Center received at Evergreen? What is the atmosphere like for the Labor Center in its early days? What were some of those less-than-friendly relationships like with colleagues?

Leahy: At Evergreen, there's dynamics there. One dynamic is Evergreen is a liberal arts college, and master's programs or any other programs that take faculty out of the undergraduate curriculum is incorrect and wrong. So, one, I was on leave from undergraduate education. I wasn't teaching in the MPA program anymore, but I was not teaching the undergraduates. That's one dynamic. So, it was a

waste of faculty time for me to be running the Labor Education Center. I should have been in the undergraduate curriculum. That's one dynamic, not a super-powerful one, but one that was there.

The second was Patrick Hill, who was a really good guy and very supportive, basically wanted a labor studies program. He was Provost. Good faculty member. But he wanted a labor studies program. He didn't want a labor education center that did non-credit programs for labor union members. He didn't care about that. It was fine, but he wanted a studies program, and he expected me to do that, which is why we started a part-time class. John McCann taught the first one, and then we hired Sarah Ryan to teach the second one. But that's where that came from. That's where Sarah Ryan came from, that's where we got the deans to approve, I think, a four-credit or something academic class that we helped—we didn't hire that person, but it was kind of like our hire. The deans hired them, but nonetheless, we pushed for that, and it was approved. But that's all we did on that. That wasn't a major problem, I don't think, but Patrick wanted that.

I know what the big rub was with Olander. He was pretty much amenable to things. I brought him out to talk to the Teamsters and stuff like that, and he was an incredible speaker. He was just an unbelievable speaker. He just charmed the shit out of them. Whenever we did programs and stuff, we had all the diplomas signed by the President, and everybody got certificates from the Labor Center signed by the fucking President of the Evergreen State College. They were amazed, because most of the people, they got out of high school, but the idea of being in a college environment was brand new to a lot of them.

So, he was very helpful. So was Patrick. But there came a time in which I didn't talk to the press, because I believed that I did not represent labor, and so I would not talk to the press. A lot of times the press would come to Labor Education Center directors and say, "What's the situation [around the? 01:46:17] labor?" And they would talk their expertise. I figured that we were only about labor, but we didn't represent labor, and I wasn't a spokesperson for labor, so I never talked to the press about labor or strikes or whatever. Never.

But there was this one guy who interviewed me from the Guild Union of newspapers guys, and he did a three-part interview with me. I talked to him because he was a union member, and it was a union newspaper. It became this thing entitled "The Deal Is Dead." It said that the post-World War II deal with labor is gone—dead—any labor unions need to do something else. It laid out everything I thought about labor, and about the Labor Center, and the rest.

Zaragoza: To use the terms that we're using now, it's the labor has switched from the Keynesian period of the Deal, the Accord, into this neoliberal period . . .

Leahy: Yes, it was.

Zaragoza: . . . where that deal has been torn up.

Leahy: It's been torn up. The social welfare floor is torn up, the regulatory floor is torn up, and labor acceptance is torn up, so that deal is dead. And that was the title.

Zaragoza: What year was that, Dan, that that comes out? Is that late '80s, early '90s?

Leahy: Jesus, I don't really know. We've been in the Labor Center for a while, so it must have been mid-'90s or something. They really came after me after that.

Zaragoza: Organized labor, or Evergreen?

Leahy: Organized labor. They wanted me gone. They brought me into a hotel room, actually, in Snohomish in Everett one time, and pretty much threatened me. They wanted me to publicly rescind what I said. [exhales quickly] Frightened me.

Zaragoza: I'll bet.

Leahy: Anyhow, so they were definitely after me after that. I mean, people were saying that I didn't have any respect for their ongoing struggles, didn't recognize any ongoing struggles. People in Tacoma, some of those people. I don't know where I was going with that story.

Zaragoza: We were talking about the relationship of the Labor Center with Evergreen. And then, you didn't talk to the press, but there was this Guild article.

Leahy: Yeah. I can't remember. There was some meeting in which they brought Olander in, and they basically raked him over the coals for . . . I don't know whether it was because he appointed me. Actually, that's out of sequence. I don't know what it was, but I remember Olander getting completely ripped by Larry Kenney and the rest of them, and it was over me.

Zaragoza: So, some of the tension that you experienced with Evergreen was due to organized labor inciting it.

Leahy: Oh, yeah. I don't know that Evergreen really—other than the undergraduate stuff, did they care? I don't think they did. We brought a lot of labor support for Evergreen. There was a lot of labor support for Evergreen. We brought a lot of people during the summers. We had summer camps, we filled the dormitories. I don't really remember a lot of tension with Evergreen. It was more the Legislature wanted to get rid of us periodically, or sectors of organized labor wanted to get rid of us.

Zaragoza: Were you supported by colleagues? Were you embraced by colleagues? How did they feel about the Labor Center as an institution at the college that you all worked at?

Leahy: We weren't really that related, in some ways. We definitely had students as interns. I did independent contracts with students, because I could still do that. I didn't have any formal classes, but I

did independent contracts, I did internships, so I was still working with a lot of students. We hired students. But colleagues? I think probably one of the most interesting programs—I know there was this interest on the part of us integrating more.

One of the examples was with Sam Schrager. Sam Schrager was interested in having his students interview people, and we had just gotten through with this oral history. One of the first things we did when we organized in the Labor Center is we picked out the largest, most recent, and greatest strikes in Washington labor history. Then, we went and found people that were participants in them. We interviewed them in their homes, figured out what story they should tell, and then we brought them back to Evergreen onstage. I interviewed Dave Beck, actually, onstage. We interviewed Machinists, woodworkers, teachers, I think onstage, on panels. All that was recorded by those guys in the Media Center.

After that, we had all these people, and we knew their name, address and phone number, and Sam was interested in having his students interview people. So, we aligned with Sam, and we gave them the list of all these people, and his students went out and interviewed those people. Then they brought them back for a luncheon, I think, or dinner or something, at Evergreen, and introduced the person that they had been interviewing to everybody else. That was one of the richest things that I attended. I think Sam was a fairly new faculty member at that time, and that was really a great project that we did.

I have to tell you this one story. This young woman introduced this Longshore guy, and he stood up and he said, “I want to tell you all, you young workers, this story. There was a cowboy out there looking for work, and he rode into this ranch one time, and he said, ‘You got any work for me?’ The owner comes out and says, ‘Yeah, I’ve got work for you, and you can bunk over there, and I’ll pay you a certain amount of money. But before you start working for me, I want to tell you something about myself.’ And the cowboy says, ‘Well, what’s that?’ He said, ‘Well, I’m a man of few words. So when I give a whistle, I want you to come a-running.’ The cowboy said, ‘I’m really glad you told me that, because it turns out that I, too, am a man of few words. And so when you give that whistle, if you see me going like this, and shaking my head, it means I ain’t a-coming.’”

I thought that was one of the greatest stories ever told to a bunch of young fucking Evergreen students. And there were stories like that that went around the table, and I thought this was one of the greatest transfers of worker wealth to young workers that I’d ever seen.

We also did an extraordinary conference with Linn Nelson. Linn Nelson’s work was with the COSH groups in New York State, with the Occupational, Safety and Health groups. They’re called COSH

groups. So when she came to Evergreen, she had this real interest in labor and environmental relations, and we put on this big conference with Lynn. Helen Lee organized it. I think it was called Workers, the Environment, and something else. But we did that. That was another great example of the collaboration that was possible.

We did a lot of work with Marge Brown, and the people in the Media Center. We did a lot of video work. During the summer schools for union women, we structured it based upon cohort. Everybody was in a cohort named by a famous labor history woman. So, they'd learn to function in a group, and then the next day, we'd fill them full of information, and then the third day, they were supposed to analyze that information.

End Part 1 of 2 of Daniel Leahy on 8-29-17

Begin Part 2 of 2 of Daniel Leahy on 8-29-17

Leahy: Okay, so the first day was a cohort group—learn how to function in a group—a group of 10 women. Then, feed them full of information. That was the second, whatever the theme was. And then the third day was analyze and act. Act was always something that we built into every Labor Center thing. Every Labor Center thing was about history, political economy, and organizing. That was our pedagogy.

They always had to act on their analyses. The way they acted was they put on a 10-minute skit, and the person that helped us with that was Marge Brown. We did it in the studio, with Doug and the whole staff. Women had 10 minutes to go in the studio to set up, 10 minutes to shoot, and 10 minutes to get out. There was another guy there, I can't remember, with Doug [last name?]. Who was the guy who ran the Media Center for a long time? Anyway, he was great.

What they'd do is we'd get out of there and do other things. We did evaluations. Then these guys would put together the video, including background music. That night, we'd go into Lecture Hall 3 or 2 or something, and we'd show the videos on the big screen. [laughing] And we'd bring in wine, and all kinds of other stuff. We'd sit there drinking wine, and watch these women perform, and man, it was just incredible. So, the use of videos, and the use of that studio and stuff, was really an important part of Labor Center work.

They also produced a 30-minute movie on the role of the union steward for the Machinists Union project. We actually had an actor voiceover. We paid for a union woman to be the voice on that, and we produced a professional, 30-minute video on the role of the union steward for the Machinists Union, in that studio. So, we did a lot of work with the studio, with Lynn, and Sam. A lot of students, for sure, came through the Labor Center and did a lot of work with the students. So, we were active that way, I think, with Evergreen.

I can't remember other . . . you know, I gave talks, of course, periodically. People would ask me to give a talk, but I don't remember doing that many talks on labor in other classes. Maybe I did, I don't know.

Zaragoza: At some point, you transition out of the Labor Center. Maybe you want to talk about that.

Leahy: Yeah. When NAFTA started, we started doing tri-national work with the Labor Center. I organized, in 1993, a conference on NAFTA and the future of public education. Raised a lot of money, and brought 40 delegates from Mexico up. Actually, I was so frightened about money that I flew down to Mexico City, and I handed out airplane tickets.

We brought up 40 delegates from educational unions in Mexico, Canadian unions. Quebequois were there from Quebec. We had translation in three different languages. We had professional translators we flew up from Mexico. We did it in the Communications Building, for three days. At the end of that, we had this incredible program, but we had no mechanism to implement it.

So one day, I got a piece of paper from Pam Udovich, my great program secretary, and I said, "Pam, what does this number mean after my name?" And she said, "That means that you have two quarters of paid leave, Dan." I said, "Are you kidding me?" She said, "No." I said, "Okay, well, I'm gone."

I took a year off, and me, Bethany and our two kids went to Mexico—lived in Zacatecas, Mexico—and organized the Tri-National Coalition for the Defense of Public Education, with a conference of February of that year, the next year, and whatever. I think it is a rule, it said if you take your sabbatical, you owe Evergreen teaching. I felt it was probably inappropriate for me to come back and to continue to run the Labor Center, so I said, "I'm going to give up the Labor Center, and come back to the undergraduate curriculum."

Helen Lee became the director of the Labor Center, and when I came back, I went into the undergraduate curriculum and started teaching. I think my first class was with Stephanie Coontz in America 2000, about youth in America. So, I shifted to the undergraduate curriculum. I taught with you, taught with Jeanne Hahn, Chuck Pailthorp, Stephanie Coontz and Peter Bohmer. I don't know who else.

Zaragoza: What were some of the memorable programs that you did during that time?

Leahy: Teaching with Stephanie Coontz was certainly memorable. She was one of the hardest working faculty members I'd bumped in to. She was an extraordinary teacher, writing and analysis. She oftentimes would write more back to the students than they would write in their papers. She was truly extraordinary. And she was very famous at that time, because her book had come out, and she was on TV. She'd walk in with her kind of short straight skirt on, and her books, tea in one hand and books in

another, just intimidating the shit out of these students. It was just wonderful to watch. I used to imitate her.

Teaching with her was really a great way to enter into Evergreen. It was a freshman class. The great thing about that freshman class was that I actually got to watch freshmen. I never saw MPA students again, generally. But we taught that freshman class, and I'd watch the freshmen go through the next four years at Evergreen, not in my classes but just around campus. I would see them come in as themselves, kind of lonesome, and then the second year, they'd become whatever the current hit of the day was at Evergreen. Whether it was purple hair or whatever it was, they'd join in on that. The third year, you'd notice that they'd actually found something that they were seriously interested in, and they'd be into it. The fourth year, they were somehow themselves, and ready to go out into the world. It was really great to watch that.

That was one of the real benefits of teaching freshmen, even though my first lecture, I felt that I really had to give my best stuff, so I really worked hard on this first lecture. But the class—I think this was the class with Stephanie—started at 9:00 in the morning, and, of course, all these students were barely awake. I was giving this talk, and I noticed the students were like starting to lean over and go back to sleep. I'd say, "Hey, this is my best shit here! I want you to listen up!" [laughter] It didn't make any difference. They said, "We're trying, Dan, but we were up till 2:00 in the morning." So I never, ever did that again, start a freshman class at 9:00, or any class at 9:00. Teaching with her was really great, and then watching freshman students over the years, that was really fun.

I did a class on the WTO. We did that together, right?

Zaragoza: No, that wasn't you and me.

Leahy: That wasn't you and me? We did a class on the WTO, and I remember doing that class because I remember Evergreen students on the radio talking about how the WTO was some corporate conspiracy. I thought to myself, if those were my students, I'd be fucking embarrassed. So, I brought original documents—which I tend to do—to my class. I taught a course on NAFTA, and I made them read NAFTA.

I taught a class on the Patriot Act, and my students actually read the fucking Patriot Act. It was huge, but we broke it down into sections. We actually read the Patriot Act, and we actually NAFTA, and Chapter 11. I really believed in original documents, and we did that with the WTO. We read original documents out of Marrakesh on the WTO so students could understand the difference between the WTO and the GATT agreement, which was, in fact, substantially different. One of the differences was that the WTO was a governmental[ly] sanctioned, approved entity.

Zaragoza: Right, it's an organization as opposed to an agreement.

Leahy: Yeah. And a governmentally sanctioned one. There was nothing conspiratorial about it. It was public. The WTO class, almost all the class was up at the Seattle demonstrations in November '99. That wasn't us?

Zaragoza: No, I didn't get here until 2004.

Leahy: Okay. Well, that was an extraordinary event. This was a Political, Economy and Social Movements class, and typically, we wouldn't get into US capital until winter.

Zaragoza: Deal with the timing.

Leahy: The WTO was showing up in November. I went up to the meetings in June and July that were being held at the Labor Council, getting ready for the WTO in November, and it was really unclear what they were going to do. I said, "What I'm going to do is I'm going to back to Evergreen, and we're going to organize a conference in preparation for whatever you guys have in November."

So me and Stephanie Guilloud put on this two-day conference, in which every actor that was in the streets of Seattle was at Evergreen in October, prior to the November 30 event. Everyone was there. The direct action people were there, environmentalists were there, labor was there, Native Americans were there. Everybody and their fucking mother was there. Those people knew each other by the time street shit happened in November. That was super fun, and working with Stephanie Guilloud on that was really great. That was extracurricular activity, but nonetheless, we did that. Then I started giving talks on the WTO in the fall. Students, unbeknownst to me, after the seminar, they'd go out and start practicing direct action and shit. [laughing]

A lot of the leadership of Stephanie Guilloud, Rebecca Tilson, Steve Hughes, Jamie Erke. Those people, a lot of the leadership, certainly the people that organized the Convergence Center on Capitol Hill, those are Evergreen students from my class. People in charge of security, Evergreen students from my class. They were the ones that were on the ground in Seattle. There were bigwigs there, but those people held the ground, and they were Evergreeners. And I think only four of them went to jail. One of them, we lost, Sara Vekasi. But I now know where she is. She's actually down in West Virginia. But, you know, extraordinary.

Zaragoza: Would you talk about the program that went to Mexico?

Leahy: Sure. One of the things that I was able to do as a result of my work with the Tri-National Coalition was to learn about Mexico. I'd traveled to Mexico, I knew Mexico, so I thought, well, I could bring students to Mexico. I've been reading about Mexico; I have a huge library on Mexico. I was so

into Mexico, I was reading the North American Free Trade Agreement in Spanish. I have a copy of it.

[laughing]

Zaragoza: Have you ever compared translations? Does the English version say the same as the Spanish?

Leahy: You can never fucking tell in Spanish. It never concludes, it just goes on for fucking ever. I would know every word, but what was the meaning of that sentence? But no, I haven't.

I had a lot of contacts in Mexico, and then, I don't know where the idea came from, I just thought, well, I could have a class on the creation of the Mexican nation state. Because I thought the Constitution of 1917 was a very important document, and certainly, the revolutionary movement in Mexico was one of the first of the twentieth century. I don't know if this is true, but supposedly Maoists studied Villa's movements by train for the long march. I don't know. But it was a significant beginning of the twentieth century social revolution that got embodied in its constitution. There are things in the Mexican Constitution that don't exist in the United States. We never had a social revolution here. They had a political and social revolution, so I thought it was really important to see.

I designed this Mexican Nation State class, which was composed of two things. One, a month of travel from Chihuahua, following the route of Pancho Villa—whose name, by the way, was Doroteo Arango, named after St. Dorothy—and then down to Chautla and Anenecuilco to where Emiliano Zapata operated. And then, march in a May Day parade on May 1. And then go to San Patricio, which is on the coast of Mexico south of Puerto Vallarta, which was a place that I had been going to for the past 10 years before this class started, because of the history of the Battalion of San Patricio, which I learned about in Mexico. We argued that the reason that town was called St. Patrick's, or San Patricio, was because it was founded by former Battalion members.

We started doing projects with that community, so I knew it really well, and I knew that they were building a new preparatory, or high school, in that town. So I made arrangements with them that if I brought students down there, the parents of the people that wanted that school would put them up in their homes for one month, and I would give them money—that I charged the students—to the fund to build a new *preparatorio*.

So, I'd take the money from the students; I'd fly down to Puerto Vallarta; take the bus to San Patricio; transfer three or four thousand dollars to that fund; and then, I'd fly up to Chihuahua and meet my students.

I did that the first year. It had its difficulties, the first year, because it was the first time. I wasn't really geared into the *cronista* yet, but I learned about it during that time, that each town has a *cronista*

historian. So I kept track, and I met all the *cronistas* in the different towns that we'd go to. So, by the time I did it two years later, those *cronistas* were a part of our curriculum.

But the first one, nonetheless, it worked. Their Spanish wasn't that good, but while they traveled for a month, they were supposed to pick a project. When we got to San Patricio for the second month, they were supposed to present that project in the community hall in San Patricio. Those didn't work that well because their Spanish just wasn't that good. That was a difficulty.

But nonetheless, that was the model. The model was travel for a month, using the *cronistas* as guides. We'd start in Chihuahua. We'd go down to Hidalgo del Parral, where Pancho Villa was assassinated, and we'd go down to his place where he retired to, which was his kind of communal land thing, for his *dorados*. Then we'd go down to his battles in Zacatecas, and then down Guanequato, and then to Mexico City. Then we'd go out to where Emiliano Zapata was—where he was born, where he was killed—and out to his headquarters even, where he had his troops quartered. We went to those places; and then we came back; marched in the international celebration of Workers Day in Mexico. Of course, the Mexicans know about the struggle for the eight-hour day in the United States, and they know about the Martyrs of Chicago. They know all that better than the Americans. So, we'd march in the May Day parade, which was a million people in the streets every day of the International Solidarity Workers. Then we'd get on a bus, and we'd go to San Patricio.

San Patricio was pretty much maintenance stuff. It was, how's everybody doing? Negotiating sometimes with the families, or if there was some problem inside the families that we maybe had to switch to a different home. But I can't remember doing much more than that, that first year, about what that was. The community event didn't work that well. But the Mexicans were extraordinary hosts, of course. They would take people on little tours and stuff, but that was pretty much it.

Zaragoza: How many years did you do it?

Leahy: Two years later, I did it again. This time it was unbelievably organized. People had to read a book before they went. It was called *Mexico Profundo*. It was just an absolutely great analysis, written in the mid-'80s, by a wonderful anthropologist who died a young death, unfortunately. His book was extraordinary. It was about the fact that the indigenous part of Mexico was still there; that the mestizo was a nice nationalist concept, but, in fact, was not a reflection of what Mexico was. And when you go to Mexico, you see *Mexico Profundo* the minute you step across the border. So, they had to read that and seminar on it before they left.

The second thing I realized that they had to learn, which I learned from the first group, but the second group was we don't come to Mexico to drink. First time I saw that, they went out to dinner and I

wasn't with them, and I came into the restaurant and they were there, drinking away. I told the restaurant to cut them off. And I said, "We don't come here to drink. Maybe you think that's what you do in Mexico, but that's not what we're doing." Plus, by the way, all of them had credentials at the Battalion of San Patricio as cadets, so "You're representing the battalion, too, so none of this bullshit."

The second year was much better organized. I knew the *cronistas* now. They would all meet the students, they would tell the history of the local towns, and the relationship of that to the struggles. The research projects were much better, and it was a class that was designed for success. It really was. Chris Ciancetta really helped a lot. She was the international person at Evergreen. She helped us orient the students. They had to have letters of recommendation from Evergreen faculty that they were solid business. I didn't want any bullshit people down there. Anyhow, I can't tell you how well it was working. The literature was really great. We met in Chihuahua again, and we traveled.

I'll tell you this story. We were in Hidalgo del Parral with a *cronista*, and the *cronista* said, "We want you to march with the Mexican Army band and the rest of us in the celebration of Elisa Griensen Day." So we said, "Who is Elisa Griensen?"

Well, when Jack Pershing sent his troops down into Mexico to try and find Pancho Villa, as far as they got was Hidalgo del Parral—which is on the border of Durango and Chihuahua on the southern part of the border—there was a young German-Mexican schoolteacher who didn't believe that there should be an American flag posted on the main square, the Plaza de Armas, of Hidalgo del Parral. So, she went to the mayor, and the mayor was a Caranza supporter, and said, "We're in support of the American troops trying to find Pancho Villa, so the flag stays." So Elisa Griensen went back and got 25 grade school kids, and came out and started stoning the American troops. And the *cronista* would name the 25 students. It was incredible. He would go right down the list, in his brain. He'd memorized them.

What they do is every year, they have an enactment at the local school. [laughter] So I went back to my students and I said, "You know, we're going to march, and listen to this presentation." And the students said, "Jesus, we don't want to get stoned." I said, "You're not going to be stoned. Put on your Battalion t-shirts"—because everybody had a Battalion t-shirt. So, they all put on their Battalion t-shirts, and there's pictures of us marching along, right with the Mexican Army band right behind us.

We marched into this auditorium that was full of all of these people—students and parents and all this shit—and before the enactment, this teacher comes out and says, "Before we start the enactment, I want to tell you a story about the Battalion of San Patricio." [laughing] He says, "One of the reasons I'm doing that is because their descendants are here." [laughter] And he made us all stand up. [laughing] And these kids were completely floored. They stood up and everybody applauded them.

That sets the stage for what happened later, but nonetheless, that was incredible. We went down [to] Zacatecas, where Pancho Villa was, and Felipe Angeles, who was his French-trained artillery guy. Then we went down to [Juanowahto?], Mexico City. And then, we were going to march in the parade. I've marched in that parade for years. No big deal. There's no cops anywhere. A million people.

But two of our students, in their projects, they had gotten interested in this group who was fighting an airport, and they were from a village called Atenco, outside of Mexico City. I said, "Well, go out and talk to them." They went out there and talked to them, and came back and said to us that the Atenco farmers want us to march with them in the May Day parade.

Usually, I would check with my friends in Mexico to see if it was okay to march with somebody, but for whatever reason, I didn't. And I really didn't understand the battle that had been going on between the Atenco farmers—by the way, their position was "Emiliano Zapata, his revolution, gave us this community-owned land"—which is called the *ejido* system in Mexico—"and we ain't giving it up for a fucking airport."

My students came back and I said, "Okay, let's march with them. So we're going to meet them on a *reforma* somewhere." So we went out there—all students—and the Mexicans, they have a lot of these guys that are plainclothes that are cops or something—they came up to us and said, "You guys should probably move on, because there's some bad people going to show up."

We started getting dispersed, and the students all started walking away, and I don't know where I was. I guess I was walking away, too. We were headed back to this Zócalo, which is where the marchers go into, which is the main square of Mexico, in front of the Plaza de Armas, between the cathedral and the main national palace of Mexico. I think it's the largest square in Latin America.

I started walking back, and I hear this honking, and turn [around] and all my students were in the back of a pickup truck, with a bunch of bandanaed Atenco farmers with their machetes. Okay, so I got in the pickup truck. We get out near Madero Street. Madero is a very narrow street that empties into the Zócalo, and all the marchers go down Madero Street. Just before they get in, they wait a while, so there's empty space. The group, whoever the group is, runs into the Zócalo. So the Atenco farmers stopped, and then they ran into the Zócalo with about 200 machete-wielding Atenco farmers, and 17 Battalion of San Patricio members and their faculty member, [laughing] because I had told them that if we were going to march with them, let's put on our Battalion t-shirts.

There were two main questions in the Zócalo that day on the part of the national media. One of them was would the Atenco farmers get past the roadblocks that were set up to stop them from coming

into Mexico City? And, two, would they make it into the Zócalo? Not only did they get past the roadblocks, but when they ran into the Zócalo, they were running in with the Battalion of San Patricio—17 students and their faculty member. We became the major national fucking hit of the day on national TV, especially when the national TV people put a microphone to my students, and said, “Do you realize that you’re violating the internal politics of Mexico?” And my students said, “*Viva la revolución!*” [laughter]

So, we get back to the hotel where I’d stayed for the last 10 years. It’s owned by the Teachers Union. It’s right off the Zócalo. As I walk in, people are saying, “Dan, you’re on TV here.” [laughter] I told all the students, right then, the rules, which included things like don’t put this in writing. Anyhow, I went through the rules, and told them to stay in the hotel. The next morning—

Zaragoza: So you realized right away how serious this was.

Leahy: Yes, because of the national TV stuff. What they were saying was that we had come down to go join the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and that we had interfered with the internal politics of Mexico, which is a constitutional violation. That was the media rap. And then, of course, there were people outside our hotel; the bad people were there. So, I told everybody to stay in. One person didn’t, and came back extremely frightened.

Zaragoza: The bad people in terms of . . .?

Leahy: Undercover cops. I called up my Mexico friends, and they said, “Look, DF [Distrito Federal] is controlled by the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution], and so it’s not controlled by the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] or the PAN [National Action Party].” The PAN was in the national government at that time, Vicente Fox. “So, you’re okay. Don’t worry about it. No one will take you in Mexico City.”

We were going to San Patricio the next day. We got up, and all of us, except one person—who had decided to go back to the United States because she was pregnant, and didn’t think that she could stay and eat the food in the village for a month—she stayed, but the rest of us got on an early-morning bus and headed to San Patricio. You go through Guadalajara first, and then you keep going west.

We made it as far as just outside of Guadalajara, where we were stopped, and a large man in a federal officer’s uniform and a shotgun, came on the bus and said, “Them.” And he pointed to all the gringos. We got off the bus, and they started searching through our stuff to make sure that we had something, I don’t know, they saw some flier or something about the march—[unintelligible 00:32:09] or something—and then they put us in a van, and they drove us to the basement of the immigration

office in Guadalajara; held us there for a while, and then they put us back in a van. They drove us to the back end of the Guadalajara Airport.

I thought that we were going to be taken back to Mexico City, and that's when I actually got nervous. But, in fact, they put us in the back of an Aero Mexico flight, and with one custodian, flew us to Los Angeles. The student that waited, about 11:00 that day, a whole swarm of federal officers came into the hotel and swept her up. The fact that we left early, they just didn't get up early. Otherwise we would have been in Mexico City apparently. But they brought her in. She said she was pregnant. They forced a pregnancy test on her, and then sent her home. Eventually, she joined us. I didn't know where she was for three days. It was driving me fucking crazy trying to find her.

We came into LAX, and before we went through customs, I had everybody call. Because now, it's 2002, and I had no idea whether we were going to be put in jail or what when we go here. The custodian guy gave us back all our passports. We went through customs, and nothing happened. The customs guy said, "I heard there was some trouble in Mexico City. Welcome back," he said. [laughing] **Zaragoza:** You were expelled, that's what happened.

Leahy: Yeah. The paper said that we were expelled for engaging in activities not authorized by our visa. It didn't list what those activities were, and it was not under the prohibition on engagement of political intervention in the state of Mexico. So, we were not charged with a constitutional violation of interfering in the internal politics of Mexico. Our paper said that we had engaged in activities not authorized by our visa, which is a completely different chapter in the Mexican Constitution. So all the press saying that we had interfered in the internal politics of Mexico was not true.

We came back here, and the demand on the part of everybody—and there was consternation on the part of the Provost, who was a guy from Argentina or Chile or something—called me up and said, "We should probably talk about what's going on." I didn't disagree, but I was also busy with my students because we had to complete the coursework and the evaluation process.

To make a long story short, some of my students were, in fact, related to Mexico, and wanted to go back to Mexico. The demand on the part of the Counsel of Mexico was "You have to apologize for interfering in the internal politics of Mexico." I met with him and said, "If we write the letter, what do we get?" He said, "We'll see." And I said, "Well, that's not much of a bargain there." I wanted the expulsion annulled, and he said, "We'll see about that."

On the other hand, some of my students were . . . so, I wrote this letter, which was basically an apology for what we did in Mexico. I met with my students here at my house, and showed it to them.

They read it, and they were furious at me for writing such a letter, and said that while capital could flow across borders, why can't solidarity? And they would never sign a letter like that. [laughter]

I redrafted the letter, and said basically that we didn't go down there intending to march with the people of Atenco, but we were proud that we did. We learned a lot, and thank you very much. I sent that out to everybody I knew in the entire world. By that time, we had letters of support from practically every Latin American union condemning Mexico for their lack of hospitality, and in support of us walking with the Atenco farmers, and all this other stuff.

Meanwhile, when all those letters were coming in, there was over one month of letters into *The Olympian* saying what fools we were, and how little we knew about Mexico. My students knew more about Mexico than most Mexicans. They knew more about Mexico, and the Mexican law and constitution, than anybody that fucking lived in Olympia. But we were characterized as people who were kind of dumb Americans that didn't know what we were doing. That went on for over a month.

I never went to a faculty meeting in my life, but I did go to a faculty meeting in the context of this. By then, my class was done, and I had gotten all my anonymous evaluations, which I did every class. I basically tried to explain what happened to the faculty, and then I read from one evaluation that said, "If you ever go to Mexico with Dan, try and get evicted after you've had your home stay in San Patricio." [laughter]

I read that to the faculty, and I don't know whether they were pleased or not. But there were faculty that were saying that I had fucked up international travel. Not a lot, but some. But the thing that Evergreen did—the deans at that time, who I won't mention—took my Mexican Nation State class out of the curriculum for the 2004 period. In other words, my class was every two years. It took an enormous amount of organizational energy to get my class into the curriculum, in which I wasn't at Evergreen. I had money to travel, and my students and that program, how I moved the money. I had to be approved. It was an organizational feat to get a travel program into Mexico for two months.

But now, Evergreen had a curriculum. It was in the curriculum now, so that meant every two years, my class was going to be in the curriculum. So, in the midst of all this turmoil when I came back, the deans canceled—they were making the curriculum for 2004—they took my class out, and they said, "You're not going back." And I said, "We don't know if we're going back. We're in the middle of negotiating."

I negotiated to get that annulled for two years after 2002. We had appeals going on in Mexico. I raised money. I got in trouble for raising money, but that's another story. That was another thing that happened to me as a result of this.

When they took it out of the curriculum without even asking me, I wanted to leave Evergreen that day. Outside my office door was a huge whole wall of stuff I put up about different things, teaching or other things. I took all that down. I wanted to leave. I called up TIAA-CREF and said, "Can I get my money?" I wanted to leave. But I wasn't 65, and I couldn't get the healthcare stuff, so I ate it for two years. As soon as 65 came along, I quit. But I was ready to quit when they took my class out. You asked me about emeritus. That's why I didn't want emeritus.

End Part 2 of 2 of Daniel Leahy on 8-29-17