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S.D. Warren Company

Stories of Maine's Paper Plantation

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## Interview with Jane Slaughter

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## Jane Slaughter Interview (2/26/03)

JS: This must have been a fairly early version of, you know, the kind of workshop that I've done dozens of times...

My memory is pretty vague, I'll tell you that. There were people from a number of different locals, mostly paperworkers, but not all, and what I was struck by was that most of the officers, not all, were working officers. They weren't full-time officers, which generally tends for better unions, I think...

The other thing that I remember is that some of the people, when they came in, greeted each other in French. I thought that was cool.

Content of the meeting, and the stuff that they said, I don't remember very much. **I remember thinking that it was a success, and that *they were very interested in and open to hearing what I had to say, but also very, you know, had a lot of the analysis – intuitively is not the right word – they knew a lot of what I had to say, and I was just kind of bringing it out for them.* And they helped teach me a lot.**

We spent a whole day. In fact, I'm trying to think if it was a day and a half? I think not, I think it was just one day. And the other thing is – and maybe you know better than I do – who paid for this? Whether it was several locals, or just one local?

MH: Yeah, that was one of the things that I wanted to track down, you know, who approached you...

JS: Oh man, I think I just threw that stuff away, all the stuff older than a certain date.

MH: You've probably done dozens of those types of ...

JS: Dozens and dozens.

MH: Peter Kellman seemed to think it was the international reps for the Paperworkers who organized [it].

JS: That doesn't sound right to me. To me, it seems to like it was local people. I do not know that for sure.

Some of the things we would have talked about – the general way I used to go through it in those days – was to talk about: what are the appeals of these programs, what is likely to turn your members on, so that they –

MH: So let me just ask: it was explicitly about team, or labor-management work reorganization?

JS: Yes. It was about team stuff, labor management cooperation.

Well, we would first go through “what were the appeals to your members?” “Why are they initially attracted to these sorts of things?” often, let me see what else.

I brought some notes, I mean an agenda for a different program, because they tended to be somewhat the same. And then I would probably do a session on “management by stress,” you know, what was that all about, which tended to be real eye-opening for people, even though most of the examples that I used were probably from the auto industry. But people never seemed to have any problems translating that. I never got complaint about that, really. And then we’d talk about management’s definitions of quality. “What did they mean about quality?” – it often actually meant productivity, not quality. And this was pretty eye opening for people, often, that when you define quality as waste-reduction, that’s really talking about productivity, and it also means job-loss.

**And we would have talked about, explicitly, some of the dangers in these programs, ranging from making the union irrelevant, to swamping the union leadership because they are going to all these other meetings, to speed-up itself, to dividing the union among people who think this is great versus the people who don’t – calling each other the dinosaurs or the sucks.**

Ok, so, this would have been some of the things that we would have talked about.

...

If you told me some of the locals, I’d probably remember a name.

MH: I’d be happy to. Let me see, the Scott local, there were three locals. Two mills were part of the old S.D. Warren Company. One was Westbrook, and that had a President named Bill Carver, or Billy Carver, as he goes by. The other S.D. Warren local was at Somerset, it was a new mill, and **the president of the Paperworkers’ local was Carl Turner.**

**JS. Yes. That’s the guy I dealt with.**

**MH: When you say, “That’s the guy who I dealt with,” do you mean that’s the one who invited you?**

**JS: He’s the one who invited me. I’m pretty sure.** I think Westbrook and S.D. Warren, that all rings a bell.

MH: ... My surmise is that these are the guys who brought you in because they were very determined. I don’t know this guy, but the name was Pelletier who head the Winslow tissue mill that was owned by Scott. I wouldn’t know the names, but the other major mills ... [I give the list]

JS: They don’t sound quite as familiar to me, I just don’t know. Like I said, there were a few other representatives, of other unions there, I don’t remember who they were.

MH: There were the Machinists from Somerset.

JS: That sounds familiar. **I'm almost positive that Carl Turner was the guy who invited me.**

*Note: as she describes it, it sounds pretty clear that the local leaders of the Scott Paperworkers' locals organized the session, with Carl Turner at the head. Very interesting.*

*She goes on to say that it happened right at the end of the Jay strike – she spoke to the Jay workers right after the int'l declared the strike over; Peter Kellman described her speaking as a vivid memory of what happened when the strike was declared over.*

MH: So, from what you remember, this training probably did not include Local 14, then.

JS: That would seem unlikely.

MH: It is very interesting that this was happening because, certainly by this point, the UPIU leadership, you know, starting with Wayne Glenn, and especially Jimmy DiNardo – and you know this stuff certainly from editing Jack's [Getman's] book, right – that they had already committed to this jointness initiative, at this point. **So, it really does look like the locals here were well-politicized on this issue, and ready to resist, probably by the time you came.**

JS: Uh-huh [yes]. Yeah, they probably – I think they were already in resistance mode. They just wanted some more information, ways to fight, things like that.

MH: Refine the edges. One of the first interviews I did on this part of the project was with Billy Carver, who is now the int'l rep for this area, and who had been president at the time. He gave one of the most – you know, for a sort of a rank-and-file guy, who was high school educated and came up through the ranks, he gave one of the most articulate critiques, not just of the team stuff, but of corporate capitalism in the eighties and nineties. I have some really vivid language from him on why you wouldn't want to be trusting a corporation. The gist of it was: "you are asking us to give up most of the contract on the promise that you will be sitting across from me two years from now, delivering on these promises. And I don't think you're going to be here. I don't think your corporate bosses are folks we should trust, based on what they are doing across the country." So, he certainly got the analysis down, and developed a very articulate way of talking about it.

His whole take was that the Paperworkers had been giving the sort of critique that you , your perspective on the whole issue, for a decade, or close to it, and then were completely reversing course. It is what the Int'l people said they did as well, but that it was pragmatism. And, you know, he said: "we just don't buy this about face."