

PRESERVING MEMORY: NEWARK AND RUTGERS  
IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

An Interview with

WALTER WEIKER

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

October 24 and 31, 1991



INTERVIEW: Walter Weiker

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GILBERT COHEN: This is Thursday, October 24, 1991. This is Gil Cohen. I am meeting with Professor Walter Weiker of the Political Science Department in the College of Arts and Sciences. [Break in recording] We are back with Professor Weiker, and we were talking before, and I was asking you if you could just provide a biographical sketch of your academic career before and after Rutgers, to get it on all.

WALTER WEIKER: Well, I'll start with the college, I guess. I went to Antioch College. I got a BA in 1954 in government. Then I got drafted into the Army. Then I went back to Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and got an MA in Middle Eastern affairs and went on to Princeton to get my Ph.D. in 1962. I did my dissertation research in Turkey. And after Princeton I spent a year at the Brookings Institution in Washington as a research assistant. And then I came to Rutgers right after that, and I've been here ever since.

COHEN: What is your area of specialty?

WEIKER: Middle East politics, comparative politics, some international affairs, American foreign policy.

COHEN: Is that what your thesis was on?

WEIKER: My thesis was on modern Turkey. And my research has been mostly on modern Turkey and some general Middle Eastern things. And in the last ten years I've turned my attention to the Jewish community of Turkey. And that's what I'm doing now. And I'll be branching off more into sociological kinds of topics of ethnicity.

COHEN: Now you've been here since 1962, is that correct?

WEIKER: Right, right.

COHEN: That was the appointment?

WEIKER: Right.

COHEN: And you've got a historical perspective on what it was like that the other folks don't. What was—just for the record—what was the old campus like? What were the facilities like for you?

WEIKER: Well, we were in all kinds of different buildings, old buildings. My first office was over on James Street. And I think there were three or four people in political science. None of us



had our offices in the same building. We didn't teach in the same buildings. We had the old brewery, the old razor factory, and the James Street houses, which were quite nice. No facilities at all. The library was, as I'm sure you know, was on the top floor of the old brewery. And we used to spend our time walking around the streets going from building to building to teach classes.

COHEN: What was it like teaching in those classrooms compared to teaching in the classrooms on the University Heights campus?

WEIKER: Well, they were certainly older. I remember one of the problems we had during the summer was that we had to have the windows open because there was nothing like air conditioning, and some of my classrooms were right out—the window looked out on the main street, so we had to get over the noise. In those senses the facilities were not very good. I don't think I was in the library more than three or four times. On the other hand, I used the Newark Public Library which was pretty close. One of the advantages of that, not an academic one but certainly in other ways, was that we circulated around the city a lot more. We also had some classrooms over on Broad Street. Now I think a lot of us simply don't get much off the campus.

COHEN: In those days, how would you compare—well, I guess the word I'm using is collegiality—among the faculty on the old campus, such as it was, and the new campus, the University Heights campus?

WEIKER: I think there was as much collegiality then as there is now.

COHEN: As much. Uh-huh.

WEIKER: I think so. Because we were small. And I know our department and history and some of the others.... I think being in a small institution, we got to know each other fairly well, especially those who were in the same building and around in nearby buildings. And we ran into each other in classes. Now, we're very collegial with the people whom we know and the people whom we see. But we're scattered in a lot of places. So in a sense that size is the advantage of a lot more people around; there were always interesting people then, and there are now. But physical contact is often difficult. One of the things we've been pressing for for years is a faculty dining room where people just go and you meet them. But we've always been collegial I think in that sense.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Would you say that there was better.... How would you compare the collegiality.... Did people know more about what was going on in the college on the old campus or the new campus in terms of having a better feel for the wholeness of things there or here?

WEIKER: Well, then you have to compare my experience as a very junior faculty with my experience now. One of the things that happened on the old campus under Dean Woodward, I think, was that he kept a very tight ship. He didn't share things, as far as I know, with anybody except a few senior people, and I'm not sure he really liked to do that. And the junior people were not very much informed, at least as far as I could tell. I think one of the reasons for that is because there were a lot fewer important issues that were going on. Now we all press for being



informed by the administration on all sorts of things, and they've learned—not all of them yet—but they've learned that the faculty need to be consulted, and the students need to be consulted. And there's a lot more information going around. It's partly also because there are so many more important issues and budget, all kinds of academic policy.

COHEN: Yes. What are the important issues going around now that weren't going around then?

WEIKER: Going around now that weren't....

COHEN: Well, you're saying there are things going on now, issues that you have to address now, that apparently weren't being addressed or didn't demand your attention. Is that what you're saying?

WEIKER: Well, many of these are still the same, but many of them are more severe now. Certainly budget and resources. I think there wasn't as much concern that we had to overtly face with student quality. Because the student body was much more homogenous. Now—you can't say for better or for worse, there are some advantages and some disadvantages to having a much more diverse student body in terms of social class, in terms of ethnic groups—but it does make it a problem because we have to do some more kinds of remedial work. We have to work on things like retention. I think that the class makeup of our student body has changed. That we get fewer students from the middle and upper middle class suburbs, which means also that a far higher percentage of our students work. So you have to be attentive to class schedules and their schedules. That sort of thing. We have the usual contemporary problems such as multiculturalism and political correctness. We certainly have those around. Let me see, there was one more that.... Yes. And one of the biggest issues, which has been around for years and which was not really around then, I think, is within the university as a whole the emphasis on research versus teaching.

COHEN: Yes, that's a big one.

WEIKER: Yes. It's a very troublesome one.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: And we are in a sense a rather difficult position compared to that...we are in the same university as New Brunswick. Our teaching loads have often been heavier. But we're judged by the same research standards—and we are researchers. One of the things about this faculty is, for a place which is not the main campus of the university, the quality of the faculty is amazingly good. It has always been that way. I know in our department there is virtually nobody that is not doing research and that hasn't published several books. So we have that kind of pressure. At the same time, we have prided ourselves, certainly in our department and I think in many of the departments, on being good teachers. And one of the reputations that Newark has as compared to New Brunswick is that a lot more people care about teaching. There is much more personal interaction with students. I know I had one yesterday who'd transferred from New Brunswick. He took a couple of courses at Newark and found us—and he transferred from New



Brunswick to Newark for that. And we've had some major fights about tenure when a person's activities and outstanding characteristics have been to a large extent teaching and less research.

COHEN: Why has there been this emphasis on teaching quality on this campus compared to, as you were saying, compared to the big campus? Where has this come from?

WEIKER: I think it's partly because of our small size. And because we have a lot of students here who are of course mostly commuters until we got our dorms, which means that they came to us as faculty often for personal needs. They didn't have as much support from other students, say, as if they'd been living in the dorms in New Brunswick in terms of some of their work. So I think they needed more faculty services in the academic sense. Another thing is that we are smaller and closer together. And our classes are often smaller. And so we've gotten to know the students better.

COHEN: Does this concern go back into the sixties or the early days when you first came here?

WEIKER: It was very varied then. Some people were concerned with teaching and some were really pretty much research-minded, which is still the same thing. It still goes on today. There are still some faculty who are very much research-minded and don't put an awful lot of energy into their teaching. I don't know what the quality of their teaching is. I just don't know that well enough. Well, that's....

COHEN: Yes. Going back to talking about the composition of the student body, what were, in your experience, the changes in the level of preparation of the students coming in the sixties, going into the seventies, before the move to the new campus, after the move to the new campus?

WEIKER: Well, one of our problems in that sense here has always been that we have a very wide range of students. We have the very well-prepared and we have the not-so-well prepared but often ambitious and strongly-motivated from essentially the inner city. And it's always been difficult to know how to pitch a course when you get all of these diverse groups. I think that pretty much continues today. We probably have a somewhat larger proportion of poorly-prepared students because we've made some efforts to serve the surrounding community. We get some students from the inner cities. And being poorly prepared is an important problem here because one of the things I think we've done is we have refused to lower our standards. In the late sixties and the seventies, there was a considerable pressure to, I think at least implicitly, lower standards. And one of the things we were told in the late sixties, around the period of 1968, was that when we went to open admissions, we would get a rush of students from the inner city. Well, we went to some extent to open admissions. But one of the things that we did not do in conjunction with that is to lower academic standards. We certainly started the EOF program, which is very important. But we decided that as the state university and as having an obligation to give those people who came here the really highest-quality education, we would not lower standards. And I think we began to have fairly high failure rates. And then a lot of people began to discriminate between where they wanted to go because it might be easy to get in, but it was very difficult to get out. Well, I think this was an important development. I think this is all to Rutgers's credit because one of the things we have to do is to protect the value of the degree of everybody that's going out now and everybody that's gone out in the past.



COHEN: How did the faculty.... Back in the sixties there were efforts to recruit in the local community, particularly in the black community, to bring students in and to bring up the number of students. I believe in about 1968-69, around the time of the Conklin Hall takeover, I think the figure was about an enrollment of 2500 students; there were 60 black students on the campus. How did the faculty deal with that number, which is of course very low by any general standards considering the surrounding community? How did the faculty at that time, before the student action on the part of the Black Organization of Students, how did the faculty deal with that problem? Did they perceive it as a problem?

WEIKER: Well, you said the number of ill-prepared students was low.

COHEN: Well, among the students there were 60, probably, black students who were welcomed there apparently to do college-level work. But that number was very, very, very small considering the total population. My question is: At that time did the faculty realize that that was, considering the surrounding community, did the faculty at that time realize that that was really a very low number by any common standard?

WEIKER: I really don't remember whether we realized it or not. See, that's really not a question that I can respond to very well.

COHEN: What efforts were made during that time to recruit—that you recall—students?

WEIKER: I'm not sure that any efforts were made in the inner cities. But I really don't know what was going on in the admissions office at the time because I was involved with different things. And one of the things I think we have to remember is not the entire black community is the inner-city community. We have black students of all kinds, abilities, backgrounds, from suburbs like Montclair as well as the Central Ward of Newark. So that color is not per se an index of preparation.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: And I think it's accurate to say that the Newark School System at that time was better than it is now. One of the reasons was because the City of Newark was not all—or not mostly—lower socioeconomic status minorities. And I know that the ...[mumbled] High School used to be predominantly Jewish. And you had a lot of upper middle-class white teachers. So that the decline in the school system didn't come until the state and the city began to have major budget problems. And the students that came there had poor preparation for high school from even their earlier backgrounds.

COHEN: Yes, yes. When the Conklin Hall action took place in February of '69, what at that time was your perception of the main issues?

WEIKER: Well, that was the time, of course, when the civil rights movement as a whole was just getting started, and it was a reflection of what went on across the country. Newark was a particularly difficult place—I'm talking about Newark and some of the other suburbs—because



there were lots of tensions between Newark, between the black community and the other ethnic communities—most importantly the Italians in the North Ward. And the Italian politics in the North Ward was pretty much old machine-type organization politics. You know you had Hugh Addonizio was mayor and later was sent to jail. There was also Hugh Carey—Irish, not Italian. And these groups would rather systematically try to control the political situation and to ward off any challenges to them...not only from, say, a group like the black community, but even from their own Italian community there were challengers. I remember politics in Belleville where we used to live before—our first three years here—was very, very vicious among Italians. So that it was sort of a closed political environment here. In Newark much of the wealth was controlled by the major corporations—Prudential, for instance—very few of whose officers lived certainly in Newark. They considered themselves as much larger area things. So they didn't pay much attention to local communities. These were some of the same things that were happening around the country. But I think in Newark, in this part of New Jersey, Hudson County, too, it was particularly bad because you had a lot of entrenched machines. And some of these machines—Hudson County and Essex County—were some of the last in the country really to go.

COHEN: So how did this impact your saying on the developments on the campus?

WEIKER: I think it impacted developments on the campus that the university wasn't awfully sensitive to these things because our business was educating, educating the students whom we got, which were mostly white, upper middle-class students from the suburbs. And this was enough to keep us busy. And the whole sense of a public university serving the community around it, I think, didn't really arise until somewhat later. And there's also the tension for Rutgers, that we are the state university; and that the Rutgers-Newark campus is a representative of the state university in Northern New Jersey. And there's always the tension as to whether our focus and our obligation is to that whole larger area or to the specific city in which we are.

COHEN: You mentioned the emergence of the consciousness of the university as a public university. Now, when did that consciousness begin to surface and become important?

WEIKER: I can't say really when.

COHEN: Well, approximately.

WEIKER: But I think in these... Well, Rutgers I think has always had another kind of attention as well. That is, that many people look on Rutgers to some extent as more akin to some of the private Ivy League universities than, oh, City College of New York or the state colleges. We were more of an elitist institution. We were the crowning jewel, if you wish, of the state higher-education system, so that... There was some evidence of this. For instance, when I've gone abroad or to other parts of the country, when I talk about Rutgers, which is the only state university that doesn't have the name of the state except on the letterhead, I've virtually never had anybody ask me where Rutgers is. So that in that sense it's akin to some of the other universities, and we haven't had to have that concern as much. But as the social problems in the United States got going in the sixties and probably the seventies, this very much began to be a concern, partly because of the pressure of the local community after the Conklin Hall things.



COHEN: Yes. When the faculty voted on such issues, on the admissions issues, one of the issues that came up was, I believe, whether a certain percentage of students in the upper half of their class either being considered for admission or, as the Black Organization was pressing for, to be accepted. And there was a question of the language there. Why was this a problem for the faculty, if you can recall, since we're talking about the upper half of their class. Why was that a problem, that you can remember?

WEIKER: I think it was a problem because a lot of people thought that if we indeed went to a much more lax admission policy, we would seriously lower the quality of the student body and get a lot of students who we couldn't handle or who weren't prepared or who wouldn't find Rutgers the proper place for them without our lowering standards. And a lot of faculty indeed felt this way. On the other hand, there were a lot of faculty who felt that the community had to be served. And we all had to tussle with these things, and we tried to devise formulas so that when ill-prepared students did come, we would have something to offer them and for major problems as to resources. I think when the EOF program was created, there were a lot of new financial resources given to the university. And if we hadn't had the promise of these resources, I'm not at all sure that we would have gone very much in the direction of admitting a lot of these students.

COHEN: Yes, that's a very important point. The promise of the remedial programs, not only of the Economic Opportunity Fund, which was a fund just for.... The actual setting up...well, then the setting up of the Academic Foundations Center which eventually became the Academic Foundations Department. To what extent did the, well, the founding and the emergence of a remedial program assuage any of the fears about standards and inform the faculty members that, yes, students would be remediated if they needed it to the point where they could deal with college work and therefore maintain standards? To what extent did this figure into the equation?

WEIKER: I think it figured in that we were going to have the resources. A lot of us—not necessarily including myself—but a lot of the faculty were not at all convinced that it would work. But given the promise of resources, we thought that at least it certainly was worth a try. And I think that kind of atmosphere still continues. We still have a lot of students who are in those remedial programs. Some do well, and some don't.

COHEN: What is your, over the years since the establishment of first the Academic Foundations Center and then the department, over the years about the effectiveness of the programs and students in the college?

WEIKER: It's been very varied because some students whom I know have been in the AFD who have come out and done very well. Others, of all kinds of ethnic groups, simply don't, and I don't understand how they got into the college. So it's...you can't paint an overall picture. It's done some good for a lot of students apparently. And some of the faculty in those centers are very, very good people. But others simply didn't belong there without a flunk-out rate.

COHEN: I want to go back and get into the area of curriculum in the old days and then how things have developed and changed in the late sixties and seventies. What was being taught, first let's say in the Political Science Department, in the sixties, before the move to the new campus?



WEIKER: Actually our curriculum has...our basic curriculum has changed in our department only in a few ways. The requirements for the political science major have remained pretty much the same. You start off with a good foundation in American government and politics. And then you have to go on to take more courses in international comparative and political theory. The main evolutions of.... [Break in recording]

COHEN: Okay, we're back with Professor Weiker, and we were talking about curriculum in political science.

WEIKER: Okay. One of the things we did early...our introductory sequence used to be American government and then contemporary issues in American politics. Well, we changed that so that the requirements for majors began to be American government and then an introduction to comparative politics. And then more recently, a few years ago, we added a third introductory course called America and the World, which combines American foreign policy and international affairs, which has proven to be very popular and very, very important.

COHEN: When was that introduced?

WEIKER: That course, we made it a required course, I don't know, five, six, seven years ago, I think.

COHEN: Oh, it's required for the major.

WEIKER: Yes. We now have three courses required for the major. And also it appeals to a lot of students who are just taking their general social science requirements. One of the innovations in general curriculum change in social science has been the students now need to take a year of the same social science; that is, two semesters of political science or two semesters of psychology. Before, they could take one semester of political, one semester of economics. Now they need to take a whole year sequence.

COHEN: Oh, that's a requirement of the new curriculum?

WEIKER: Yes.

COHEN: Once you opt for...I see, so you can't mix the soc course with the political science.

WEIKER: Right. You can take a lot of social science, but you everybody, including political science majors and everybody else, has to have two semesters in the same thing. And then since we were beginning to get, you know, a sizeable number of non-majors who might never take any political science again, we decided that the second semester for them really had to be America and the World. And that's proven to be a very good decision.

COHEN: Yes. What influences were working to bring about these changes?

WEIKER: We began to be...the United States in general began to be much less domestic-centered. We also...from an academic intellectual standpoint, comparative politics began to



grow in the country generally, and the comparison being, you know, a very important intellectual tool. I think these were the kinds of trends. And also I must say that we got some faculty members who were in the comparative international area, and those are the ones who happened to have stayed.

COHEN: Okay. In recruiting faculty members, again during the late sixties into the seventies, what were you looking for?

WEIKER: As we expanded—and when I came here the department was three or four people, I think; and now we have ten full lines. We used to have a little more but then we lost some for various administrative reasons, which I still don't support. So that what we were looking for, as the department expanded, was specialists in a different variety...in a wider variety of fields. When we came here.... Well, at the faculty meeting yesterday, Ken Miller delivered a little eulogy for Heinz Seelbach. And Heinz used to teach all kinds of courses from state and local government to world politics to everything else. We needed people who could expand...who were specialists really in international affairs, who had area specialties, who were political theorists, political philosophers, and that was our main criterion really is to see what were the fields as we widened which needed to be filled.

COHEN: Now were the increases in the number of faculty hired commensurate with the increases in enrollments at that time?

WEIKER: To some extent. I think we grew. I don't know the figures, but I'm sure we grew up to from maybe 2500 to 4,000. Something like that.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: Yes. And of course this was a period, too, when universities were flush with money and so on. In fact our department probably expanded more than the percentage of the student enrollment, but I can't be sure of that.

COHEN: You mentioned before just in passing about the people who came on board, some of them specializing in comparative politics. And then I think the phrase you used "those who remained." Okay?

WEIKER: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: My question is, to what extent do the vicissitudes of faculty retention, recruitment, and so on impact on what a department actually offers?

WEIKER: Very much because one of the things that's happened in the academic world in the last 20, 25 years maybe, is that people move much less frequently. You know in our department a lot of people have been here 20 years, which is a comparatively long time. You get tenure, and you tend to stay. And given the budget crunch of the last few years, when somebody leaves, that line often does not get replaced. And so what you have left is really a kind of almost a coincidence. And for no particular reasons, the fields in which we have had the most trouble



holding people are in things like American national government, which means then that in order to teach courses in those fields, either we have to do it with people who are not primarily experts in those fields, or we do it with coadjutants, part-time people. But the vicissitudes of individual movements, the impact is very, very great.

COHEN: You mentioned the people in American political science haven't stayed. Has that been pure happenstance? Or something to do with university policy?

WEIKER: No. No, I think it is pure happenstance because we've had a number of people in that field who simply didn't work out, who simply weren't the caliber that we wanted. I don't know why it's happened, but it has.

COHEN: What was happening during the same period—again, late sixties through the seventies—in the general overall curriculum development for the college?

WEIKER: I think there weren't an awful lot of changes in the basic curriculum. The major curriculum revisions came about in the eighties really. And what was happening in terms of things like college requirements, I think, if I recall rightly, was not great change. But there was much more expansion of it, much more specialization as the departments got bigger. One of the things...when I came here, we didn't have social science departments at all. We had a Division of Social Sciences, which I personally would like to go back to.

COHEN: Would you?

WEIKER: Yes.

COHEN: Why?

WEIKER: Because I think in terms of the academic logic, that there is a lot of commonality between political science and, say, sociology. I teach a lot of what otherwise might be called sociology and anthropology in my courses. And there was much more interchange in the social sciences because now our major, for instance, requires 36 credits in political science. And that means a 790 number which is sometimes rather narrowly defined. And we really have to work at it sometimes to get students to take psychology, sociology. Economics is not so difficult because they realize the economy is a considerable problem. An additional requirement for our major is that students need, over and above political science, they need 12 credits in other social sciences which have to be in at least three different departments. But the organization of a major by departments sort of leads people to confine themselves more narrowly and in terms of intellectual interests, for instance, my particular research interests, which are now moving into the area of ethnicity and social relations, I have much more in common, in that sense, with the sociologists than I do with some people in my own department and the title political scientist. I mean I go to do some of my sociological social research, and I give people a card that says: "Professor of Political Science." Well, then we quickly agree that political science isn't very much of an accurate term anymore because we don't only study governments. In that sense I think a return to a broader social science emphasis would be very beneficial for the students...and for us.



COHEN: What changes have there been during this time, department changes in the organization of the Political Science Department? If at all.

WEIKER: No, not really very many.

COHEN: In the area of faculty—going back to that—you mentioned before the problems, I think you mentioned problems, about teaching versus research. When did that emerge as a problem?

WEIKER: It emerged probably with Ed Bloustein. He had a lot of good things, and he was ambitious for the university. He brought a lot of important things. But he implicitly...everybody talked about teaching, but the rewards were really there for research. I think, as I said, probably somewhere in the middle of the Bloustein administration these things began to be important. The prestige of the university—and it aspired to be a national university, which meant research, which meant a lot of connections with business and industry. That's also important because there are a lot of resources, financial resources, that came in from those sources. And I think that's pretty much when it emerged.

COHEN: How did that impact on the actual working life of yourself, the average professor, on the campus. Or someone who is—okay, let's leave it at that.

WEIKER: It impacted on us because we were told, in effect, that our promotions were going to be based to a large extent on research, and we had to do that as a primary activity. I think a lot of people cut back on the efforts that they made in teaching. For instance, I know that there are some people who give fewer exams, who don't give as many or as detailed term papers, because those things take a lot of time in grading. There was a reluctance to develop new courses because those things took a lot of time. I think in those senses it certainly impacted on it. We used to say the kiss of death around here was being selected as teacher of the year. [Laughter]

COHEN: I've heard that before from another people.

WEIKER: Mm-hmm. But on the other hand, though, as I said, in our department and in a lot of departments I know, we have some very, very good researchers, fully on a.... There's always talk about—between us and the New Brunswick campus. The impression certainly had been given at times in various departments that the New Brunswick people consider Newark and Camden sort of as provincial, that there are lower standards, research standards for instance, for promotion for us than there are for them. But one on one, I think you've got to say, certainly in our department, that we are the equal in research of the people down there. I should mention one more impact, is the great pressure to reduce teaching loads.

COHEN: Yes. Sure. What had it been in the sixties, the early sixties, when you first came?

WEIKER: When I first came, it was four, usually four courses.

COHEN: Four and four, four each semester.



WEIKER: Yes. Not four preparations.

COHEN: No, no.

WEIKER: But four actual classes. And there were sometimes I know there was a difficulty; when I had a good semester, I would have two preparations but three sections of the same course, which was a problem. Because by the time you teach the third thing the same time every week, you don't do as good a job. You don't pay as much attention, you know. [Laughter]

COHEN: So the typical pattern was to have four classes in each semester, is that what it was?

WEIKER: Mm-hmm. Yes.

COHEN: And that changed—when did that change?

WEIKER: I don't know exactly when; I'd have to go back. But probably in the seventies. Late sixties and the seventies it began to change. That's approximately when it happened.

COHEN: So that the typical pattern became what?

WEIKER: The typical pattern became...well, gradually it went down to three. And then in recent years it's been very often two and two. Now we're going back up to two and three because we don't have the resources. And I know in our department there was some reluctance to increase our teaching load from two and two to two and three, because of this tremendous research pressure. But we decided to do it partly because we felt that if we did any less, we couldn't have a respectable major. We can't offer students so few courses that they have virtually no choices in things. And we said reluctantly, but in terms of our responsibility to students, we've gone up to two and three.

COHEN: Yes. Again, dealing with the research-teaching question: When it came to deal with the whole promotional process, how fair has it been? Let's say, again, if you can compare, compare let's say the early years with the later years. The early sixties when you first came here, and then with the move to the new campus and the Bloustein administration. How fair has the whole process been?

WEIKER: Well, fair. What does it mean to be fair?

COHEN: Maybe I should rephrase my question. Do you think that when the recommendations went through from the department to the Appointments and Promotion Committee and finally reached the Summit Committee, that the Summit recommendations—decisions—were a fair response to the recommendations at the local level?

WEIKER: I think for Newark, for a lot of things in Newark, the problem was a reflection of some of the same tensions that we've already talked about. That our mission, the mission of Newark in the last ten, 15 years, has become, I think, a little bit more differentiated from New



Brunswick in that the teaching is a more important function. And the one of the reasons—I should have mentioned this earlier if I didn't—I think is because certainly at Rutgers College, you have students who are intellectually much more independent. They don't need as much mentoring. Not to say that they're necessarily any brighter. But that we've had to give them—and we wanted to give them—more attention. In the other direction, though, the Summit Committee is the last ten, 15 years maybe has gone pretty much fully into the research mode. And, as I've said, we've had some very major fights with them. They've also sort of taken it into their own hands. We have had cases where the recommendations from the department on up to the A&P Committee that indeed everything had been—and the section when they're used to be; that's another matter for some time—they were unanimously favorable, and the Summit Committee for some reason or another of their own turned them down. And this was, in our view, simply an almost insult to the judgment of the faculty ourselves. There's also been a lot of emphasis in research on letters from outside of the university, from people outside the university, which is all right. Sometimes one or two negative letters is enough to kill somebody. And the Summit Committee would tend to go off and read those outside letters and in our estimation not give much weight to our evaluation of some of those outside things. We thought that was really denigrating our role.

COHEN: How, in your perception and the perception of your colleagues, how equitable...how has the Summit Committee been in dealing with Newark compared to New Brunswick faculty?

WEIKER: In the last few years, I think it's been quite equitable.

COHEN: The last few years.

WEIKER: Yes. Earlier I really don't know because I wasn't really in those things. But now every year we get figures and we look very carefully at the percentages of people that are approved on the two campuses. And we do quite well. The rejection rate for New Brunswick is as high as it is for Newark. So in that sense I don't have any complaints.

COHEN: You have no sense of what was happening in the seventies, let's say?

WEIKER: No, I really don't.

COHEN: Yes. When the AAUP came on as bargaining agent for the faculty, how effective has it been, again, when it first got started through the seventies, into the eighties, in defending faculty in grievances?

WEIKER: Certainly the advent of the grievance procedures I think has been one of the major achievements of the AAUP. Probably also in terms of things like salaries. It's hard to say how much money we would have gotten if we hadn't had the bargaining. But as I said, I think certainly grievance procedures have been one of the major achievements of the AAUP. I think there's no doubt about that.

COHEN: The procedure. How successful do you think they've been?



WEIKER: Again, it probably varies individually. Administrations are always very reluctant to bow to procedures and pressures. And, as you know, you're in it, one of the provisions is it says the Grievance Committee finds in favor of the grievant. Very often what is done is not that the judgment is reversed, but the case is sent back for reanalysis.

COHEN: Hmm. Yes.

WEIKER: Which leaves administrations an awful lot of leeway, and they've very often used it.

COHEN: In the seventies and into the eighties, my understanding is that there have been varying levels of faculty on this campus interest in AAUP in terms of participation, and at the various levels who have been involved either in the local chapter, in the university-wide council and so on. Why this sort of rollercoaster phenomenon?

WEIKER: Well, several things. One is that a lot of faculty consider the unions as pretty much proletarian. That you don't want to have anything to do with unions. We're professionals. We're not workers. Another thing is I think that faculty concern on some of these or for things that the union could do was a lot of times geared to economic issues, salaries. When those things became tight, we wanted the AAUP to really be strong. Those were the things that were important to a lot of people. Grievance procedures, which is the other major thing, and faculty consultation were not so important because people that have tenure are unlikely to get themselves involved—or less likely to get themselves involved—in grievance matters. And, as I say, I think those factors. When certain issues are very hot, especially economic ones, interest would rise.

COHEN: Approximately what period was that then?

WEIKER: A lot of it came only in the last maybe ten years when budgets began to get tight and salaries began to get pressure on them. One of the things that certainly was a factor was the administration's desire on merit increases. To have a very large say on the distribution of merit increases, a very great deal of discretion. That was a major issue. It became an even larger issue in the last, again, probably about ten years, when the Bloustein administration started bringing onto the campuses—or into the university—high-powered people. We now have the Wixall [sp], the World Class Scholar. Very high salaries. Very large perquisites, including apparently apartments and other things. So a real morale problem because of the great inequities. I don't remember any person who was already at the university being designated as a World Class Scholar. And there was a lot of bidding. The same thing goes on now with some people in, for instance, the Business Department. The salaries of some people in the Business Department at the equivalent rank that a lot of the rest of us are, as far as I know, I don't know this for a fact, but the rumors, and impression certainly is very widespread among the faculty, is some of the businesspeople, in order to recruit them, you had to pay them very, very high salaries. And it creates real inequities. We were in a sense told that we were not as good as people being brought in from the outside. And that's created a real morale problem. And as I said, one of the focuses of that, as far as the AAUP is concerned, is the whole fight every time we have a contract about who is going to have how much influence in the awarding of merit increases.



COHEN: Yes, yes. Talking about the Business Department, how has the emergence of the business program on the campus impacted on the college as a whole in terms of student interests, enrollments?

WEIKER: Well, as you know, the percentage of people, of students, wanting business curriculum has grown very high. This is partly in response to...similar to national trends. It's partly.... Well, to some extent a lot of students want to simply make money, and business was the place to do it, although we have also a lot of students here who are interested in the professions. It's an interesting phenomenon. A lot of them are first-generation college students here. But certainly it's produced tension because it's meant that the Business Departments have had far larger classes; they've had to get a lot more resources. And we had problems, for instance, as to how much resources should be devoted to small departments with very few majors. We did phase out geography. We decided that, on the other hand, philosophy ought to be kept; it's a very important department. But there were that kind of tensions.

And there was also a problem in the Business Department because the business schools, or the Association of Business Schools, require a very large number of business credits for the business major, which meant that students were taking far fewer courses in other things. Which is a problem of resources. It was a problem also of student development. That is they had many fewer opportunities to take general education courses. And one of the issues of the mid-eighties when we had this large curriculum revision, we had long discussions about, well, how much of a general education requirement to maintain. And I think to this day we have a larger number of credits required in general education than I think in any other parts of the university. And the trend to let students sort of—the national trend—let students do all their own choosing and drift off anywhere they like, we've resisted that very strongly, and I think we were right to do it.

COHEN: I wanted to, with the few minutes we have left for today, maybe we could touch on the question.... [End of Tape #1]

COHEN: Okay, this is Gil Cohen. It is now Thursday, October 31, 1991.

WEIKER: Right, Halloween...

COHEN: And we're again with Professor Walter Weiker, who is chairing the Political Science Department this semester, right? This is our second session. And we broke off at the last section...I think that we pretty much—we were talking about curriculum. And I wanted to move next into the area of the student population, particularly your perception—I mean it's all pretty well documented over the years; there have been many complaints about the level of preparation of students coming into the college. What is your perception of the level of preparation, the changing level of preparation, of students coming to Rutgers in Newark, comparing the sixties, then through the seventies. I mean what can you say about that?

WEIKER: I think in the sixties it was pretty high because we were still getting a lot of the middle and upper middle-class students at the time, and the school systems in many of the places from which we were drawing were quite good. The seventies it probably declined somewhat, partly, as I said, because of demographics, because we were getting students—fewer students



from the residential suburbs and more from the industrial suburbs and more from the inner cities. And certainly in the inner cities, one of the problems was the school systems did decline fairly rapidly. In the eighties it began to come back because to some extent economic circumstances and the influx of some foreign students, and as I think I said the last time, those inner-city students who weren't prepared, who we were told were going to come rushing to the campus when we had open admissions, found that we were pretty tough. And that if they weren't prepared, they couldn't do very well. So they didn't really come. We still have our share of the not-very-well-prepared students, but on the whole the students today are pretty highly motivated; and the number who are unprepared for my kind of subject is relatively small. From what I understand, it's more difficult in some of the sciences and mathematics. But that's only informal kind of information.

COHEN: You said open admissions. Was there really open admissions at any time?

WEIKER: I don't think so really. I think we guaranteed, if I remember this right, that at some point we would take almost anybody with their high school diploma into the EOF program, into the remedial program. But I don't think that lasted very long because students found that even if they could get in, to stay in was very, very tough, and the word apparently got around the community that that was going to happen. So we sort of had the best of both worlds. We had some in name open admissions, but in fact we maintained a lot of our standards.

COHEN: Do you recall—since we're on the subject of admissions—do you recall, you know, after the Conklin Hall takeover, admissions was a major issue. There was a faculty discussion about whether students in the top 50 percent of their classes in the Newark area, I believe it was, either would be accepted or considered for admission. Do you recall that discussion in the faculty in 1969 after the Conklin Hall takeover in 1969?

WEIKER: No, not very well. I don't recall the discussion itself. But I think the pressure was very much for actually accepting. I don't remember the figures.

COHEN: Right.

WEIKER: And probably I was wrong just a minute ago when I said we would accept anybody with a high school diploma. But it's probably more correct to say we would accept anybody in the upper 50 percent of the class. But again, I don't remember the specifics of that anymore. But it was a fairly heated discussion.

COHEN: Do you remember any of the details about it?

WEIKER: No, I really don't.

COHEN: Okay. Okay, I wanted to move into really.... Well, since we've touched on this whole question of Conklin Hall, let's go back to that. What, in your perception and if you can sort of speak for the perception of your colleagues that you know, was the grievance of the students?

WEIKER: Well, I speak for myself. I'm not going to speak for anybody else.



COHEN: Okay.

WEIKER: There were several kinds of grievances. One was that there was a general grievance nationally and in the larger community here that led to the whole civil rights movement, and that the university was a white, elitist institution in essentially a large black residential community. That was the general context. More specifically, there was a lot of controversy as to what Rutgers-Newark's role was going to be. That is, is it primarily a Newark institution or is it primarily a New Jersey—a northern branch of New Jersey, the State University, and what should be the relationship of institutions like the university, but also like business, to the black community as a whole? And the Newark urban community wanted really, I think, to coopt a lot of those institutions and to get a good deal of control over what they did. I think that was the basic complaint. And to some extent the university had not reached out to the inner-city community. Not that anybody else had either. So it was all those kinds of questions really building up, both nationally and localized.

COHEN: At the time how did you feel about the demands and about the justification for these expectations that we just outlined—the university being more responsive to local demands?

WEIKER: I had a good deal of sympathy with it because we were a major public institution, and there were some real problems. On the other hand, I continued to feel that we also had a responsibility to Northern New Jersey and particularly that we had a responsibility to high-quality education. That is, that if we put all our energies only into working on problems of the inner cities, we would be diverted from giving the high-quality education which the community needs and which was going to maintain the reputation of Rutgers. So, as I said, there were these kinds of contradictory pressures. I was fairly active in some of the things that we did in the inner city. There was a thing called the Committee of Concern, which consisted of business, civic, and university leaders. I spent a considerable time working on that. So, as I said, I was in a sense in both camps. I thought that the quality education was the thing that would be the most important service that Rutgers could render to the inner-city community.

COHEN: Why was there a perception overall that there was a conflict between...on the one hand, as you say, a quality education, and on the other hand, a responsiveness to local needs?

WEIKER: I think partly this was a perception because the black community was viewed as a core, unprepared, uneducated, very political community. And that many of the leaders were viewed as having more political concerns than really, say, intellectual, academic ones. To some extent that was true. I think to a large extent it was not true. But certainly there was that perception. And there was the perception, too, that the university is going to have to put so much of its resources into really making up all the deficiencies of the past. And then there were a lot of other things that the university needed to do that we simply couldn't do. It was partly a question of resources. It was also a question of the qualifications of the faculty. Because to teach...to do major things for poorly-prepared students is quite a different task than the regular kind of teaching activities. At the university, people with Ph.D.'s in traditional disciplines are not necessarily prepared to perform all those tasks. So, as I said, all kinds of pressures really on the university and particularly in Newark.



COHEN: How would you assess the effectiveness of the remedial program on campus, which, of course, was Academic Foundations Center...eventually became a full-fledged department.

WEIKER: They've had considerable success as far as I can tell because I've had some students that have gone through it and have done very nicely. I should also mention that it is not only black clientele at all. It has a lot of white students in it, too. So there are some success stories. There are a lot of stories of failure, where they tried and it simply didn't work. And this happens to any institution. You get people in it that don't belong in it. It's very hard sometimes to screen out whether somebody is simply poorly prepared or somebody who just doesn't have the ability. It's not a scientific process.

COHEN: Going back again to the Conklin Hall takeover, what was your perception of how—specifically how—Malcolm Talbott handled the negotiations?

WEIKER: Malcolm Talbott handled the negotiations, I think, very well. He was a good diplomat. Some people certainly felt that he was much too much on the side of the protesters. But on the whole I think he was a major factor in really bridging the gaps. I had a lot of admiration for him. I always liked him very much.

COHEN: Looking back with the wisdom of hindsight, do you have any idea of what could have been done at the time to avert the action itself? Any possibility?

WEIKER: It's a long time ago, and I don't remember the situation in detail. But I think that probably there was not much that could have been done. Because this was in the midst of the civil rights movement. It was connected with the Martin Luther King assassination. And locally there were also problems, which I think I mentioned last time, of an entrenched political machine in Essex County and in Hudson County. So there were some pretty legitimate complaints, which was had, too. Because I was active in the Democratic Party at the time. And I doubt that much could have been done to avoid the situation.

COHEN: How do you think, going back a year or so...I mean the Conklin Hall takeover was in February of '69. There Newark riots were in July of '67. What recollections do you have of that in July of '67. Were you on campus then?

WEIKER: No. I wasn't on campus very much. It happened...I'm not sure where I was at the very beginning. And at the height of it they told people to stay away, and a lot of people did. I was here for a little bit. I didn't really see any of the kind of tank battles that we had.

COHEN: How were things when you came back in September of '67 after the, well, I'm talking about a month and a half, two months after the riots themselves? What was the discussion going like on campus at the time, that you can recall?

WEIKER: The discussion was as to certainly why it all happened. And then whether or not the governor and the National Guard and the state police had handled it very well. And as to what the university's role was going to be, we didn't really get to that until somewhat later, I think.



COHEN: What links, if any, did people establish between the Conklin Hall takeover and the Newark riots in their minds?

WEIKER: Well, the Conklin Hall takeover, of course, came because there was a perception in the black community, in the inner-city community, that nothing really had been done. How it was perceived out in the suburbs, well, there was a continuing kind of a fear that there was going to be an explosion in the city at any time. And there were threats from the inner city to make the suburbs feel it by actually coming out into the suburbs and doing things. I'm not sure how credible any of those threats were, how popular they were. I don't think they were on the part of responsible leaders. But certainly there was a good deal of tension which continued for some years.

COHEN: You mean post-'67 riots?

WEIKER: Yes.

COHEN: This actually was being talked about by people?

WEIKER: Oh, yes. I know in some places where I was out in the residential suburbs, there was a great deal of fear of these things being exported out there.

COHEN: So when the Conklin Hall action occurred, was this background also influencing attitudes and decision-making, do you think, among the faculty here let's say? Or among the student body?

WEIKER: I don't know what it was doing in the student body. I really can't answer that question very well.

COHEN: How did you feel at the time? Was this something that influenced your responses to how negotiations should be conducted or attitudes toward negotiations on issues? Were you conditioned in any way by the events of the year and a half before?

WEIKER: To some extent. Well, I was conditioned to that for much longer because I came from a very liberal college background. I went to Antioch in the late forties and early fifties, which was, as I said, a very liberal place. And my liberal sympathies were fairly deep. So I was to some extent sympathetic, of course, to the black aspirations. And I think it was certainly clear also that between the Newark riots and the Conklin Hall takeover, nothing very much was done to prevent the—to improve the situation. And it's often rare that these things happen unless there's a great deal of pressure very specifically.

COHEN: Okay. I want to move on to the area of—since this is related to what we're talking about—the area of affirmative action in hiring and appointments.

WEIKER: Mm-hmm.



COHEN: First affirmative action in the hiring of minority faculty. What was being done in the seventies to recruit them specifically?

WEIKER: I'm not sure whether we—when the time came for various hirings we had to fill out forms that we had sincerely searched and interviewed minority people. As I said, I don't know when that began. I think our department was always alert for that sort of thing. We had some black faculty very early. There really weren't many black faculty; of course we couldn't hold because everybody else was trying to get them. And the numbers of Ph.D.'s, of minority Ph.D.'s, at that time was fairly small. We made efforts. I'm not sure that it was a very major concern 'til it was brought to our attention that politically it had to be done. Of course there was academic justification for it, too, in the sense of role models for students. And the black Ph.D.'s were, person for person, as good as the white ones.

COHEN: How did the recruitment of women, recruitment and promotion of women—because that was an issue in the seventies—what were the college and the department doing in that area at the time?

WEIKER: Well, the department, I can't say enough good for the department because we always had—not always—but for the last 20, 25 years, we've had our share of women. And the thing that I'm always pleased to say is that the reason we got these particular women is because they were the best people, and it had nothing to do with the fact that we were told to get certain categories. As far as promotion is concerned, we promoted some and didn't promote others. Some simply didn't work out; I had to fire one one time, and that was not a very pleasant thing to do. It's never a pleasant thing to do. And there were all these possible charges of sex discrimination. In our department they never amounted to very much because, well, we maintained a pretty good record. A lot of the information about discrimination against women that is statistical, I think what you have to do is take it on a case-by-case basis. There are certain kinds of things that are.... For instance, when somebody works part time for a number of years, what about qualifications for promotion? To what extent are the research requirements the same for somebody that takes off time to raise a family, a perfectly legitimate concern? I think nobody has any valid complaints at all. In the college as a whole, again, I don't know people's individual records.

COHEN: Do you recall in the seventies a class action suit was filed by some women faculty? I think the group was led by Dorothy Dinnerstein and Helen Strausser and the Department of Higher Education. Do you recall that class action and what it was about?

WEIKER: No, not in great detail. No.

COHEN: Do you have any recollections of what the issue was?

WEIKER: Well, I think the issue was that women were being promoted more slowly, that there was no allowances being made for part-time work or any diversions that had to be done because of raising families. Again, those are the kinds of feminist issues that plague the whole society.

COHEN: How did you feel about the justification for their arguments?



WEIKER: I didn't know enough about the individual cases to really be able to have an opinion about the class action as a whole.

COHEN: I want to move along to the...we were talking about issues in the community and student activism, and I should have brought this up before. But I want to get into the area of the student activism around the war in Vietnam. And I guess my question is, in what way did the whole issue, the activism, affect your teaching?

WEIKER: Well, I taught, of course, some international relations courses and some American government courses. It only affected the teaching in the sense that we had to use analytical techniques to talk much more about contemporary events than we had before. We had a lot of discussions in classes about the war in Vietnam. But often it didn't get very far because the situation was developing, and everybody was sort of putting out their own rhetoric. So in that sense it didn't affect teaching a great deal. What I've always tried to do is to give the students analytical techniques to talk about whatever events there were. I continued to try to do that. I have my own opinions, of course, which I told students about. I never hesitated to do that. I always told students at the beginning of classes I do have opinions. And to try to pretend that I don't is something which is just really not worthy of college students. I give them a chance to answer me in lots of interesting discussions.

COHEN: What were students saying in the classroom in those days if you can generalize or give specific examples?

WEIKER: Well, the number of students who were rabidly, if you want, militantly anti-Vietnam was always a majority—I'm sorry, a minority—at Rutgers-Newark, as probably in most universities and colleges around the country. The ones that were militantly anti-Vietnam were more vocal as they've always been. But we were probably not as much affected probably because of the class composition of the student body. They did some from much more working-class and lower middle-class ethnic backgrounds, with conservative views from conservative families. As I said, we were probably less plagued with that some of the more elite universities of the time.

COHEN: How do you think it affected the study habits of students at the time?

WEIKER: Well, I don't recall any particular disturbance except for the activists.

COHEN: How did the discussions around the war, specifically in the spring of 1970 after the invasion of Cambodia and the Kent State killings of four students, discussions around having a moratorium—how did that affect faculty relations, your relations, with colleagues?

WEIKER: A lot of the faculty, interestingly enough, were divided on the issue. We had a fairly good number of activists, but we also had a share of the fairly vocal conservative faculty. Except for a few people, I don't think personal relationships were really very much affected.



COHEN: Do you remember a faculty meeting where large numbers of students were in the meeting room, probably Conklin or Boyden, and the discussion got rather heated? Henry Blumenthal then—the dean, yes....

WEIKER: Probably.

COHEN: This is '70. [Blumenthal] had to calm things down. Do you recall that meeting at all?

WEIKER: Yes.

COHEN: What happened? What were the issues, if you can recall, at that meeting? I understand curriculum was one. There was the question of whether to retain a foreign language requirement. What can you tell me about that meeting?

WEIKER: I think the fact that it happened around the Cambodia thing was pretty much coincidence. If I recall rightly, one of the things about some of those meetings was that some of the militant activists wanted us to adopt as a faculty some anti-Vietnam resolutions. But the issues of the curriculum at that time were, I think, pretty much separate as I recall.

COHEN: And why was the—if you can recall—at that meeting there was quite a heated discussion, I was told, between faculty.... [Break in recording] Okay, we're back with Professor Weiker. Okay. So at that meeting, your recollection at this point. There was some discussion around it. Okay. I wanted to move on to the area of the changing literally, to the graduate school, the founding of the graduate school. What effect—I realize there were graduate courses here before the graduate school was established as a graduate school.... Well, first, why was it necessary to have a graduate school?

WEIKER: Several reasons. One is because a university, certainly a major state university, one of the things that makes it unique in kind of offerings, and differentiates it from state colleges, for instance, is graduate programs. We certainly had a graduate-level faculty here. And politically speaking, in a way, a lot of people thought that our programs were certainly getting shortchanged by New Brunswick, which was considered by the people there to be the center of the university. That we had relatively little autonomy. We were members of the graduate faculty in New Brunswick. We didn't run the programs here. We saw our mission as often very different from that of New Brunswick. So it was partly for academic reasons and partly also for administrative and efficiency reasons, that we just.... The graduate programs were getting larger, and we couldn't see continuing to be administered from New Brunswick. It just wasn't an efficient way to do things.

COHEN: Now, what effect did the establishment of the graduate school then have on the undergraduate program—teaching, curriculum, so on?

WEIKER: I think one of the big effects was it provided a lot more competition for resources. I know that we had to...that there was no graduate school budget. So all the teaching resources had to come out of the load of the undergraduate faculty. When I say there was no budget, is there were no separate lines established.



COHEN: No separate lines, yes. I'm forgetting all that.

WEIKER: No, right. Which is still the case. The only lines that the graduate school now has are in the Public Administration program and the Institute of Animal Behavior. Maybe now the new Molecular Science Center, which are not connected to any undergraduate departments.

COHEN: Hmm. MPA, IAB, and the center...

WEIKER: And I think the new center.

COHEN: Yes, I think you're right. Yes.

WEIKER: Yes. The dean doesn't have any lines.

COHEN: But aside from the question of lines, what did it do as far as bringing in people with backgrounds and experience who may not have been here without the graduate school? Did that have any influence on the undergraduate program?

WEIKER: I can't say it had any influence in our department because a lot of the people were here in fact without the graduate school. In some departments it probably did. And one of the attractions that we did have was the possibilities of teaching graduate courses in New Brunswick, which a number of us did. So in that sense it probably had some role. But I can't say it's been in very specific individual terms.

COHEN: Yes. Okay. I want to get into the area of the administrations you've served under, going back some years, and I'd like to start with the presidents of the university, sort of your perception of their role, their effectiveness or otherwise. Mason Gross?

WEIKER: Yes. That goes back quite a ways. I think the perception of Mason Gross was...to some extent he was certainly New Brunswick-oriented. He was a humanities kind of a person. I think his major reputation in many ways was because of his radio program. I forget what the name of it was.

COHEN: I forget, too.

WEIKER: So that was a long time ago. So I don't have very much of a personal perception because I wasn't in that level at the time.

COHEN: Edward Bloustein?

WEIKER: Bloustein started off, I think, very well. He was a lawyer, he was a political scientist, he had had a lot of experience in various foundations. And he began to pay some real attention to Newark. You see I'm looking at it from the Newark perception.

COHEN: Yes. Right. That's what I want.



WEIKER: And he certainly was a more visible, glamorous, if you will, kind of a person, I think, as probably the rest of the state was concerned. But then he went off in his last few years on the research, the tremendous importance of research, that we had talked about earlier.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: And so many of the issues of contention within the university developed during his tenure. To some extent some of them were his fault and some of them were not. But the perception of his interest in Newark decreased. That whether or not he was responsible for such things as the tensions between the administration and the faculty through the AAUP is hard to say. But certainly as the tensions between the AAUP and the faculty—or you could say the administration and the faculty—got greater, he didn't do anything about it. There was certainly the perception that he wanted all the authority for himself. The role in the senate was really pretty perfunctory. I served on the senate for a few years, and we virtually never saw him. There was a great tussle about what the senate ought to take up. There was kind of a legalistic one. In I think the three or four years that I was on the senate, the most important thing that came up for decision really was the university calendar, which was the one thing that the senate had control over. And he was very ambitious for the university, which was fine. But I think internally he was perceived as more and more unaware and uninterested in the need to have consultation—the faculty was very strong—on this. And a lot of people began to be sorry that he didn't keep his pledge that after ten years, he was going to say the university needs a new leader.

COHEN: You mentioned the contentious issues. Is there any other detail that you can supply to fill that out?

WEIKER: Yes. Well, I think we talked in the first hour about the great tension between the research requirements and the questions of undergraduate teaching. That was certainly one.

COHEN: Did you think that was more of an issue on this campus than on New Brunswick?

WEIKER: Yes, I think it was.

COHEN: Why?

WEIKER: Because the mission of Newark, I think, has been more one to give attention to teaching because of the nature of our students, because to some extent it was somewhat of a lower academic level. That for our students, many of whom continued to live at home, they didn't have the kind of peer support groups that you have on a residential campus. They weren't as independent intellectually, I think. Many of them were just as bright. But they needed a good deal more mentoring. That sort of thing. And there was also the perception, I think, in New Brunswick that Newark's mission was a good deal more teaching. And certainly when it came to promotion time sometimes, if the record of Newark faculty in research wasn't as good as some of the individuals in New Brunswick, a lot of it was said, Okay, this is fine. But we don't expect very much of people in Newark. We were looked on as sort of second-class citizens. But not by everybody, but certainly by some that I know.



COHEN: This is rushing a bit, but were Newark faculty actually spending more time with the students, teaching, advising, and so on, do you feel?

WEIKER: It's hard to say. But certainly our perception was that we were. And from what I was told by students who had attended both Newark and New Brunswick, generally they got more faculty attention in Newark than they do in New Brunswick. And New Brunswick people were very much research-oriented. Again, it comes down to some individuals.

COHEN: Sure.

WEIKER: But I think the general perception among students certainly was that this was the case. And, as I said, a lot of us also thought that some of the people in New Brunswick really looked down on us in terms of our research performance. Although, as I said also, I think that in our department, one for one, we can match New Brunswick with no trouble at all.

COHEN: Okay. Moving on to the various administrations. Malcolm Talbott was appointed vice president of Newark in 1965, and he served in that capacity until 1972, I guess, and then moved on to other positions. James Young then took over as provost.

WEIKER: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: The question is how would you assess Malcolm Talbott's overall contribution during his tenure as vice president? And acting dean, by the way before Henry Blumenthal.

WEIKER: Yes. Well, Malcolm's contribution, I think, was pretty significant. Because for one thing, he was strongly oriented to Newark. He had come out of Newark, he was always identified in that sense. I think he was a very capable negotiator and administrator and diplomat, a sympathetic person. And I think, if I recall rightly, he consolidated a lot of the administrative and academic aspects. And in that sense I think naming a building after him is very appropriate.

COHEN: What did you feel about his role in the final—well, his role in the Conklin Hall negotiations? There are many currents and many opinions.

WEIKER: Yes. No, I think on the whole he had a positive effect because he really did try to bridge the two sides. Some people think that he was more on the side of the protesters than he should have been. That's a matter of opinion. As I said, on the whole he played a pretty constructive role. As I said, a pretty wise administrator.

COHEN: Do you have any opinions on why he didn't get the job of provost?

WEIKER: As I recall, the major reason was that he was not willing to be as much the servant of New Brunswick as central administration really wanted. He was a pretty independent Newark-minded man. A very strong man.



COHEN: Yes, yes. Okay. The first provost after Talbott left as vice president was James Young, who is now a professor in New Brunswick. What can you say about his term as provost from 1973 to '82, if I'm not mistaken. Or thereabouts.

WEIKER: I think that would be...I'd rather forget that ever happened.

COHEN: Okay. Deans going back to.... You worked under.... I'm forgetting.

WEIKER: Woodward?

COHEN: I'm forgetting Woodward's first name.

WEIKER: Herbert.

COHEN: Herbert Woodward, of course.

WEIKER: Yes.

COHEN: What can you say about his administration?

WEIKER: Well, he was here a long time. And I came in as an assistant professor at the time and didn't have very much to say. He pretty much dominated the place allegedly with three or four or five very senior faculty who were very close to him. So I had very little involvement with him. Whenever I met him, which was sometimes on a specific issue, but mostly he was talking about his Bulgarian stamp collection, that sort of thing. He's a nice guy.

COHEN: His successor was William Gilliland. What can you say about his tenure?

WEIKER: I think the same as I just said about Jim Young.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Do you have any details you could supply?

WEIKER: He was completely ineffective as an administrator. He was interested in his own things and really nothing happened.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Of course Malcolm Talbott was acting dean after that. And so Henry Blumenthal took over in '69 through 1971. What can you say about his administration?

WEIKER: Well, Henry was just a marvelous kind of a person anyway. He was very much devoted to the academic enterprise. He was a real scholar himself. He was a gentleman in every way. He could be very, very tough at certain times. But I think coming from the really solid academic ranks of the faculty itself, he really boosted faculty morale and did some administrative things which were improvements. In that sense, as a human person, in relationships to the faculty, he was very, very good.

COHEN: Why did he leave the deanship and resign from the faculty at the time that he did?



WEIKER: I really don't recall.

COHEN: Yes. His successor for a year as acting dean was Gil Panson. And what can you say about him?

WEIKER: Gil was also a very strong administrator. He knew the faculty well. He had very high standards. The thing I remember more about Gil as undergraduate dean is when he was graduate dean. And as far as I'm concerned, he was one of the very best graduate deans that we've ever had. He was smart, he was academically-oriented, he was a very good administrator, he was a strong man, sympathetic. He knew the faculty well. And he did a lot to really develop the graduate school.

COHEN: Then Richard Robey was appointed dean 1972; he served through '76. That was a stormy time. How would you assess his tenure?

WEIKER: How he got appointed...one of the problems with him was that he was an outsider, with whom that's not necessarily a problem. But I thought he wasn't really interested in the college. He was very kind of ambitious for himself. He operated on a lot of whims. You could never get anything out of him. And at the end there was a lot of personal scandal revolving around him. And we were rather pleased when he got some kind of an appointment someplace else. In fact I think some people worked to get him an appointment someplace else. And again, he was a rather unfortunate episode, because his personality and his interests really weren't in academic things, and certainly they were not in Rutgers-Newark. He didn't know the faculty. I think he had little interest in getting to know the faculty. He had his own agenda.

COHEN: Specifically, why was he forced out? How could the faculty get to the point where they felt justified to force a dean out?

WEIKER: Well, he didn't do anything. He had personal scandals around him. I think people were convinced that he played a lot of favorites. And we needed a leader at the time. And all of these things just made him kind of almost a laughingstock of the campus. And, you know, that was enough to mobilize some senior faculty members to simply send strong signals that we needed a change.

COHEN: And then his successor was—well, now the present provost—Norman Samuels, since 1976, '77, through '82. What can you say about his deanship?

WEIKER: Well, I think he was just, again, a strong administrator, very bright person, knew the faculty well. Certainly I know him very well. I was one of the people who interviewed him when he was an assistant professor all those many years ago. And he continued to develop things. He began to be a very strong advocate for Newark. He did take a year away at some point to go to Medgar Evers, and then he came back. And there are certain things, when questioned about his priorities, certain criticisms one still has of him. But on the whole, I think, again, he's a very capable administrator. And we...as dean, he tightened up a lot of things. I can't recall any specific things right now. But certainly...he was a good dean.



COHEN: You say questioning his priorities, what priorities are you talking about?

WEIKER: Well, I think some of us thought that certain departments were getting shortchanged—

COHEN: Like which?

WEIKER: Well, one of them was ours.

COHEN: Uh-huh.

WEIKER: Because one of the things we had to do was to bend over backwards to see that his old department didn't get any....

COHEN: Oh, of course.....

WEIKER: Any special kind of treatment. But those were the kind of things. Not awfully serious.

COHEN: But during that period, I guess—when I say that period, late seventies into the eighties—the business programs begin to flourish.

WEIKER: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: What impact—just for the record; I guess it's sort of common knowledge, but maybe not—what did the whole flourishing of the business programs have on the college itself?

WEIKER: One of the impacts was to certainly increase the competition for resources. And the question always came up as to what extent traditional liberal arts should be continued even though that meant that allocating faculty lines, for instance, would not be done strictly according to numbers; otherwise the Business Department might have had half the faculty lines. So there was certainly that tension. And a tension also as to what role liberal arts education ought to play in the curriculum of the students. One of the problems of the business programs is that for good reasons or bad, they require a very large number of credits in the major, which meant students then took major credits and some in general education, but not very much else.

COHEN: So lines...the question of lines is really a serious one.

WEIKER: Yes, it is.

COHEN: It's not just a question of the purpose of a liberal arts program, but it really comes down to lines.

WEIKER: Oh, yes! Because—yes, sure—for instance the question of the small majors. We had to take a decision at one point, what do you do with the Philosophy Department? Which had very few majors. How much do you maintain it? We took a decision, for instance, that in order to



maintain a major, there had to be at least two full-time people in a department, which meant that some departments, like geography, fell by the wayside. Those were the kinds of issues.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: And there was never...well, there was always the question that the business bubble might burst like some of the others. In the early seventies, I think it was, sometime in the seventies, sociology was tremendously big in terms of demand.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: Well, if you went and gave them a whole lot of lines and then the bubble burst, what was going to happen? Well, the same thing with the business programs.

COHEN: Okay. Just a couple more questions, and I think we'll wind it up. What has been your experience with the library in your career here? Starting with the quality of the collection.

WEIKER: I think it's gotten considerably better. It was pretty rudimentary when I came. Now certainly for student use, it's very good. For research use...well, I take such specialized materials anyway, that I get them from other places. I think one of the biggest innovations has been the interlibrary loan system where I can get anything I want from New Brunswick in a couple of days. In that sense combining the libraries is certainly very cost-effective and very useful.

COHEN: You say innovations. I mean interlibrary loan has always been something that we've always done. I wonder at what point...you say innovations in terms of the computerization?

WEIKER: Partly that. But I think.... Well, it's my impression certainly, though, that the cooperation among libraries, interlibrary loan, has very much increased the perception that you can get anything from New Brunswick at any time. I think the usage for that has gone up a great deal.

COHEN: Yes. How has that interlibrary loan, after the move to the new campus, through the seventies, let's say, how did that work for you?

WEIKER: Well, it's always worked reasonably well for me. But I think also the collection in New Brunswick has considerably improved.

COHEN: Yes.

WEIKER: And that turned out to be very important.

COHEN: Yes. But how did you feel, let's say 1970 through the early eighties, how effective was it for your purposes at that time?

WEIKER: Certainly for my purposes, the major thing was the holding of what was in the collection, and it's gotten steadily better. I think partly because the university's resources were



used better. The books that weren't vital to have in all the other libraries were gotten into only one. So that meant you could get a lot more in the university as a whole. In that sense I think it's considerably improved.

COHEN: How would you assess the other services, reference service, circulation services? What has been your experience through the seventies, let's say?

WEIKER: At the Dana Library they've always been good. Yes, I have nothing but the highest praise for the library personnel frankly. Yes. And students the same.

COHEN: I'll pass that on.

WEIKER: You should. I try to do it all the time. [Laughter]

COHEN: Okay. Any issues we've talked about, topics we've talked about, which you'd like to go back to, perhaps expand on?

WEIKER: Not that I can really think of. I think we've....

COHEN: Any questions I didn't ask that I should have asked, any topics?

WEIKER: None that occur to me. I'd have to go back and think about it, but none that occur to me right now. You've been pretty thorough.

COHEN: Okay. Would you like to make any wrap-up statements about your perceptions of the past 20 or so years here on the campus?

WEIKER: It's treated me, I think, pretty well. I've gotten less and less of the perception that I'm on a provincial campus. This goes along, of course, with the general development of branch campuses of state universities all across the country. I've been very pleased—I still am—with my colleagues. I think we've got an absolute first-rate faculty. There are a lot of challenges. But on the whole, I think it's been—for me it's been a good experience.

COHEN: Well, Dr. Weiker, thank you very, very much.

WEIKER: Okay.

[End of Interview]

Edited by Gideon Thompson