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Art Hallgren

**This is an interview with Art Hallgren, COPE director, Florida AFL-CIO. The interview was conducted in Tallahassee, Florida, on May 20, 1974, by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. The interview is from the Southern Oral History Program in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.**

pp. 1-3: Hallgren discusses Florida's labor school, mandated in the state's labor organization constitution. The school covers collective bargaining, new legislation and other topics of interest to labor organizations. He addresses the changes he has seen in Florida's political scene in the last 25 years, for example, new areas of liberalism in the urban scene. Hallgren talks about his service as director of COPE [Committee on Political Education] since 1961 and also how the movers and shakers of the Florida labor movement have tried to change the public's seemingly distorted image of unions. He wants to convey the concept that unions' interests are with the community at heart, as well as the interest of the working people. Hallgren attributes reapportionment as a factor in achieving that goal and the advent of public employees' collective bargaining.

pp. 3-5: Hallgren describes the growth of organized labor in the work force, but the growth isn't as great as union organizers would hope. For example, Cuban workers are not well organized, not as well as the Latin American local trade organizations. He provides the current membership statistics and the potential number of members that the Florida AFL-CIO would like to recruit. He hopes that the organization will have a newspaper at some point.

pp. 5-9: The interview's focus turns to the role that labor has played in state politics, such as endorsing candidates. Hallgren cites specific names that labor unions are currently endorsing. He feels that political endorsements put labor in the limelight.

pp. 9-10: Hallgren states that less than a third of organized labor in Florida is affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Part of this problem is due to international unions not following up on organizational efforts in many areas, such as service unions. He cites Disney's efforts in negotiating a master contract for all the trade organizations working at Walt Disney World.

pp. 10-14: Hallgren talks about COPE getting involved in statewide races and also on the local level as far as organization, but COPE lacks the money to help fund campaigns. He cites the recent election reform law--its advantages and disadvantages--requiring campaign funding to be reported. He also describes the change in candidates' perception of being endorsed by unions--many having previously seen this kind of backing as "the kiss of death"--to wanting open union endorsement now.

pp. 15-16: The conversation turns to Florida's election and right-to-work laws and COPE's need to educate people about their legal implications. Hallgren discusses some of the committees on which the officers of the Florida AFL-CIO serve--Migrant Labor Commission, Charter Revision

Commission, Apprenticeship Council, Governor's Labor Advisory Committee, etc., the latter committee advising on workmen's comp, unemployment comp, and other topics of interest to labor.

pp. 17-19: Hallgren discusses the percentages of black and Cuban membership in the AFL-CIO, and then breaks down those percentages into specific work force areas, such as service, labor, crafts, etc. Hallgren feels that the major influence of organized labor in local elections is not so much in the Miami, Jacksonville, and Tampa areas as in the rural settings, where the Florida AFL-CIO can "flex a much stronger muscle." He cites Reubin Askew's running for re-election as a state senator in Escambia County as an example of labor pushing a candidate at the last moment--and winning.

pp. 19-22: The interviewers direct attention to major issues coming up in the legislature in which labor has specific interests, such as improvement in workmen's compensation and unemployment compensation. Hallgren would like to see a bill that would be formula-based rather than dollar amount-based for workmen's comp. He would like to have restoration of tax exemption status for union property. And despite the ruling that agency shop legislation has been ruled unconstitutional, he would like to see that law in place rather than become involved in a fight to get rid of the right-to-work laws. He also states that the unions are interested in legislative issues that do not directly reflect labor's interests. He then cites the plight of the migrant workers and his disappointment in not getting them to organize and become a more permanent work force.

pp. 22-25: Hallgren gives examples of political candidates running for office in Florida whom the AFL-CIO endorsed. He feels that there are not enough liberals or those who have labor's point of view in either party. He talks about the screening process in getting AFL-CIO endorsement. Hallgren states that the AFL-CIO tries to work with industry prior to a piece of legislation of mutual benefit to both labor and management. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't.

pp. 26-29: Hallgren provides examples of the power of construction, mobile home manufacturers, and citrus lobbyists regarding legislation. He tries to expose labor's improved and approved image to those living in rural settings.

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Jack Bass: So, you are the only state that has the one week labor school?

Art Hallgren: Well, we are the only state that has it as a mandate in the constitution of the state's <sup>labor organization</sup>, that we are mandated by our constitution . . . .

J.B.: Is this primarily a political school?

Hallgren: No, it has politics involved, but it covers collective bargaining, new legislation, whatever is of interest to the participants. We try to get a feel of what they would like to have in the school and grind in whatever is of interest to them.

J.B.: I want to make sure that I've got the spelling of your name correct.

Hallgren: H-A-L-L-G-R-E-N.

J.B.: And you've been in Florida for how long?

Hallgren: We moved from New York in 1948, moved down in 1948. I started with Pan-American Airways in Miami as a mechanic there, aircraft mechanic in Miami.

Walter De Vries: That's the period of our book, from 1948 through 1974. So, when you moved down here, what are the changes that you have seen in

politics that have occurred in that twenty-five years?

Hallgren: Oh, there have been great changes. Dade was always the most liberal area, but we find now other areas of liberal persuasion springing up. We have more of a liberal aspect in Hillsborough and Polk County, plus Jacksonville. All the urban areas are much more liberal than they were. The legislature has changed greatly because of the growth in the state. We have a much more . . . it's still not a liberal legislature by any means, but it's much more liberal than it was. And it was in the hands of the so-called "Pork Choppers" when we came down here.

J.B.: You've been here how long, in Tallahassee?

Hallgren: Oh, I only come up here for the legislative session.

J.B.: How long have you been COPE director?

Hallgren: Oh, I've been COPE director since 1961.

J.B.: And you've been coming up every year since then, at least every legislative session?

Hallgren: Right. Oh, maybe there are a few that I've missed when I was busy doing other things, but in the main, everyone since 1961. But we have less of the drive now on the part of the enemies of organized labor, the enemies of labor, if you will, the opponents of labor, than we did before. They are beginning to understand. We've made, I think, great thorough in some of the rural areas getting these people to understand that labor people are not a bunch of goons that are going to come in and spoil everything and that we do have the interests of the community at heart as well as the interest of the working people. I think that we have seen some strides forward in that area.

W.D.V.: Was reapportionment the primary thing that . . . .

Hallgren: Yes, reapportionment was a great factor, and having the greater representation from the areas where we had the greater population. That doesn't hold true in every area, though. For example, Broward County is a very conservative area. A lot of retired coupon clippers live down there and they are very conservative. They have been that way in their voting. In Dade County, they have a lot of retired people, they are the people who retired out of the labor movement, mainly from New York, New Jersey, and the northeastern states. We find on the west coast with the retirees that we have a combination of both. We have some wealthy ones and some that come from a labor background, so we have a mix as far as retired folks are concerned. But now, with the advent of public employees' collective bargaining, we are finding a much greater interests and acceptance of organized labor as such in this state.

W.D.V.: Has organized labor as a percentage of the work force grown?

Hallgren: It has grown some, but not to the extent that we would like to see it grow and I . . . .

W.D.V.: What is it now?

Hallgren: I would say now that we have probably 40% of the work force here organized, in the potential, we have probably 40% organized.

W.D.V.: Is that the highest of the eleven southern states?

Hallgren: I don't know. I couldn't tell you. I don't imagine . . . .

W.D.V.: Has that remained pretty steady, or is it increasing?

Hallgren: Yes, it's . . . well, it remains pretty constant. One, we haven't had the unionization of many of the industries that come into Florida, especially south Florida, where we had this huge influence of the Cuban workers. They were not unionized as they came in. Unions tended to ignore them,

thinking that they were going to be a passing group and were not to be reckoned with. Now, unions, particularly the trades, carpenters for example, have two or three locals that are almost entirely Latin American in make-up. They have gone and organized these folks. The cubans when they first came, were taking any kind of jobs for any type of money. But they soon realized that they were being taken advantage of and decided that they had better find somebody to represent them. The trades suffered greatly in the Miami area in that they didn't organize the construction workers, the Cubans that came in, and some of them had capital and started small construction companies and they were just ignored by the unions involved, figuring that, "Well, they are not going to build anything too big." But, as they finished a motel or a small shopping center, then they had some more capital and they started to build larger complexes, and now, I would say that probably 60% of the small contractors in the greater Miami area are Cuban and are non-union. And this has had a big impact and provides a big problem for the union contractor in the area, because these people are able to come in with a lower wage scale and undercut some of the bigs. It's creating a problem.

W.D.V.: How many numbers are there in the AFL-CIO?

Hallgren: We have affiliated with us about 180,000 right now. We have a potential, according to the national figures, and we got this as a result of their going to a computerized system of registration and identification, we have a potential of nearly 300,000. So, we've got about a third or somewhere a little better than a third of people that should come aboard.

J.B.: Is there a labor newspaper as such in Florida?

Hallgren: No. We don't have a labor newspaper. We do, we just put a woman on the staff as our women's activities director, we put her on last year, and she and I put out what we call a COPE Monthly Report. That's the nearest thing that we have to a newspaper as such right now. It comes out

once a month and relates to the election issues, the candidates and anything that we feel is important on the, more or less, the political front. We do cover some of the general news, what is happening here or there, we're gradually, as best we can, working it into a more newsheet, something along the lines of what Barney Weeks has in Alabama. We don't have a newspaper. We've talked about having a newspaper, but we never have . . . .

J.B.: Could we just get some copies of that before we leave?

Hallgren: I have one that just came in today. This is the latest one . . . .(tape turned off)

J.B.: What's the distribution of the newsletter?

Hallgren: Unfortunately, we are not mailing this except to our, we run our mailing list on all the local unions that are affiliated plus all the delegates to the last convention. And that amounts to about, I would say, to a mailing of around 2,000. We would like to expand that, but we've had some resistance. One, because our mailing list is not exactly as it should be and we are hoping to use the national AFL-CIO computer bank to print out labels for us once we get the computer information updated. We hope to be able to use that and order labels from AFL-CIO and make a mailing to a total membership. We think this is important to do. You can keep that and I can get more to you if you want it. De Leon just brought that from our Tampa office, as I say, it's probably being in there today.

J.B.: What kind of role does both your office and labor play in state politics in Florida? Do they endorse candidates?

Hallgren: Yes. We're having a real internal rumble right now in my endeavor to hold a conference to endorse candidates for the first primary. I feel that it is important that we do this. This is the time and it gives you the chance to pick somebody. You might not pick a winner. But, we have a

real problem because of the race for the United States Senate. We have several very friendly candidates in there. We have Dick Stone, who has always been a labor endorsed candidate. He's currently the secretary of state. He has announced and is running for the U.S. Senate, the seat that Ed Gurney now holds. We have Richard Pettigrew, a state senator, who has always been a good friend of labor, has announced and is running for the U.S. Senate seat. We have Bill Gunther, who is Congressman from the Fifth District, he has announced and is running for the same seat. And that's the major ones. And we have Mallory Horne, who is the current president of the senate, who is presiding today in the state senate. He has announced and is running. He will be a very conservative candidate, I wouldn't believe that we would find ourselves in the posture of endorsing him, but that's within this room, because if he heard us say that right now, we'd be in trouble. He has the power of life and death over any legislation and that's why we are keeping rather quiet until after the session ends in two weeks. The session ends in May.

W.D.V.: Do other COPE committees endorse in the first primary?

Hallgren: Some do, and some don't. We did in the last general election. It was the first time that Florida did endorse in the primary and we had some misgivings about it, but on the whole, it proved to be the best move that we ever made. It really put us in the limelight. We intend to have a COPE conference. We have a very late filing date, you don't have to file for office until July 23, which puts it pretty far away and we try to guess, if you noticed in that sheet list, "Hold the Line," you find our affiliates starting to support one candidate or another candidate and this is giving us problems. So, we are trying to get them not to commit themselves to any

candidate until we can hold such a conference. I doubt sincerely whether we would require a two-thirds majority of delegates of candidates in attendance for endorsement, that we would require the two-thirds vote. I don't envision, unless something very dramatic happens, any one of the candidates being able to capture two-thirds of the vote. So, I would assume that at least in the senate race, we would probably end up with no endorsement in that particular race. But I think that in the governor's race there is no question that we would endorse Reubin Askew, the incumbent, for re-election.

J.B.: Did they endorse Askew the last time?

Hallgren: We didn't in the primary, no. There again, we had several friends and he was not our choice in the primary. We endorse Chuck Hall, who was then the metro mayor and seemed to be the most likely candidate. He was well known, a lot of money and seemed to be a man that was going to go. And at that time, as you probably heard, it was "Reubin Who?" Nobody knew. We knew Reubin Askew, because he had been a good friend of ours in the senate, he came from Escambia County, Pensacola and was just not well known. The same was true of Lawton Chiles, nobody knew Lawton. We told them both, as friends, "You don't have a chance." You know, "Reubin Who?" Nobody knew them. "Walking Lawton." Who knew Lawton Chiles. But as Lawton started to make his walk, I realized that he was gathering a million dollars of publicity every day without spending a dime, because newspapers and media were covering every town that he would go through and he was headlines in every paper as he went around the state. And he captured the imagination of the people and really went in and he's been a good senator. And the same with Reubin, once the primary was over, then we did endorse Reubin Askew in the run-off; but we didn't endorse him in the first . . . only because we didn't think that

he had a chance. We liked him, he was friendly and a good candidate, but we just didn't think that he could survive the run-off, survive the election to get in the run-off. But he surprised everybody and he has been a very good governor as far as we are concerned. Probably the one that we have been closest to of any of the governors that I can remember. Certainly would like to see Gurney out. By his own doings, we would certainly like to see him lose out in the election. Personally, I would like to see him stay in the office and have him as the opponent. I think that he would be the easiest to beat. I'm very much concerned, there's a very sharp gal who is now serving with the public service commission, Paula Hawkins, Republican. She's a member of the Republican National Committee and a very, very attractive woman, very articulate and she did win a statewide race and gone on to public service. And she's used this seat to project herself in the public eye and she comes on as a sweet little housewife, you know, but she has no more seen a broom, I would say that the only broom she has seen is the one she rides when she is going back to the house at night. She's a witch. She's going to be a devil to beat, though. They had this trucker's strike and she made sure she had news coverage and she got up on the back of the flatbed trailers and telling the drivers how much she was concerned with their plight and how much she was going to do at the public service commission to help them out, she comes on like a gang buster. So, whoever wins, if she is a candidate and is in the general election, whoever the Democrat is, I think that they will have a tough job to beat her. I wouldn't take odds on that one at all. I'm very much concerned about her. So, I hope Gurney stays in, because she is set, now, she may change her mind, July is a long way off, but she has said that if Gurney seeks re-election, she will not oppose him, but I don't know, I just read the cards a little differently than that. She may change her mind when

she sees him having some problems. There are the financial problems that he is having right now and the legal problems that he's having.

J.B.: What percentage of organized labor in the state is affiliated with AFL-CIO?

Hallgren: Oh, I would say again, less than a third of what our potential is. We are picking up, though. And a great deal of the problem is that the international unions are not following up in many of the areas. We are in a difficult area to service, they just haven't given the groups who want to organize, it's not for a lack of people wanting to be organized, it's a lack of organizational effort on the part of the various international unions. Now, when Disney came in, they built Disneyworld 100% union, but Disney said that he wanted unions on his property, but he would not deal with half a dozen different unions, he didn't want any jurisdiction disputes. So, they formed for the first time, to my knowledge, a council of the building trades and they agreed to a general contract with all the trades, of course with varying scales for the different skills, you know, separate clauses for the different crafts and trades, but they negotiated a master contract for all the trades. Once the place was built, they did the same thing with the service trades. They had various unions, the hotel and restaurant workers, the service employees, oh, you name it, they had more coming in and wanting to represent the service employees. And Disney again said the same thing, "I'll sign a master contract and you will all work under one contract with various provisions for each different group as it relates." And they have a council now of service employees. It has worked out well for management, any fights that come up, the unions have to go outside, talk to a member of middle management of Disney. A while back, a good friend of mine, I knew him from the mechanical fields, and he said, "It's really funny, Art. We have a dispute, come up and Disney says,

'O.K., you settle the dispute and come up and tell us what you want to do.'" So, it really takes the burden off management's back in this instance. But as I started to say, there is no lack of interest in unions, unionization, but there is a lack of organizers in this state to do the job. There is a growing interest now, almost everybody is getting interested now, since we have this provision in the constitution that was put in there when they revised the state constitution, that public employees. they wrote it into the same clause that we have our so-called "right to work law", and they added to the right to work language that public employees shall have the right to bargain collectively. Since then, they have been trying to draft guidelines. Well, this session, they will probably succeed in passing guidelines, after about five years of battling over it. But the various internationals have come in and are forced now to organize the public employees. The AFT has stepped up its efforts, the firemen and the oilers are in here organizing service employees, the carpenters are interested in the service employees, they are all forming arms of their various organizations and sending the organizers in to organize the hospital workers, the service employees in the various state, county and municipal entities.

W.D.V.: I may have misunderstood. I thought you said that 40% of the work force is organized and you are saying now a third. Did I misunderstand you?

Hallgren: No, we were talking about the total work force, how many went to work.

W.D.V.: Well, of the total work force, what part is organized, what percentage is?

Hallgren: I would say about a third.

W.D.V.: About a third?

Hallgren: Yeah, about a third. Forty was high, a third is probably more realistic.

W.D.V.: Does COPE get involved in statewide races and the state legislature?

Hallgren: Yes.

W.D.V.: And that's about it?

Hallgren: We get involved in the national . . . .

W.D.V.: I know, Congress, but any below that?

Hallgren: Yes, at the local body, our central bodies take action in county commissions, city commission races, mayor's races.

W.D.V.: In the statewide races, what kind of assistance do you give?

Hallgren: When a central body makes the determination that they are going to back a certain council member or certain people from their area, if they request us, we will make a mailing for them, listing the candidates with open doors. All they have to do is send us a letter and we will give them the mailing with no charge to them as an affiliated organization. If it is a real important race to them, we will go in and help organize their volunteer women, setting up phone banks and doing things like that to help the candidates that they endorse. We don't give as much financial help as we would like to, because we just don't have the funds, you know. We are alledged to be very rich by our opposition, but we don't have the money. But I always contend that we do have the votes if we put them to work.

W.D.V.: Well, do you contribute in the state legislative races?

Hallgren: There again, it's more of an in-kind sort of contribution than actual cash contributions. Now, we have, this past lastyear, an election reform law that is a very stringent one, that severely restricts and limits the

activities in which we can take part without reporting. We can do any in-house work, you know, with our own membership without reporting, but as soon as we start doing anything directly for the candidate that involves monetary expenditure, we have to report as a committee of continuous existence, we have to report to the secretary of state, to the director of elections and to the county court clerk, exactly how much was spent and we have to have prior permission from the candidate before we have to make any expenditures. That would include printing bumper stickers or anything like that. We have to have his approval and he has to report it and we have to report it.

W.D.V.: How do you feel about that law?

Hallgren: I think that it's going to be rather restrictive. It's got its good points and its bad points. It was aimed, the intention of it, was to get at these committees that were formed a month before election and would go to a candidate and say, "Mr. Jones, we will endorse you, but we have to have \$500 for a newspaper ad in order for Citizens for Better Government of Leon County to support you." In other words, they were taking money from the candidates and actually it was a racket. And the legislation was particularly for that, but once they wrote down language that would cover that, they found that it was all encompassing. It included any committee that did any kind of activity for any candidate. We recommended some specific changes and we are hoping now that the change will pass that will make the recording procedure easier. We are not afraid to report, our books are open anyway, for anyone to inspect. But the recording procedure was quite complex and we are concerned what it will mean to a local union, for example, if they get involved in a campaign and fail to report, they can find themselves in trouble, but they can also get the candidate in trouble if they spend money without notifying him ahead of time. Because he is held to be responsible for any action taken by

anybody for him, which we think is rather unfair. For example, if you were running for office, if I really wanted to sabotage you, I could simply run out and take a full page add and I could report it and you would fail to report it and you would be in trouble. I could report it to you after the fact, maybe while it was going to the press and you could say, "No, no, I don't want it." We find some candidates around the state that are still a little reluctant to advertise the fact that they are being supported by organized labor. But this has lessened. That's one change I've found since we started in in 1961. We had a lot of candidates who would come in the back door and say, "We want your support, but don't publicize it." We find now, in fact, we have pretty much adopted a stipulation that if you don't want to be publically known that we are supporting you, then forget about it, you know. If we are not worth mentioning in your report, then we don't want to support you. If you are ashamed about us, then forget about it.

W.D.V.: Is that campaign expenditure law the toughest in the country as far as you are concerned?

Hallgren: I think that it is one of the toughest. I just talked to Washington about a half hour ago and they are very concerned about it.

W.D.V.: Is it the toughest in the South?

Hallgren: Yes, I would say so.

W.D.V.: But you don't know about across the country?

Hallgren: I would say that it is one of the toughest if it isn't the toughest. It really is a very strict law and I have been growing grey hairs over it, not so much for our part as the state organization, but again, if you noticed in that newsletter, and I told our gal to stress it not to make any contributions without first contacting me. Because they can get themselves

in a jam. And it provides some pretty severe penalties, fines and so forth. It does put the candidates in jeopardy too.

W.D.V.: Does it have any teeth?

Hallgren: Yes.

W.D.V.: It does?

Hallgren: Yes. In addition to that, it sets up a, oh, they call it . . . it would be a panel that is composed of members of both parties and then a chairman appointed by the governor and they are charged with the responsibility of investigating any alleged violations of the law. And I can just see how a group like this could really go a witch hunt, even though you have representation from both parties and supposedly an impartial chairman. You could still get into an awful jam, somebody wanted to really harass you with it.

W.D.V.: You said that one of the major changes is that people now want the open union endorsement. Is there anybody left that doesn't want it? Who sees it as the kiss of death?

Hallgren: Well, there are still some in some areas of the state and I think that it's probably true that . . . .

W.D.V.: How about statewide?

Hallgren: Statewide, no. Statewide, they are willing . . . the governor; for example, is very proud and pleased to have our support, as well as most . . . .

W.D.V.: The cabinet?

Hallgren: All of the cabinet. And we supported them all openly and they brag about the support that they had from organized labor. In fact, I sometimes worry about our governor, you know. He is constantly under attack, as far as big business is concerned. One of his first and foremost programs was to pass the corporate profits tax, which was very unpopular, but he pushed it through and we helped him push the referendum through. We worked hard on it. By the

way, that's another thing. This election law addresses itself not only to candidates but to the issues. For example, if we were involved in a big right to work fight now, trying to get rid of the right to work law, we would have to report any money, as would our opposition have to report any money, that is spent on an issue. It doesn't apply to voter registration or get out the vote, but it does apply to an issue. The strange thing, it is really funny, I suppose, in a way. The first group that really got themselves caught in the trap when the law was passed was the Leon County Chamber of Commerce. They were out plugging for a road bond issue and they should have known, of all people, right here in the capital county, they found themselves in violation of the law. They hadn't reported to the secretary of state and they hadn't reported to the clerk of the court their expenditures on behalf of this issue. They more or less dropped it because the law was new, but they got their wrists slapped publically. Not that they did it illegally, but there are many groups that are really on thin ice right now. They don't realize that the law is for all intents and purposes on the books and in practice. That it is, in fact, law and anybody who goes out and does any endorsing or working on an issue right now could find themselves in trouble if somebody went to this board and reported a violation. So, it's something that we are very concerned about, again, not so much for us, we feel that we are pretty much aware of what we can and can't do. I'm planning some sessions to go around and meet with the various central labor groups to explain in depth and maybe get the author of the bill, Representative Martinez, to travel along with me to have him, someone from the secretary of state's office maybe, to go along and explain the recording procedure so that they don't get themselves in trouble.

W.D.V.: Are you mounting a campaign, are you going to work?

Hallgren: No, not this time.

W.D.V.: Do you intend to?

Hallgren: No, not right now. You see, ours is one of the constitution, under the laws and titles of the constitution, we would have to have one resolution passed by two-thirds of the legislature . . . .

W.D.V.: And then a referendum?

Hallgren: And then a referendum vote of the people. And I would be very, very reluctant to put it out as a test right now and try to get a repeal, because the very nature of the name, "right to work." It sounds so, you know, much like motherhood. People just don't understand that it doesn't give anyone the right to work, it doesn't do anything of the kind. And I think that we would certainly lose the battle without a very, very vigorous educational program. We would have to spend a lot of money to get it going. Because we have found even in local unions where they have run some secret ballot polls, "Do you think that the right to work laws are good laws or not?" We've had some good union members go to the meetings, they are usually pretty good members, fairly well informed, and we've had one union meeting with 60% of the people voting in the meeting saying that the right to work law is a good law. They just don't understand it, it's implications and the problems that it can cause.

W.D.V.: Do you or the president or any of the officers of the AFL-CIO serve on any of the state boards or commissions?

Hallgren: I'm on the commission, the Migrant Labor Commission, have been for about five years now. It's a joint legislative commission. President Harris served on the charter revision commission. He served on that. Our secretary-treasurer has served on the apprenticeship council, which is a joint

administrative group, management, labor and government. And I served on the governor's labor advisory committee, which is a standing committee. There were ten of us on that, the president and I both served on that. He meets with us, either he or his staff or aides meet with us quarterly to bring us up to date with what is going on, gets suggestions from us, input, particularly before the legislation on what changes we wanted to see in workmen's comp, unemployment comp, that kind of thing. So, we are active in that area. And of course, we are interested. In fact, there was an election committee meeting this morning where they were amending some of the election laws. We are trying to keep track of what they are trying to do to the election laws. Again, I have hopes that we will be successful in making these changes that I talked about.

W.D.V.: What percentage of the organized work force is black?  
Or Cuban?

Hallgren: I would say probably 15%.

W.D.V.: 15% of the AFL-CIO is both black . . . .

Hallgren: Or Cuban?

W.D.V.: How does that break down, black and Cuban?

Hallgren: Probably 10% black and 5% Cuban or so. Not that a lot of the Cubans aren't in areas that could be organized or should be organized, they are just not union, I mean, they are in the force. For example, the garment industry in Miami used to be entirely union. It had a lot of Spanish speaking people, but not Cubans. But when the Cubans came in, they set up their own shops and took over, I would say, at least 80% of the garment work in the Miami area.

W.D.V.: Are there prodominantly black unions and Cuban unions, are or they part of other . . . are they integrated?

Hallgren: Most of the . . . well, it varies now. I would say that most of the Cuban unions are predominantly Cuban, like I mentioned that the *unions* are 90% in the Dade County area. The blacks are integrated particularly in the industrial type of unions. You have them pretty mixed, the communication workers, the air line people, you have a pretty fair mix there. Not as high as a percentage as there probably should be, as the blacks would like to see. But there is a mix there. A lot of your crafts are still lagging behind, the exception would be the brickmasons, they have quite a few blacks. The labor force is almost prodominantly black. Your longshoreman are predominantly black. Some Spanish in both organizations, but mainly black laborers and longshoremen. Very few whites. Your service trades, the hotel and restaurant workers, I would say they are 90% Cuban. They used to be black. They displaced the blacks in that particular area. The taxi drivers are almost exclusively Cuban in the Miami area. Clerks in stores, where there used to be blacks and whites, almost all Cuban now in the Miami area.

J.B.: Is the major influence of organized labor in local elections in Dade County, Duvall and the Tampa area?

Hallgren: I would say, no, I would say that our real impact, I feel, is in a lot of the rural areas. I think that we can flex a much stronger muscle in rural elections than we can in the urban areas. Because we do have a tighter group, we can zero in on a candidate or group of candidates and win with them, if we have a united labor operation. I can give you a classic example. When Governor Reubin Askew was running for re-election as a state senator in Escambia County, he called me one night, the night before election. And he said, "I'm in trouble over here. If the labor folks don't get out and vote for me tomorrow, I'm not going to win. I won't come back to Tallahassee as a senator." And so, I said, "We will see what we can do." So, the next

morning I got on the phone and called all the business agents that I knew in Escambia County and told them to be sure and get their people out, that it was going to be a close race and we wanted to see Reubin Askew returned to the senate. Well, we were successful and he has never forgotten that and even since he has been governor, he's said, "I probably wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for what you did for me when I was back running for that senate seat." So, I think that in instances like that, it proves to me at least, the fact that we can be very effective in rural areas. You take a town like Palatka where they have a paper mill and I would say that probably 80% of the people in in Palatka are union or have union connections . . . . (tape turned off due to interruption by telephone)

J.B.: How about in the legislature? What are the major issues coming up that labor has a specific interest in?

Hallgren: Well, of course, the one thing that we are always interested in is the improvement of workmen's compensation and of course, unemployment compensation. We are trying now, and we are within reach of a formula concept on workmen's comp instead of a dollar amount. We are trying to tie this to 66 2/3% of the average weekly wage in the state. So that when the wages go up, the compensation will automatically rise with the wage and we won't have to go back every legislative session and, you know, with hat in hand and beg for another ten dollars to keep up with the cost of living. One of the other things that we are vitally concerned with in this particular session is the restoration of our tax exemption status that we enjoyed for a number of years and that we lost two sessions ago. Union profits were tax exempt, at least that part of the union profit that was only used for meetings and for office space. I mean, if we rent it out, naturally, we would expect to pay taxes on it. That exemption was removed two sessions ago in a last minute bill that we

just didn't have our eye on and it went through and removed our exemption. But at the same time, it removed the exemptions for all the Elks Clubs, the Masonic Order and everybody else. So, it caused a big furor with all organizations, all fraternal organizations lost their tax exemption status on their real property. And since then, all of us have been working toward getting that restoration of tax exemption. However, this session, the bill went through real early and it only covered fraternal orders, it didn't cover anybody else in giving them back their tax exempt status. And that was signed into law almost before anybody realized that it happened. But we are trying now in the last days of the session to get unions back on that particular role of the tax exempt status for union property as a non-profit operation. Whether we will be successful on it, I don't know. That's why we were kind of busy this morning. If we don't get it out of committee today, our chance of getting it is almost impossible.

J.B.: How about agency shop legislation?

Hallgren: Agency shop has been ruled unconstitutional. There was a test case between Food Fair and one of their employees. They had an agency shop agreement and it went to the supreme court and the supreme court held that under the state laws, the constitution as written, the agency shop was not legal in the state of Florida. Now, some states do have right to work laws and can have agency shops, but it was outlawed in Florida by the supreme court decision. This is something that we have argued and we have had some receptive ears as far as the legislature was concerned, on that portion. They feel that it is only right if a person is getting the protection of a union, they should pay their fair share. Not be obliged to join or pledge allègiance to, but certainly pay their freight as far as paying for the organization. And there are a surprisingly growing number of legislators who would be willing

to listen to that kind of an argument. So, I think that we may find that to be the route rather than an all out fight to get rid of the so-called right to work laws. It will be an easier route anyway. And that would certainly accomplish as much for us as we need.

J.B.: In dealing with the legislature, you concentrate your efforts more or less primarily, and almost exclusively on those type of issues that you feel are directly related to union members, such as the ones that you've described?

Hallgren: No, we were very much interested in the extension of home state exemption. We have a home state exemption in Florida for the first \$5000. This year they upped it to \$10,000 for people over sixty-five. We were very much in favor of that. We are always looking for tax reforms. We supported the governor's proposal on corporate profits tax. We feel that a better spread of the tax burden is important to all the people, not just the working people. And when we are talking about workmen's comp and unemployment comp, we are talking about every worker, not just the union worker. So, I don't think that any of the issues, except for possibly the right to work, and even the right to work is not a labor-union problem, it's a problem for a worker who wants to get an organization in and finds it difficult, not impossible . . . .

J.B.: I didn't really mean issues limited to organized labor. I meant primarily economic issues, taxes, workmen's comp, is there a state minimum wage law in Florida?

Hallgren: No, we tried to get a state minimum wage at several sessions. We proposed a dollar minimum wage and we had one legislator say, "I don't have a man working for me that is worth more than 40¢ an hour. I move that we

table the bill." And that was the end of minimum wage. So, we haven't really seriously tried to get a minimum wage, we feel that the federal law has pretty much taken care of the majority of workers. We are interested in the plight of the migrant workers, we have quite a few migrants. That's why I have a great interest in this migrant labor commission that I serve on, investigating not the wages but the conditions and so forth that these people have to work under. We feel that this is a very important endeavor for the state. In fact, we had a program going a while back and it fell through, I was very disappointed. We had worked with the Laborer's International Union, they sent staff down here, even one of their vice-presidents. And our thought was to organize the migrant workers into the Laborer's Union and then when there were low lulls in the harvesting and picking operations, they could be used as common laborers on the building construction sites. This would tend to upgrade them and move them out of the migrant stream and make them a more permanent work force. And it looked like it was going to go and suddenly the Laborer's International lost interest or ran out of organizing money or something and they whole thing just blew up and that was the end of it. But I was very disappointed in that, because we felt that this was an area in which we could really do a job in helping these people. Sinc

J.B.: Since you've been in this job, how many Republican candidates do you recall that you have endorsed, the AFL-CIO endorsements?

Hallgren: Two that I know of. We helped elect a Senator Glissen in this last election. By the way, we were really taking a big chance, the Democrat was strongly supported by the governor, but we felt that Glissen was the better man for us and we supported him and he was elected. There again, it was the effect of a rural effort.

J.B.: He is from where?

Hallgren: Eustace. And he has been a very good senator and very friendly to organized labor. And we did endorse . . . well, probably more than two have gotten endorsements, but I was thinking in terms of two that we have gotten elected. We helped elect a Republican in Broward County, this wasn't very difficult to do because Broward tends to be Republican and this was a very liberal Republican. We helped him get elected. The problem is that we don't find enough people who are liberal or take a good view of labor's point of view in the Democratic party, much less the Republican. That's our big problem.

J.B.: Who is the Republican in Broward?

Hallgren: His name was . . . oh, let me think now.

J.B.: That's all right.

Hallgren: I can't think of it right now. Senator Glissen is the one that stands out in my mind, you know, statewide. We probably will . . . let me put it this way, it wouldn't surprise me to see us endorse a Republican in some of these races that we have coming up this year. Again, we don't know who the candidates are going to be. We find ourselves with this cabinet . . . if you have been following Florida news at all, you find that we have already lost the Commissioner of Education through indictments and the Comptroller is under investigation right now. There is a shadow hanging over the state Treasurer's office, so we just don't know what is going to happen in the next few months . . . .

(End of side A of tape)

Hallgren: . . . that's basically the . . . .

J.B.: Do you interview candidates for endorsements?

Hallgren: Yes. What we did the last time, we had an endorsement conference. The executive board of the AFL-CIO sat down with candidates but prior to that, I sent to each candidate a registered letter inviting them to the screening session, also a questionnaire for them to answer. And we put general questions of interest to us and to the state and they could answer them, expand on their answers if they wanted to. And we requested that they return them and also appear before the screening committee to refer to the questions and make statements. And we had a pretty good response to that. And we invited Republicans as well as Democrats. We invited Claude Kirk. He claims that he never got the invitation, but . . . .

J.B.: He said that he would not come to that?

Hallgren: No, I know that he got the letter, because I received the returned receipt for the registered letter. That's why I sent them registered, so that no one could claim that they didn't get the letter. I still have it in my files, where he claims that he was never invited, but he was. He didn't show. We knew that we weren't going to endorse him, but we felt that we ought to give him the courtesy, as we would in this upcoming screening. We would invite every candidate, no matter whether we liked them or didn't like them or anticipated that they were going to be very unfriendly or not, we still give them the courtesy of appearing and of hearing him out, or her out.

J.B.: To what extent do you . . . I guess that communicate is what I'm really interested in, with business representatives in terms of pending legislation?

Hallgren: We contact them, you might say year around, because we have a very unique system in Florida now. We have a committee system, the legislature is made up of standing committees. Every committee is a standing committee in the legislature and the chairman of that committee can at any

time during the interim between sessions call committee meetings and hear and discuss and act on legislation and then when the session opens they can come in with bills they have already heard. They can call a committee meeting in Dade County or Leon County or any county they want. But at their will, they notify all parties that they believe would be interested and they ususally make it a matter of public record by advertising the fact that they are going to have a meeting. And we try to have representatives there. If it is a bill of mutual interest to labor and industry, then we contact the industry people and talk to them about what their view is on the legislation and try to, as best we can, hammer out our differences beforehand so that we can go and present to the legislature a more or less united front. We are not always successful, but we try.

J.B.: How about workmen's comp, this move to try and get workmen's comp on a formula basis? How would it operate?

Hallgren: You mean so far as labor and industry?

J.B.: Right.

Hallgren: We have gotten cooperation of the lobbyists of associated industries and others in this particular interests. There are just a few hang-ups that they have. One is the inclusion of migrant labor. They were upset about that, they had some qualms. I don't know why, because most of them that we find were statistics that were provided by the departments that were involved showed that probably 80% were already covered, were already under insurance or were under workmen's comp, but the employer found that it was to his advantage rather than running the risk of being sued, that he did provide workmen's compensation coverage. But there are just a few minor hang-ups from our point of view now, and management's point of view. We have come close to what you might say is an agreement.

W.D.V.: Is the associated industries group the most powerful industry or business group in the state?

Hallgren: Probably. It would be a tie between them and some of the construction . . . the road builders particularly, are a very powerful organization. So are the mobile home people. They are probably the most powerful, I would think. Try to get some law passed against or about mobile homes, and you really find this place goes afire. They are very, very powerful as an interest, because there are so many mobile homes in the state of Florida. And we've tried in conjunction with other consumer groups, we have tried to get legislation, to support legislation to get regulations on construction and tie downs and so forth of these mobile homes. It's almost impossible. They really lobby you to death, let me tell you, anything that we try to introduce . . . .

W.D.V.: Is the source of their power their campaign contributions?

Hallgren: I really don't know what tactics they use, but I do know that they have out here somewhere in the woods a whole complex of mobile homes that are made available for any legislator that wants to have a place to stay during the session. I know of one session, I don't know if it is in existence in this particular session, but they had around the clock steak and bar service any time that you wanted to go out there. You could go out there at two-o'clock in the morning and get a steak two inches thick and any kind of drinks that you wanted to have, served by the most attractive girls that I've ever seen in my life. This is part of their lobbying effort, I would assume. And I can't prove any of this. I do know that they had these homes there and I know that the mobile home industry had placed them there. But the terrible part about this mobile home thing is that under the existing law,

trailers are rejected in Georgia. Georgia state law refuses them to be allowed to be placed in Georgia and what is not allowed can be trucked down and placed in Florida. And you can ride around these mobile home parks and you will see a little Georgia seal on them saying that they are made in the state of Georgia, but they are not allowed to be left in the state. The seal doesn't say that, but they are made in Georgia and trucked down here. Yet, there are mobile home construction firms in Florida. They are allowed to set up rejects from other states in Florida. It bothers me. And I've seen some of these things that have been hit by just mild winds and it is a terrible tragedy to even allow them to be placed, really. They are so flimsy. And they are absolutely tender boxes if there is a fire around, they go up like that. There have been several real bad experiences with them. And it is usually the elderly people, unless it is the very young who can't afford a home and have a small family and low income, who are compelled to live in these things. And they are really not just worth anything. They are of very, very flimsy construction.

J.B.: Who regulates them, I mean, what agency?

Hallgren: That's it, we can't get any regulation. None of them. They have mobile home regulations, but they are very lax. Most counties don't have any. Some counties are stricter than others. Some are strict, but as far as tie downs, in some counties, you can just roll one in and leave it sitting on concrete blocks. You don't have to tie it down at all. So, the first wind that comes along can push it over. Dade County has the strictest code as far as tie downs go. Other counties are beefing them up since they have had problems with them. But you talk about strong lobbys . . . I would say that associated industries is powerful, but I wouldn't discount the mobile home and the citrus is of course, one that you certainly couldn't discount. The growers associations . . . there are maybe four or five that would almost vie

for first place as far as influence is concerned. Plus the fact that we have a lot of rural legislators that are farm oriented. The peanut farmers . . . I don't know. We've got a long way to go to making great strides in moving ahead. One of the things that I try to do is to get as much exposure in the various forms, debates, addressing rotary groups, luncheon meetings, anytime that anyone says that they want to hear from organized labor, I make myself available, even though I know that I may be walking into a lion's den, I feel that this is what we have to do to get organized labor's image through and approved. And that, I think, is the main thing. Once we do that, we're in good shape. But when someone says, "Labor" now, it's like someone saying a dirty word. Everyone thinks of someone who is going to beat them over the head with a stick if they don't do what they are supposed to do. Unfortunately, we have that kind of person still around in some areas. It always happens to me when I am going to go and talk to some high school or college group, that the day before there will be some incident, some picket will lose his temper and beat someone over the head with a stick or something like that, and it's headlines. I always tell them that by statistics, it is a known fact that there are more bank presidents in jail than there are union presidents in jail, you just don't read about them.

J.B.: Anything else?

W.D.V.: Did we miss any item?

Hallgren: Not that I know of. I hope that I have given you some insight into what we have tried to do, and certainly if there is anything else that you can think of, I will be happy to send you any information that you want. I'll send you additional copies of that material.

J.B.: O.K., fine. . . (tape turned off)

Hallgren: 85% of our union membership is located in nine counties in this state.

J.B.: Is this the nine largest counties?

Hallgren: Yes.

W.D.V.: Any guess as to what percentage of that group is registered?

Hallgren: I would guess, from a report by our director of women's activities, she was very much concerned that she was coming up with a figure of less than 40% who were registered. The ones that she had checked so far this year. And this is in Hillsboro County, which is a fairly, you know, heavy area. I was very surprised.

J.B.: That's Tampa isn't it?

W.D.V.: Less than 40%?

Hallgren: Less than 40. I was really . . . and we always suspected that it would be in the building trades group who would have less registration, but this has not proven to be the fact.

J.B.: So, you are getting . . . (inaudible) . . . so is this likely to result in an emphasis on voter registration?

Hallgren: Absolutely.

J

(End of interview)