

Candy Brown, director of AFL-CIO job retraining programs, interviewed in her office in Helena by Teresa Jordan, Jan 31, 1986.

Notes taken at time of interview, not audited against tape.

Q: How has the way Butte reacted to plant shutdown been different from other Western communities?

The City of Butte was convinced that it wasn't going to die, it was going to keep the economy going, and do so with a livable wage. Other communities were devastated by a closure the relative size of ARCO (population to laid off workers).

The City County government was responsible for that attitude. There was an immediate effort on the part of Butte/Silver Bow to expand present businesses--such as MHD and NCAT. They also accessed every federal and state dollar they could find. They also tried to recruit new business, but they didn't get into the trap of ONLY trying to do that.

Don Peoples deserves the greatest credit. Candy's office has not always been in agreement with the types of programs he went after, but the important thing was that he went after them. He was the motivating force.

Q: What programs would you have changed if you had had a chance?

The Operating Engineers retraining program retrained mining operating engineers to be construction engineers. But overall, the construction industry is in as much trouble as mining; what the AFL CIO thought was needed was retraining to NEW careers--possibly to different kinds of mining, or something like over the road trucking; that industry has continued to expand in Montana.

Q: Why was the program oriented to construction?

There wasn't mining in Butte, so if they were to stay in Butte, it wouldn't have done them good to be retrained for new types of mining. Candy doesn't know why there wasn't retraining for over the road trucking--perhaps Butte's trucking may not have been increasing. The city-county government, she feels, was looking at the short term. The Butte Operating Engineers had a contract on the Boulder road and surrounding area. Also, it was getting on to summer, and Don was probably looking at hiring people for the city/county summer work. Because of the Boulder Road work, the trainees could be placed quickly, though temporarily, so it was a short term solution rather than the sort of retraining that would have allowed them to follow a whole new career.

Candy was involved in the set up of the program twice. Once, there was a conflict between jurisdiction--the Local 400 had the contract on the Boulder Road; it is a different union than the operating engineers who worked the pit. And, she reviewed the

contract after it was submitted to the Dept of Labor. She thinks she was heard when she voiced objections to the type of retraining. The City/County had different priorities than the AFL CIO: They wanted to get people back to work quickly, they wanted to show those people that there really were new opportunities (reach them before they settled into despair), they wanted to let them work at something with which they were somewhat familiar; they wanted something visible so that people could have faith that they weren't at the end of their career.

Candy felt strongly that the focus of the program should have been different, but she understand the priorities the City/County had. She notes that there is a common pattern of recurring short employment after years at a stable job. Times are hard in construction right now.

About the crafts retraining program--primarily dealt with welding. Almost all unions have welders in them, there is no union just for welders. When program operators look at the skills that can be upgraded, they almost always look at welding. This was a good course, very effective in that it upgraded their skills. Many got jobs. This particular course was very well constructed, and well designed in the specific skills it taught. Generally, the AFL CIO is against welding courses because it is a flooded market. The instrumentation retraining that is going on at Vo Tech right now, however, retrains people for a whole new career in an expanding field.

Q: What are examples of communities that had different responses than Butte.

Candy notes that Anaconda is an example. Their initial reaction was one of real confusion; many felt that the smelter shutdown was going to kill the town, wipe it out. Local government got involved, but the major problem was the economic development board that was set up to spend the money ARCO gave the community for economic redevelopment. Helping organizations in Anaconda had trouble with how the money was spend. The community was divided. Since the closure announcement came during a strike, many felt that the workers were to blame for the closure, which was untrue. The workers, on the other hand, felt no one cared. The community suffered a substantial decrease in wages. A lot of time was spent trying to get the community back together again. There was limited retraining. And Anaconda fell into the trap of looking for new business instead of trying to expand what they had. It all comes back to the economic development board--it was a flop. That hurt morale. Many people saw it as a waste, that the money they had to get a new start had been wasted.

Pocatello, Idaho had a problem when Pasirus Airies (sp?) closed down. That's a firm that manufactured heavy equipment components. In fact, the first indication AFL CIO had that there was not going to be expansion on Colstrip was when PA got no new orders. Also, New Zealand's law on domestic content hurt the firm very badly. They had been supplying New Zealand and they

lost that business. About 550 workers lost their job, a big impact on small Pocatello. The boilermakers were the union at that plant. The town response was good; they tried to do what they could. But they didn't have aggressive leaders; they didn't pursue other programs as quickly as Butte. Most workers had to relocate to get jobs, and the average wage in the community probably dropped substantially.

Q: So was the key to success dynamic, aggressive leadership?

Yes. And in Butte, you see a real community getting together. From the beginning, there was a community awareness program. Every part of the community was involved. In Anaconda and Pocatello, people seemed to feel that the plant closure affected only part of the community. They didn't stop to realize what was at stake in terms of secondary jobs. That recognition was immediate in Butte. How the ARCO money was to be spent was a decision in which the whole community was involved. For instance, the gov't worked with United Way from the beginning, and spending was a matter of community decisions. In Anaconda, a select group of people made the decisions, chosen on their particular areas of expertise--bankers, for instance. Butte had always worked more as a community, had worked with the Chamber.

Q: Was there a period of paralysis in Butte where people couldn't believe what had happened?

Yes, a short period of paralysis. But in Anaconda, the belief was that someone would buy the smelter--a party from Taiwan, a party from New York. Not it seems ridiculous. But at the time, the rumours were rife. And they weren't only community-level rumours. Most of the comments came from politicians. That happened during a political campaign. Most of the politicians were saying, this isn't going to happen, we're going to keep that smelter going. And that wasn't going to happen. Those of us who were working on it from an employment retraining angle knew immediately that ARCO was really shutting it down; it wasn't feasible to run it.

In Butte, there was not that false hope. There was the feeling that ARCO was screwing them around again. People thought that ARCO wanted to teach them a lesson about the strike, and in time ARCO would get over its mad, and come back in. But people thought that would be 3 years or more before that would happen. In Anaconda, the sense was that the smelter would be going again in 3 to 6 months. So even at the beginning, there was a different sense of denial. Butte was anticipating a longer layoff. Anaconda lived on false hope for a long period of time. And there was still that feeling that the reason for the closure was the strike, that the workers were to blame. People wondered, will Taiwan buy the smelter if it is still union? There was a lot of time spent on those sorts of question.

In Butte, the denial phase was very quick. People were convinced that it would be a three year layoff or more, so they were moving

from the start. Government and labor officials were convinced it would be three years at the least. If you think you'll be out of work for a few months, you may wait it out; but if you think it will be three years, you are going to look for a job, for something else.

In Pocatello, there was total belief that the plant was closing because of the New Zealand domestic content law. There was a very short time where there was some consideration of the place selling, but there was no real hope for that.

Different shutdowns handled things differently. ASARCO closed their smelter in Tacoma, Wa, but they let the workers know a year ahead of time, so workers got to work through the denial phase and the panic phase. They got jobs soon after. In Seattle, a wood products closure happened recently with virtually NO notice. Those workers thought for a long time that someone would buy the plant or something would happen--but it didn't.

In most cases, workers have to work through the denial stage. And the length of that stage varies from industry with industry.

Tape 1, Side B

If there is a facility, a mill, a plant, the denial doesn't last long. They can see concrete indication of closure, that the machinery is going to rot. It's different with mining. The natural resources are there, and the idea is that the company could mine if it wanted. For instance, the mines closed in Silver Valley, S.D. six or seven years ago, and workers are still waiting for them to open.

And with natural resources, the future depends on other things. For instance, you watch the price of copper, and when it goes up, you feel a tinge of hope. You don't have that with mills.

Q: What is your reaction to Montana Resources buying the Butte mines?

We are pleased to see something happen there. Butte people are very proud, very good workers. And the tradition is important that there will be jobs in mining. What Washington will be able to do--that is very different, and very difficult. They are projecting maybe 350 jobs. Yet there are thousands who want them. There will be a difficult time for Butte about who gets them, about wages, and conditions. And how that situation is handled will set a trend for years to come. Our hope is that the mining is done by former miners, who are very productive, very good workers, who can take pride again in being a miner. We hope, obviously, that they have the best working conditions possible, with the best wages possible.

What he will need in order to open as far as concessions on wages--we hope that Washington is under the same requirements as for other businesses--good wages, good jobs. Hope that there is

a real concern to keep wages livable. Candy thinks it is possible that they want these jobs so badly that they might not hold out or be as tough as with other industries there. The wages they are talking about [avg \$21,000/yr plus \$7000 benefits] are not as good as ARCO, but better than other new mining around the state.

Q: Is there a possibility that the belief that mining will start up again, take energy away from diversification, prove a false hope for the long term future of Butte?

Yes, that is a possibility. Candy knows that the union leaders are well aware of the need to diversify. But again we get into the whole tradition of that city. If your father and grandfather worked in the mines, you want to do that, that's the tradition of the family. Yes, there is a real possibility that people are saying, this is just the beginning. If the 350 jobs go well, we'll expand to 1000, in 10 years, we will be back where we were. That probably ISN'T going to happen. What Candy has seen from the community leaders, they're trying to say that.

It will be very difficult to decide who will get the jobs--the older men with experience, or the younger ones who have 20 years ahead of them. And there's the problem that those who spent 20 years in the mines are not in good health. There's the age consideration. It is going to be difficult NOT to see some age discrimination. All of the unions and jurisdictions are up for negotiation. Job categories will almost certainly change. And that is hard for the older workers, when something has always been done one way. It is going to be a real trying period. Candy's worry is that the problems over these 350 jobs will break down the community spirit.

Q: Some people think that it will be just one union for the whole operation. Do you, and what is your reaction to that?

That's a strong possibility. AFL CIO would like to see the mine open up with former jurisdictions intact. That would be ideal for workers. Workers are then specifically trained for the job they do, they know exactly what is expected of them. Also, there is involvement of pride in the work, in an understanding of what your duties are. You get the best work out of people when they can say, this is my job, and I do it best. For an Operating Engineer to do a Steelworkers job--they don't do it as well; it hurts productivity; there is more injury; workers are not as satisfied. Also, if you only have one union, you can cut wages, can move people everywhere.

Q: Those who started out as contract miners seemed to love that work, find excitement in it much more than in the pit. How can that excitement be created in modern-day jobs?

Working underground, there was so much pride involved. Those were the best jobs, and those people also struggled very hard for the union. They were the very best workers. They were very

tough, they had very hard jobs, they had PRIDE. It was the cream of the crop. Everyone recognized that. They were the select few that could do that toughest work. There is some of that in modern mining. At Colstrip, for instance, you see extreme pride in the job, a real feeling that they are tough, good workers, they can accomplish anything. The initial struggle with the union is not there, but they have found pride elsewhere.

Q: You could see that pride at work in putting up Our Lady of the Rockies.

Candy was amazed, talking with a lot of union members who were involved, at the feeling of accomplishment they took. At first, she thought, "get practical,"--spend that time and money on the food bank or on retraining. But now she thinks she was real wrong about that. "That statue represents a real important element of Butte. And again, I think it's the whole issue of, if you could face every adversity you needed to, and then to bring that community back to a feeling of pride on something. And for those craft workers, the workers who did that, the Operating Engineers and the Ironworkers, mainly, there is a tremendous sense of accomplishment and a feeling that they are part of that community. They contributed. And that's something that dislocated workers have real problems with because once you are out of work and you are a skilled craft person, not a lot of people call on you, you are no longer contributing to your community, you are someone who is taking from your community and this was a real way to demonstrate giving to that community. It's wonderful. I'm real amazed that it is. ...that's probably one of the worst things for dislocated workers, the tremendous blow to their pride. Dislocated workers, at least for the most part, the ones we've seen in Montana, have taken a great deal of pride in their work for a lot of years. It's not the person who goes to work and doesn't care. It's not the person who has a real bad job--well, they may have bad jobs, but they care deeply about those jobs and they are so very productive, and they have such a feeling of accomplishment. And to take that away from a worker after 20 or 30 or 10 or 5 years... Those workers have reached their goal, they were whatever--a miner or an operating engineer or a sheetmetal worker or whatever, they had reached their goal. They were skilled craft people. To see that talent go to waste and also to see those workers who had such tremendous pride in what they had accomplished, have that pride knocked out of them because an employer makes a decision on a profit loss basis or how they could increase their profits is really a sad thing to see. Something that we work on in all of our programs is to make sure that those workers understand that first, they are not to blame and two, they maintain that sense of pride about themselves and the work that they do."

Candy remembers the Reagan administration was talking about the total recovery, that it would mean that 10 M workers would never return to their occupation--that would be total recovery, somewhere between 7 to 10 million people. The insensitivity of that bothers Candy--to write off 7 to 10 million workers is

insensitive, illogical. And to be willing to accept that as recovery. Work is so central to us. We don't have a caste system, but we do have a work and economic structure. Most of your friends do the same type of work, same scale occupation--white collar, blue collar, whatever.

And we were taught very early that if you work hard, and do good work, you can take care of your family--you will HAVE a job, a good income. Now we are taking a whole group of workers who did everything right, we're making the decision to tell them--you're not going to have a job, or at a least a job you can live on. Built is associated with that, and it's important that they understand that it's not their fault. We were taught to work so early, and we saw that it was true for our parents. When it isn't true for us, that tends to turn inward--guilt, anger.

Q: The BCU in Butte has noted that many government programs designed to develop jobs--such as UDAG grants for loans like Montana Resources hopes to get--fall short of their job objectives and also that many retraining programs have not reached many General Assistance recipients. How do you react to these concerns.

Tape 2, Side A

The AFL CIO is supportive of the BCU on a number of issues and will continue to be. Candy serves on both the state council and the Private Industry Council and she spends a lot of time on issues that relate to GA assistance recipients dealing with the Job Partnership Training Act and retraining. As for their concerns that jobs go to Butte workers, Candy can't imagine that the jobs would go elsewhere. It would be too unpopular for Washington to try to do anything else. It wouldn't be a bad idea to be in writing, but probably not needed there as much as other places. And it is important as economic development comes back, not to forget the goals of a few years ago--jobs on the basis of equal employment, that we not develop a situation where women, minorities, handicapped, older workers are not given equal opportunity. The BCU's concern that that is accomplished is very legitimate. If we are going to restructure the economy of a community--and this is the first chance as far as mining jobs in the community go--we should be concerned about equity.

As far as job retraining going to GA recipients--in general philosophy, Candy is in agreement that retraining should be targeted in part to GA recipients and that the percentage should probably be higher than it is. At the same time, the job training programs take the most in need. So Candy believes that the problem is getting GA recipients referred to the programs. There is some glitch in the system; they are trying to discover what that is. But Candy thinks one reason is that, though GA participants who are receiving full benefits from the state are barely making subsistence income, in addition to it they have health care for their children, and child care available. JTPA federal performance standard is \$4.91/hr, typically w/o benefits.

(The AFL CIO retraining programs average over \$7.00/hr.) AFL CIO has done studies on that, and to replace what you get with GA, including health care and child care, for a single parent with two children, you have to make \$6.51 an hour if the employer doesn't pay health benefits. If the employer pays health, then you have to make \$5.60/hr. Candy thinks that is the problem with recruitment. It is almost criminal when you have health care not to continue it for your children. So Candy agrees that we have to recruit more actively, but thinks we won't have GA recipients going into those programs until we can say that at the end of the job retraining, they will be better off.

Small part of JTPA money, about \$500,000 (out of \$10 M total for disadvantaged adults and youth), is for dislocated workers, designated for them Title 3. In those programs, like the operating engineers retraining in Butte, you have to have certain skills going in. The BCU is talking about the programs for disadvantaged, not Title 3.

[Candy covers MT, AK, OR, WA ID, and CA for all employemnt training activities; and the Rocky Mt West for dislocated worker programs for the AFL CIO--MT, ID, CO, WY, UT, AZ, NE, NM.]