

ORAL HISTORY T-0234
INTERVIEWEE: CONNIE KUBISTA
INTERVIEWER: IRENE CORTINOVIS
ST. LOUIS TEACHERS' STRIKE PROJECT
FEBRUARY 16, 1973

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CORTINOVIS: Well, Connie, we like to start out by getting just a little bit of background. You said that you went here to school (UMSL)?

KUBISTA: Yes, I graduated in 1970 in August with my Bachelor's of Science in Education and dealing in Special Education. And that's the field that I went into. Now, my first year of teaching, I did not teach Special Ed. I was a Fifth Grade teacher. But, this year, the Board hired me, and I am teaching Special Ed. at Dozier No. 48.

CORTINOVIS: And where is that?

KUBISTA: It's on Goodfellow and Maple, in the city.

CORTINOVIS: Now, you spoke about your experience last year. Where did you teach last year?

KUBISTA: In Vancouver, Washington. My husband was out there on like an internship for the ministry. He is still studying for the ministry and will graduate in May.

CORTINOVIS: Now, the project that we asked you to come in for is that we are trying to amass some material on the St. Louis Teachers' Strike. Do you belong to either the Union or the St. Louis Teachers' Association?

KUBISTA: No.

CORTINOVIS: Could we go into the reasons why you're not? that they're unprofessional in the teaching aspect, and a union or an organization that I could belong to...I belonged to one last year...but this year, I guess my main reason for not belonging was financial, because I didn't want that money taken out this year because my husband is still in school.

CORTINOVIS; How much does it cost to belong to the Association?

KUBISTA: I think they take out \$10.00 each, I'm not sure whether it's each pay period, or each month.

CORTINOVIS: You can assign and the Board will take it out? have the hassle of writing out a check for them.

KUBISTA: Right. That was the main reason I didn't join this year. Of course when I started at the school where I., at, I asked several people who did belong to the Association, and they had a real negative attitude about it. And I thought, "Bo. why get myself into something negative?" And this school is so negative ., it is...!,,, always having a lot of difficulties controlling my classroom, but I have a big factor to overcome there, too.

CORTINOVIS: Well, before we go into your classroom situation, which I am certainly interested in. you did mention on the way upstairs here that you did belong to an association last year. a teachers' association.

KUBISTA: Right, well, I belonged to the National...the NEA an, the local and state last year.

CORTINOVIS: In the state of Washington?

KUBISTA: Right.

CORTINOVIS: How did you see that a. being different from the St. Louis Association.

KUBISTA, Well, from the...1 ,guess the biggest thing was the size. It was a lot smaller situation and the teachers seemed to be able to sit to be able to sit down and talk things out, whereas here, it seems like there is a lot of yelling and screaming and it doesn't seem coherent all. And the particular teacher at my school that out, whereas here, it seems like there is a lot of yelling and screaming and it doesn't seem coherent at all. And the particular teacher at my school that belonged to the Association never came back with positive ideas from the Association. You know, she reported them from the meetings. And I kept asking her, and she said, "Well, they..." She was very hesitant about coming up with any answers, and you know, I just finally came to the conclusion that she didn't have any answers .

CORTINOVIS: Now, she is the representative from your school...

KUBISTA: Right.

CORTINOVIS: ...Is she like a school captain for the Association? Something like that?

KUBISTA: No. She went to the meetings, you know, and took all the grievances and reported back to us...what happened at the meetings.

CORTINOVIS: At faculty meetings?

KUBISTA: Right.

CORTINOVIS: Is the principal there, you mean, at the regular faculty meetings she reports this back?

KUBISTA: She reported it to those who were interested. She never, you know...

CORTINOVIS: Informally, you mean?

KUBISTA: Right.

CORTINOVIS: She doesn't make a report at regular faculty meetings?

KUBISTA: No. She couldn't because some of them didn't belong.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, that was what I was trying to get at...get straight. About... you said that you got a different feeling from the Association in Vancouver, Washington, because of the size. Can you give me some idea of the comparable size? ...Of the Vancouver systems with the St. Louis system?

KUBISTA: Well, Vancouver itself is only 50,000 people. And I couldn't tell you how many...maybe 500 teachers.

CORTINOVIS: I'm sure that *I have the figures of the St. Louis system somewhere. You don't know how many teachers, we have in St. Louis, offhand;

KUBISTA: No.

CORTINOVIS: Well, it's up in the thousands.

KUBISTA: Right. it are the main issues of the strike?

KUBISTA: Right. I guess that's one the reasons why I didn't strike, because I, see as the teachers, main Issue, a pay increase. Secondly, I guess I see the hospitalization and the benefits they want from the Board, and finally, the negotiations...

CORTINOVIS: The right to collective bargaining.

KUBISTA: Right... negotiations.

KUBISTA: well, the pay increase, I guess, I might have different attitude about going into teaching, but I really didn't go into for the money. And, I guess, I feel comfortable at my salary, and I'm at the base...on the bottom...but then, I'm not a man either, and I'm not supporting a family on that...\$7,200, you know The hospitalization...! guess I can see that.

CORTINOVIS: At the present time, there is no hospitalization?

KUBISTA: There is none. You can join like the Blue Cross or the...there's another one...they have several packages that you can take out, but the coverage of them is really very poor, and what they are asking for is full , and benefits from the Board. And then the court defied them, and I think that would be the strongest point if I were striking, that I would stand behind. Because. I think, that teachers need a right in saying what they need in the classroom. The school board doesn't come into the classroom, so how do they know...I mean, they don't see what is going on. They might go to one particular school throughout the entire school year. I can't say, because they haven't been around my school at all.

CORTINOVIS: Well, even then, one would be tempted to think it was a ceremonial visit in which they would be greeted by the principal, escorted around to the most favorable places in

the school, and stick their head in.

KUBISTA: Exactly. Not really see much of anything.

CORTINOVIS: Yes. It would be really hard for any school board member, I would think, no matter how dedicated or inquisitive they might be, to find out the true conditions.

KUBISTA: But I think that that would be the biggest issue with me...collects-0 bargaining.

CORTINOVIS: Well, the Board now says that they are only following the law which forbids collective bargaining. What do you think about that?

KUBISTA: The law needs to be changed, because I think teachers need to be able to come to the people who employ them. It is rather ridiculous when someone employs you and you can't go to them with any grievances. That's awfully one- sided.

CORTINOVIS: Does the fact that the Board does enter into collective bargaining with the trades, the building trades, who work for the Board, does that bother you?

KUBISTA: Does that bother me? No.

CORTINOVIS: Well, they already do collective bargaining with the trades, who work for the Board. Does it bother you that they sit down with them and not the teachers?

KUBISTA: With them and not with us? Yes, I guess it does to an extent, but I think that they should realize that if they can do collective bargaining with them, why can't they do collective bargaining with us who are their main employees, in a sense.

CORTINOVIS: Well, they say, that they...they really don't call it collective bargaining. But, as a matter of fact, that is what it turns out to be.

KUBISTA: With the building unions?

CORTINOVIS: Yes. Speaking of the trade unions, the Board had an ad in the paper for an electrician opening in one of the schools for \$13, 700. How does that strike you?

KUBISTA: I guess it doesn't bother me, because, I suppose, the electricians get paid more per hour because they are a trade-type situation.

CORTINOVIS: Well, of course, this is one of points that the union and the association has made a big thing out of. That the, though I think that an "electrician with experience has many skills, they say that their preparation time isn't...

KUBISTA: Well, like I said before, I guess money isn't a big issue with me, and it's not that I couldn't use it. I sure could, because I have school debts. My husband has had many, many years of schooling...twelve years of schooling, and he has debts piled sky-high. But that's not why I went into teaching.

CORTINOVIS: So, why did you go into teaching?

KUBISTA: To help children. You know, I think they are the most important thing to consider in the profession. Children...they need a good education. and they aren't getting it. A lot of them aren't getting it...especially in our city schools

CORTINOVIS: Are you speaking of their not getting it because of the strike, or what?

KUBISTA: Well...they aren't getting an education (period) right now. But, up to that point, it was very difficult, up to the point of the strike, it was very difficult...just in my classroom, for example, the materials that we are given are so ridiculous. The materials ... you see, I teach in a portable building which is separate. It's a Special School, behind the big building, and. ..

CORTINOVIS: It's a special room?

KUBISTA: No, it's not a room. It's a Special School. We have our own principal and the building has their own principal. So, there are...

CORTINOVIS: How many children are in this portable room.

KUBISTA: There are eight portable classrooms, and I think there are ninety children.

CORTINOVIS: This is behind the Dozier School?

KUBISTA: Right

KUBISTA: There are eight portal children.

CORTINOVIS: This is behind the Dozier School?

CORTINOVIS: I see. What do you mean, that materials you are given are so ridiculous?

KUBISTA: First of all, my children can't read, so they should be given materials that will promote reading. My pre-primer books...they shouldn't be given reading books. They have no interest in them at all.

CORTINOVIS: How old are your children?

KUBISTA: Eleven to thirteen.

CORTINOVIS: And they can't read?

KUBISTA: Some of them can't. I have one reader who I would put on a good fourth grade level. But he's extraordinary. But I have two children that don't even know their alphabet.

CORTINOVIS: Perhaps we should go into the Special School's conditions a little bit more. How does a child get into the Special School District in St. Louis? Or is it a Special district?

KUBISTA: It is a Special School District. I think that the classroom teacher refers them to be

tested. Then they go through a series of testing and once the I.Q....they take it, I guess, on the I.Q. ...and they have to have an I.Q. of below seventy. And then they are put into the Special classroom.

CORTINOVIS: Un-graded?

KUBISTA: Yes.

CORTINOVIS: How many children do you have?

CORTINOVIS: How many children do you have?

KUBISTA: Twelve, right now. I had thirteen.

CORTINOVIS: What do you think you need for your class besides the things you've talked about?

KUBISTA: That's an open question: I ...

CORTINOVIS: I mean, if you're dissatisfied with the materials you are given, what do you need?

KUBISTA: What I could see happening with Special Ed. schools here in the city is that they go towards an open-concept type thing. These children need things that they can discover on their own, on their level. They aren't given any levels-type of material at all. The social studies books that were given by the Special School District are, I would say, on a good second or third grade level in reading. And that doesn't cover the majority of my students by any means. They can't...! have two students who could sit down and read the books, and that's all...out of the twelve.

CORTINOVIS: Who decides about the materials?

KUBISTA: I guess they have a curriculum committee that decides, and the curriculum committee has sent out this past year different forms asking us teachers what we think of the particular series that we now have...like in social studies and science And that's all. They haven't asked us about our reading, which I feel is very inadequate.

CORTINOVIS: Have you volunteered this information?

KUBISTA: Oh, yes, I've told my principal.

CORTINOVIS: Does he agree with you?

KUBISTA: She does...she's a lady principal.

CORTINOVIS: A lady principal? And she agrees with you?

KUBISTA: Yes, because she has always stressed reading to us, because reading is so vital to these kids, you know, to even learn their name.

CORTINOVIS: At eleven or twelve, when these children that you have, cannot read at second grade level, what is their future in the school system.

KUBISTA: Pretty bleak. don't think, if I were to take my classroom right now, I don't think that many of them will get past the age of sixteen in our school system. They'll drop out, unless they are given a better chance...to succeed. No, I really don't feel that they will...get past that.

CORTINOVIS: They won't get into high school?

KUBISTA: No. They won't get into high school.

CORTINOVIS: Is there any kind of a special high school?

KUBISTA: I'm not sure that there is in the City of St. Louis. Like our portable classrooms go up to what they call the upper levels, and they stay there until they are sixteen, and then after that...

CORTINOVIS: It's mandatory for the state...

KUBISTA: Right. And then after that, they either drop out or maybe they are sent to a trade school or something...of that sort.

CORTINOVIS: Can you see any of the children you have this year going to a trade school?

KUBISTA: One of mine.

CORTINOVIS: Just one?

KUBISTA: Yes.

CORTINOVIS: How do you think that the Board...who do you think is responsible for this kind of thing, situation? That you described, then? You gave the impression that you think it is deplorable.

KUBISTA: Yes, I think it is the Board in my particular situation, and I'm sure the rest of the teachers in my school would feel the same way. Because we have asked, like the children that I have who don't even know their alphabet...I didn't even have alphabet cards in my room; So,...for them to use. So, I had to go out and buy them.

CORTINOVIS: Out of your own funds?

KUBISTA: Right. Right; And, just the basic things that they need to learn, like even their colors, and their number factors...the one-to-one concept... they have nothing...! have nothing' for them to work with. So, on a one-to-one concept, I have to bring toothpicks...you know, the two children that I have who are particularly low...to learn...they didn't have any blocks; they didn't have anything; Nothing, whatsoever;

CORTINOVIS: And you asked for this material, and you don't get it? The principal..

KUBISTA: Well, the principal said that the Board only allows us so much, and she does all the ordering, and we have to take what she orders. Therefore, I go out and buy materials every month, so that my children in my classroom will have materials to work with, because I feel it is unfair to them, and, well, just a simple thing of like...they are forced to use the big, fat, like kindergarten crayons. And they are insulted, at age thirteen, to have to sit there with these big, fat crayons. So, I went out and bought crayons for each of my kids, so that they could have something that other children have. Something as simple as that.

CORTINOVIS: Do the other teachers do this?

KUBISTA: I think that the majority do. I think that a couple don't...they work with what they have. But I feel that that is unfair to the kids. I think that they need more than that. They need stimulation.

CORTINOVIS: How about to the teachers? Do you think this is unfair to the teachers to have to buy this material themselves? Out of their own funds?

KUBISTA: Well, I'm sure it is. You know, it hurts when you bring home a paycheck and you have to spend \$50.00 a month for your classroom needs.

CORTINOVIS: Do you spend that much, Connie?

KUBISTA: Oh, yes, because I have to buy my own construction paper. I have to buy...I buy rewards for the kids because they are in Special Ed., and that was one way of my overcoming some of their behavior problems. That has sort of dwindled out now, and it has gone to praise. So, the cost per month has gone down considerably. But, drawing paper...the school runs out of it, so what do you do? They run out maybe four weeks before their order comes in. You have to do something with these children. You have to have some of these activities.

CORTINOVIS: How is the morale among the teachers in your school;

KUBISTA: It's pretty good. Pretty good. I guess that the teachers that I work with sort of feel the same way as I do about these children, particularly in the portables, really, really, are so far behind that any amount of time that we lose is hurting them greatly.

CORTINOVIS: Now, for the ninety children you have the principal and how many teachers?

KUBISTA: Seven teachers.

CORTINOVIS: So, most people have ten or eleven?

KUBISTA: Right, right. And they kept telling us that, come January, to expect our classrooms to go up to twenty, which we were all dreading, because you now, twenty emotionally disturbed children...that's ridiculous, in a classroom...there is no way...all you would be doing is correcting behavior problems. You wouldn't have any learning going on.

CORTINOVIS: Why is this supposed to happen? Will more children be arriving?

KUBISTA: I guess so...from the big school and from other schools within the district...Soldan, Northwest...they will come in.

CORTINOVIS: I see. The Dozier School is for this whole district then?

KUBISTA: That's right. I think Dozier is the only one that has Special Ed.

CORTINOVIS: How about the children who rate slightly above seventy and do not come to the Special Ed. classes?

KUBISTA: They actually belong in Special Ed., too, because I don't think the normal classroom teacher...because of her class load in the system in the city...can really touch these kids like they need it. You know, they really need inattention. And, I think, if I were classifying kids in Special Ed. I would put the range at eighty. I wouldn't cut it so low. I was surprised when we got back to St. Louis to find that it was so low. Seventy...that's a pretty low I.Q.

CORTINOVIS: Connie, you seem like you are extremely dedicated to your students and I get the impression*that some of the other teachers are, too. Do you feel that your education at UMSL adequately prepared you for what you actually found in the classroom?

KUBISTA: (laughter) No, I really don't: UMSL had a good program in Special Ed. for a well-rounded classroom. If you have the equipment, if you are given all the supplies you needed, UMSL's education was very adequate. But, when you walk into the type of classroom situation that I walked into last September, I just couldn't believe it; I just went back to my books and I just tried all these different things. I even had to go to the Board and say, "Now, look; Help me." Because, at first, I didn't seem to be getting the help I needed from the principal, and when I went to the Board, I guess she took some note. Boy, I was really having difficulties, and I wasn't about to back out on it...because I did want to back out on it. In my particular classroom, they are all black, of course, and I had the thing of the white teacher with black children to overcome, and people might not think that that's a lot, but it is: For those children to finally accept you as a person and to trust you, they really try you out. But, now, instead of saying that I'm a white teacher, the kids will say, "Oh, Mrs. Kubisto, (because they can't say Kubista), you're not white, you're just light;" Which is a real compliment to me. (laughter) You know, because I'm not "white", and I'm just "light." But, I think that was a difficult thing for those kids to overcome. And they have a very poor attitude towards white people which is understandable, because of the type of situation that these kids are in (live in), and UMSL didn't prepare me for anything like that; You know, I had absolutely... I think that they prepare you thinking that you will go out into the county schools, and I wasn't prepared for the type of situation that I had in the inner-city, at all.

CORTINOVIS: Have you talked to anyone in the Special Ed. department about this?

KUBISTA: No, but I wanted to, because I think it is important for the people who are going to teach in the inner-city, to be aware of this. Maybe it's be-

cause of the particular area that I'm in. The kids that have seen and done... and the things that they have gone through at thirteen years of life is more than many of us have ever heard of, as adults.

CORTINOVIS: Well, Connie, if you know of anybody over in Special Ed. department, wouldn't they appreciate your coming to one of the methods classes and talking... now that you are out of work?

KUBISTA: They might. I don't know who is there. You see, we were gone last year, and I've had my hands full of just being able to maintain balance, you know.

CORTINOVIS: Oh, of course.

KUBISTA: ...In my classroom. But I don't even know who is over there anymore.

CORTINOVIS: You spoke on, "I had to go to the Board." How did you go about that?

KUBISTA: I guess I was just belligerent: Because I just decided....

CORTINOVIS: You don't sound belligerent, but you don't sound tickled, either; (laughter)

KUBISTA: I was having a very difficult time with one of my students who was highly hyperkinetic. Very hyperkinetic. And I kept going to the principal and telling her, you know, "What am I to do with this child?" And he would do things like...he would come into the classroom and, for no apparent reason, he would have absurd laughter. And he would roll summer salts all the way around the classroom, and there was no stopping him until he had decided. Well, I finally got my other twelve children in the classroom to ignore him, which took some doing, because I felt a lot of it he was doing for attention which he didn't get at home. There was a lot background, you know. And I didn't think that the principal was hearing me. And FINALLY, I said to my husband, "Someone has got to help this poor boy:" And, so, I went to the Board, and I said, "Hey, look...."

CORTINOVIS: You went to the Board office? And who did you talk to there;

KUBISTA: Miss Miller. She is now in the hospital. She had an accident.

CORTINOVIS: Is she in administration? She works for the superintendent?

KUBISTA: Yes, she works for the superintendent. She's a supervisor, like. I had made an appointment to talk to Mr. Cott, the person who hired me. I think he is probably the superintendent of this school district. And he couldn't meet with me, so they suggested that I meet with Miss Miller. So, I told her about it, and that I wasn't getting anywhere by talking to the principal, so then she said...! gave her two alternatives, "Either you help me, or I am going to have to take my name off the payroll, because, you know, Z just can't handle the situation any more. And I don't want to back away from it. But, I think it's gotten to the point where something has to be done by the Board for this little boy." And so we had a meeting and talked it over with the principal, and they were finally able to withdraw him and he was taken...! think his mother took him to Malcolm Bliss and was having him tested, etc. I haven't

heard from this little boy since, so I don't know what has happened since then. At least, he was receiving some help which he desperately needed.

CORTINOVIS: On the politics of the situation...perhaps human relationship. Did the principal resent your doing this?

KUBISTA: I think so, because she said to me, "Well, why didn't you come to me, first? And, I said, "Well, I did come to you, and you weren't hearing me." And she didn't say anything, and afterwards I apologized to her if I had hurt her feelings, you know, but I said...the teacher who had this particular little boy last year, kept begging and begging for something to be done with him,... like he would go through a whole year of this type of behavior, and nothing was done, you know. He really needed help...really needed help. I had never experienced this type of behavior...or experienced anything like it before. So, the social worker was actually more help than the principal over this. Because in talking to her, she was able to get me materials, you know, concerning the hyper-kinetic child that really refreshed my mind. My textbooks didn't that much to help me. But she was able to give me valid suggestions to use.

CORTINOVIS: In handling him?... or identifying him?

KUBISTA: No, to handle him. I identified his problem. A lot of it stemmed from his home life. He had quite a home life. He had no father, and his mother worked seven days a week, and the things that happened to him... Like he would come to school, and he'd be just shivering...he'd had to sleep out in the car because they had no heat in the house, you know. A series of things that happen to children, until they snap.

CORTINOVIS: Well, I'm sure you've seen not only him, but other conditions...

KUBISTA: Oh, yes.

CORTINOVIS: You seem, though, at the same time, to take a very good perspective about this. Does this finally get to you?

KUBISTA: Well, it did, and that's why I knew that something had to be done. You know, I think a teacher can only go... I'll cancel that. A conscientious teacher can only go so far in permitting things to happen to her students without it affecting her to some degree. And, you know, in a classroom of forty children, I might not be able to pick out particular problems as fast as I can with my twelve, but that's why I'm in Special Ed.

CORTINOVIS: Yes. I understand completely, because I was a classroom teacher myself.

KUBISTA: But, I think, yes, it did affect me, this particular little boy did.

CORTINOVIS: It would affect me;

KUBISTA: And that's why I wanted to give him some help, because he needed help desperately. He was only eleven years old.

CORTINOVIS: Then you were able to concentrate your efforts on the other children, who remained.

KUBISTA: Yes, that was another big thing... I guess. In my classroom for six hours, I was always saying, "Now, it's time to sit down," and trying to cope with the other children who were just sitting there watching him do all these bizarre behavior things, and nothing was happening in the classroom.

CORTINOVIS: Well, Connie, I don't know very much else to ask you. Just touching on the strike once more. I know that you are a new teacher in the system, and you've just been it about five months or something like that, ...could you just give me your general impression as to just what or how the other teachers in your school feel about the strike?

KUBISTA: Well, I have talked to quite a few of them, and there's one other teacher that I work with that feels exactly like I do, but... We feel that it's highly unprofessional, because any time you are dealing with children, well, let's call them "innocent", they have no control over this strike, and they are the ones who are getting hurt. Of course people will come up with, "Well, aren't they being hurt in the regular classroom? Now, without any materials that are of use to them?" And, they do need a lot of things in our schools in the city, but I feel a little help is better than no help whatsoever, and most of the kids, like in Special Ed., and even a normal classroom, are behind their level...that they should be at the age of ten. And a lot of it has to do with the classroom size, not only the teacher having to cope with so many different aspects that these children have grown up with and developed with...and I guess the two of us feel that a little help is better than none, which they are getting right now.

CORTINOVIS: Now, you spoke about the one teacher belonging to the Teachers' Association. Do you know any teachers who belong to the Union?

KUBISTA: There's one of them.

CORTINOVIS: Yes. Are they all women?

KUBISTA: No, we have one man. And, I think, that's a shame, too: I think we need more men teaching in the lower grades.

CORTINOVIS: Have the Union member and the Association member approached you about joining?

KUBISTA: No.

CORTINOVIS: They haven't asked you to join?

KUBISTA: No.

CORTINOVIS: There's been no pressure put on you to join?

KUBISTA: No.

CORTINOVIS: It occurs to me, then, since you, Connie, take this attitude that "it is unprofessional for the other teachers to organize in this way, and that you didn't go into teaching for the money, then it would seem to me, that the logical outcome of that would be to depend upon the Board, and secondarily, to the administration, for their largess, in other words.

KUBISTA: Yes, I guess so. But, it doesn't happen that way. So, I guess... I am a fighter, but I'm not, I don't want to say "militant"... I forgot where we were... (some interruption...about the door open...so hot...)

CORTINOVIS: Yes.. well, if you take this attitude that it is unprofessional to organize, and that you have not gone into teaching for the money, then the logical outcome of that would be to depend upon the largess and decisions of the Board and Administration in all things.

KUBISTA: Well, I suppose I would depend on them, but, of course, they didn't come up with the things that I need, and I am hired by them and I am a teacher, and I'm supposed to do a job in the classroom...! guess I take it upon my own shoulders to do it. And I'm not saying that that is right and/or wrong. I guess I don't think it is right, because if they are hiring me, they should be able to give me the things that I need to function in the classroom. But, at the same time, I guess I can't walk out on the children. I just can't walk away from them. That's like a nightmare, you know, walking away from a child who desperately needs help. And right now, I guess, at the point where the strike is now, I feel that the teachers can't back out. Because I do feel that they ... a lot of them have been in the system a lot longer than I have, and probably feel the pressures a lot more than I have in just, you know, the five months. And I couldn't see them saying, "No, let's forget it." And call the strike off, either. I'm really caught between two things right now, because I couldn't see the teachers giving up, and yet the Board has hired me, and I feel like I must answer to them, too.

CORTINOVIS: Well, of course, you are exactly in the dilemma of everyone who would benefit by the efforts of the strike who have not taken part in that strike. So, then, you feel that you wouldn't support the teachers, or join them. But I get the idea that you morally support the teachers.

KUBISTA: I guess I would, yes, because I feel that a lot of them have been in the system a lot longer than I have and have...just, maybe the pressures that I have felt in the last five months, which I guess I've been able to carry, I'm not so sure after ten years that I could carry them. You know, that's what I'm saying. I don't feel that the basic thing of the pay raise and hospital insurance...! don't feel that that should be the biggest issues. The big issue of being able to negotiate with the Board, to get better things in our classrooms, putting the city classrooms up to the level of the county classroom schools...I think people outside of the system would listen to them a lot more and parents would listen to them. I have talked to a lot of parents, you know, we live in a neighborhood, black, and I have talked to quite a few parents around in that neighborhood and they don't realize that..... also that the teachers are striking/for this basic thing of being able to talk to Board, also, and for materials for their children to learn better and reduce the class sizes. But they don't seem to realize it...because all they hear through the newspapers is pay, pay, pay.

CORTINOVIS: It's the pay issue.

KUBISTA: And, to them...they only see their children...how their children are being hurt. I think that if the Union and the Association could also stress more that point, the basic relationship between teachers and Board...you know, they tell us in our methods classes to build rapport between student and teacher. Well, I think the same thing has to happen between teacher and employer, and it evidently is not happening.

CORTINOVIS: Evidently not. The one point that I wanted to talk to you on, and then I realized that you hadn't been in the system so long, but we are asking the other teachers that we have interviewed this...it has been a surprise to many people who have observed the Board and the teachers, both the Union and the Association over a long period of time, that the Association and the Union could finally get together and strike. Some people still see it as a power struggle, not between the Board and the teachers, but between the Association and the Union. What is your view on that? Have you heard anything about that?

KUBISTA: No, I guess I haven't. I wouldn't even know how to comment on that, because I don't think I have been around long enough to see the two, the Union and the Association, even operate in the last five months.

CORTINOVIS: I don't, personally, believe it to be true. But, because in many ways, they seem so united in this strike, that, although it has been true in the past, I don't see it in the strike. But, naturally, I'm not that much a part of it either.

KUBISTA: No, I guess I really feel that the strike has come about because the teachers that have been in such a long time, have been begging from the principals, who are supposed to be the mediators between the Board and the teachers, and it seems like the principals can't touch on, you know, the Board, and, therefore, the teachers are saying, "Well, the principals who are hired for this reason can't do it, then we better do it."

CORTINOVIS: What is your opinion of the...that the Board has taken on the pay issue, as far as their saying that there is no money?

KUBISTA: Well, to me, it seems all a little bit strange, because if one auditing company says, "Yeah, they can afford it," and the other says, "No, they can't." You know, then these auditing companies are biased to whomever hired them. I don't think the truth has really been brought out.

CORTINOVIS: They are both nationally known firms.

KUBISTA: Right.

CORTINOVIS: Both...the one for the teachers and the other by the Board. Well...is there anything else that you'd like to touch on?

KUBISTA: Not that I can think of.

CORTINOVIS: Connie, I have enjoyed myself immensely. I think you have been extraordinarily frank, and I'm also proud (laughter) that UMSL has graduated a student like you to go into Special Ed. and understand the basic of classroom dynamics so well so

quickly. As an older teacher, I am quite surprised.

KUBISTA: Well, thank you:

CORTINOVIS: I have sat in many a faculty classroom and been quite discouraged...

KUBISTA: Well, I think, you know, teaching is...you have to go into teaching, feel, liking children. I just think that teaching... that that is the important thing...that the children are the biggest thing. If you don't like children, you surely don't belong in the classroom.

CORTINOVIS: Do you get some of this motivation, do you think, from your religion?

KUBISTA: Gosh, I never thought of that; I suppose I do. Although I have always, always, always liked children. There has never been a point in my life where children have disgusted me. You know, like some teenagers growing up hating their little brothers and sisters, you know, and I just never have...perhaps it came through in, you know, my family structure.

CORTINOVIS: Well, the fact that your husband is in the ministry...also you seem to have been attracted to each other...perhaps you have a mutuality of interest there in service.

KUBISTA: Yes, that is possible.

CORTINOVIS: Do you have any children yourself?

KUBISTA: No, not yet: I enjoy my teaching too much.

CORTINOVIS: Well, I certainly thank you very much for coming and giving us your time.

KUBISTA: Thank you.

CORTINOVIS: Thanks, loads.