

Oral History Interview #3

with

JOHN JOSEPH CARSON

Washington, D.C.
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By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

CARSON: You wanted to start with what you had to ask me. So if you do...

HESS: All right, let's just start there and we can work some of these things in as we go.

CARSON: Now I could give you the Lou Schwellenbach story.

HESS: I think--why don't we do that to keep things in chronological order, since that was early Truman period. Tell me about your association with Mr. Schwellenbach and the incident that you have just related.

CARSON: Well, when Lou came here to the Senate, I think I told you early yesterday, that someone sent him to me and he and I became very good friends. And then he told me about his association with Truman in the Senate, which I have related in the other interview, and then he--I was out at Chicago at a meeting of the Cooperative League board shortly after Truman's election, and Lou

[2]

called me and Lou--at that time Lou had become a Federal Judge in Washington. He wired me that he was coming through Chicago and would stop at the Morrison Hotel and I said I would--I mean I wired back that I would meet him there.

He came in with Mrs. Schwellenbach and we had dinner together and then Lou told me that he was coming on to Washington, that Truman had telephoned to him and asked him to come to see Washington immediately. And I knew--thought I knew what Lou wanted, he wanted an appointment to the Cabinet and I was pretty sure that it would be the Attorney General. I knew that he would want the Attorney General's job, and I said to him that "I hope it's to become the Attorney General."

And he said, "If it's that, I'll take it."

So we made a date to--I told him that I was coming back to Washington immediately and I would see him. I didn't see him the next day because he went to the White House--to the Blair House where Truman was at that time, and then the--he stayed overnight at the Blair House he told me. Then he told me what I had thought was some interesting story about Truman.

He said that he had dinner with Truman on the first night in the Blair House and after dinner they went in the library and sat down and talked. And he

[3]

said Truman told him all about his problems and what he had on his desk and what he had to do and what problems had developed. He said, "We talked," Lou said, "I let him talk and he talked till about 9 or 10 o'clock," and I think Lou said 10 o'clock. They talked till 10 o'clock and promptly at 10 o'clock Truman said, "Well, I've got to go to bed," and got up and left.

And Lou said, "He, Truman, asked me if I knew where my room was and I told him I knew, they had showed me my room where I would be and I wanted to smoke a cigar before I went to bed." So he said, "I sat down in the library to smoke a cigar because I couldn't go to sleep."

He said, "I went up to bed and I didn't sleep a wink all night up until about 5 o'clock this morning," this was the next day he said. He said, "John, the problems that man has on his mind and on his desk that have burdened him here and that he will have in the future from day to day is absolutely impossible for me to understand how any President who is a conscientious man, how he can get a day--a night's sleep." He said, "You can't--you'd be amazed at the tremendous burden that that fellow's carrying," Mr. Truman--or Harry is carrying now. "Truman is just," he said, "I couldn't sleep, just worried me all night. I laid there and thought how, what could be done

[4]

by a President to avoid this kind of a situation." He said, "So about 5 o'clock in the morning I looked my watch about 5 o'clock in the morning and I went back to sleep, but I couldn't sleep again. I slept a little bit, and then about 7 o'clock I got up and took my bath and went down and had breakfast. At 8 o'clock he said Truman came in and sat down at the table with me and said, "How did you sleep?"

And I said, "I didn't sleep at all."

He said, "Why not?"

He said, "I just told him that I was absolutely--I was just confounded," he said, "I just couldn't understand or appreciate the tremendous burdens and problems that he had." Truman said well he got up at his regular time in the morning and when he went upstairs he went right to bed and right to sleep and got up the next morning, had his walk and had his breakfast and was now ready to go to the White House.

Lou then said to me, "I said what is it, the Attorney General?"

He said, "No, Department of Labor."

Well I said, "Well, I wouldn't take the job."

And he said, "Why not?"

And I said, "That's the last--end of the last road." I said, "The Department of Labor is probably

[5]

the weakest of all the government departments. It has never been developed; organized labor apparently isn't interested in having it developed to any extent." And I said, "The Department of Agriculture, which represents about ten percent of our people has about ten times the budget that the Department of Labor has, which represents about sixty percent of our people. There's just no interest down there." And I told him about the Conciliation Division. I forget the fellow's name... Steelman that was--John Steelman was head of that at that time. I said, "John Steelman is down there, Lou, it's just--they don't do anything. You can call it--talk about conciliation, conciliation, nothing more than labor acts, conciliating the labor act, and they sit on both sides of the table with the labor and the employers, and the only policy they have, the rules, procedures, to sit there until they wear each other out, and finally agree on a settlement." I said, "There isn't any public interest at all represented at that table, it's just impossible, Lou, I wouldn't take it."

He said, "Well, John, I'd like to get you--would you go up to the Senate and see Hatch?" Hatch was the Senator from New Mexico and a great friend of Lou's and of Truman's. He said, "Ask Hatch his opinion,

[6]

because I've got to go back and see Harry this afternoon, and telephone him."

Well, I rushed up to the Senate and got Hatch, told Hatch the story. And Hatch said, "You're wrong, he's got to take it. Mr. Truman is President of the United States and he's calling on Lou Schwellenbach now to be in the Department of Labor and head up the Department of Labor and Lou can't refuse it, he's got to take it. Call him and tell him so."

So I got Lou by telephone and told him so. And Lou did become the head of the Department of Labor. And then the first thing he did, he organized a little crew and I was in it and Jim Twohy was in it, and a couple of more. Jim Twohy had been head of the farm--Home Owner's Loan Board, and was at one time one of the biggest bankers in the West and really a great fellow. Lou asked the four of us to come down and take over certain divisions. I was assigned the Press Division and the conciliation, Bureau of Conciliation. And I remember so well that I suggested what I thought should be done in the Press Division and then I--they called--he called a conference of the four of us and had each of us report. And I came to the Bureau of Conciliation and there sat Steelman who was head of it, he was one of the four. He wasn't

[7]

he wasn't given that bureau to look at, and from where I sat as far as the Bureau of Conciliation, or settlement of labor disputes is concerned, Lou, it's utterly impossible and I don't care what John Steelman tells you, it's utterly impossible. And then I told him why, the makeup, the

employees of the bureau, the conciliators were people that finished their work at various labor organizations once and were old men, and they were told just what to do and they couldn't settle anything down there. And it was just--there was no public interest in the place at all. He said, Lou said, "What would you do?"

And I said, "Well, the first thing I would put the whole department under the Civil Service, except your personal representative, the head of it maybe, but I'd put all the rest under Civil Service and I'd have a very stiff examination for them right now and I'd get rid of everyone that's down there except the ones that could take the examination. And I'd see that it was kept under Civil Service and kept away from any dictation of labor or anybody else."

And John Steelman stood up and said, "No, Mr. Secretary," he said, "that won't do, that won't do at all. I'd have to oppose everything Mr. Carson is telling you--saying here." He said, "You see,

[8]

Mr. Secretary, that Bureau of Conciliation is about the only department of the Bureau in the Department of Labor, but perhaps in the Government service, which is free now to do your jobs. When you want jobs done up in the Senate and the House, you have some representation to get things done for you down there. That's what our job is."

So I said, "That's not my opinion of what that bureau is at all, or should be," and so on."

Well, after it was over I asked Lou who had recommended Steelman to him. I said, "I know he's been head of that bureau and hasn't' been worth a damn."

And he said, "Well, when I came here, it wasn't long before I was here before Steelman came up to see me and now and then when something would happen I'd get called down there. John was always on the job to tell me anything that I wanted to know, not only in the department, around town and things. He's always ready to spend a lot of time with me and with all the other Senators and Congressmen whenever he got a chance, that's where--he was just a kind of a representative of the Senators and so on and so on and so on."

And I said, "Lou, I don't want him."

Well then Lou asked me if I would take the job, which would be the complete business manager, he was

[9]

going to create one person who would be a business manager. And I said, "Well, Lou, I won't take it, because I want to stay at what I'm at," which was the cooperative business at that time, "and then I want to get to writing if I can." But I said, "I'll give you a guy for the job."

He said, "Who?"

And I said, “Nelson Cruikshank, that’s Cruikshank, and I told him about Cruikshank. Cruikshank had been—he was a—he was a young man, he had been a Methodist minister, still was a Methodist minister, but he was retired, on leave, or something, but he had made some speeches in behalf of labor to his congregation up in Connecticut and they asked for his resignation and he came down here and I had got acquainted with him through Elmer Milliman, who then was the head of the Railroad Labor League. I admired Nelson Cruikshank very much, I’d seen him a good deal before I talked with Lou about him and then I had several things that I had association with Cruikshank.

And so Lou said, “See if you can get him.”

And I got a hold of Nelson; he was then working for the American—for the American Federation of Labor, the head of their Social Action Department. And Nelson came down when we went over it and Nelson agreed to take the job, providing he had gotten permission,

[10]

assurance from the AFL that they would give him a leave for as long as he wanted so that he could return to the AFL at any time, if he wanted to take the job. He said, “I’ve been over it, Mr. Secretary, and John--and we were talking,” he said, “but I’ll take the job only if I can become an Assistant Secretary of Labor.”

And Lou said, “Well, unfortunately, I can’t give you that job because it has already been committed. I have to make the next appointment of the CIO. We got the first appointment from the AFL and we have to make this appointment to the CIO, so I can’t give you the job.”

Mr. Cruikshank said, “Then I can’t take it. I won’t take it.”

Then Lou asked me again would I take the job and I said no I wouldn’t take it, “I wouldn’t even take it if you made me an Assistant Secretary of Labor, because I was never competent to be an executive, and I just didn’t have the talent and the second thing I thought I could do more for him by just giving my time voluntarily, taking my time from the Cooperative League, the League would permit me to—the League would permit me to give that time to him.

[11]

Well I—it went on, that talk went on and finally I did spend, I suppose, the first two weeks that I went down here, I spent probably, oh, a couple hours a day down there and I did organize the Press Department, got him a man, and unfortunately that didn’t work out because I made the decision...

HESS: Who did you bring in?

CARSON: I brought in a fellow named Leslie Eichel, E-i-c-h-e-l. He had been the editor of the Evansville Press and then was a Washington correspondent for some other paper, but Eichel, a

very good man, later went to New York, a very responsible job in New York. But Eichel and Lou didn't get along and then he asked me to get him a secretary and I got him a secretary, a fellow named Jimmy Dempsey, who had been in the department. And Jimmy took the job with him and did very well. Jimmy and--he and Lou's wife was very fond of Jimmy, she was very fond of Jimmy and they did very well. But then Steelman, Lou began to have a few troubles with Steelman, and then Steelman was taken over--he went over and sold himself to Truman and became an assistant, Special Assistant to Truman.

HESS: What difficulties did he have with Mr. Schwellenbach?

[12]

CARSON: Steelman had been running over to the White House while he was still at the Department of Labor and talking to Truman, and I don't know what the situation, something had come up, I don't know what it was and Lou had decided what he was going to do. And the President, Truman, tried to prevail on him to do something else, I don't know--wasn't too serious. But Lou found that Steelman had been running over, talking to Truman, and really trying to run the Department of Labor. And he did have considerable influence with Truman.

I asked somebody why, where Steelman's influence with Truman developed. I asked Lowenthal one time.

HESS: What did he say?

CARSON: Max said, "You know Steelman, John," he said, "Steeleman's one of these fellows who becomes the butler," he said, "he knows where the best tailor in town, if you want to buy ties he knows where to go to buy ties, if you want to go out and have a dinner someplace, he can tell you where the place is, he's just kind of a butler, that's his--that's his ability and that's about all he has, but Truman needs that kind of a man, and he knew it. And he became a butler over there, that was all he did." He was—I told him

[13]

how Truman was trying to run the Department of Labor a little, but too at the same time, but that was what happened and then...

HESS: Let's see, he was made chief of OWMR, Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, for a period of time and then he was moved into the White House as The Assistant to the President, but during that period of time was a time of strikes and strife and all of that, and many times Mr. Steelman was placed in charge of trying to mediate the strikes rather than working through the Department of Labor. Do you think that it was the wrong thing to move someone into the White House to take care of labor matters rather than to...

CARSON: Well, if I could say perhaps that was it. I know there was one particular reason that Lou became terribly outraged by it and he went to Truman about it that time. I remember he said

something to me that Truman's—Steelman's trying to run the department, and he isn't going to run it if I'm here.”

HESS: What did Truman say?

CARSON: I don't know what Truman said to him, but I'm sure that anything that Lou wanted, he would have gotten from—he stayed—Lou stayed there until he...

[14]

HESS: Until he died.

CARSON: He would have got it from Truman and he would have done it before Truman. Schwellenbach wasn't anybody to be moved around by...

HESS: Was he a good Secretary of Labor, did he--did he do a good job?

CARSON: He was exceptionally good. He was always trying. For example, I insisted--at that time, well, I was a kind of an adviser; he was calling me down there every now and then. And I insisted at that time that one of the problems in the labor organizations was that they had no Department of Education, or Bureau of Education in the labor organizations. And I told--that is how I described the condition in the machinists. I think the machinist organization is probably the finest organization of labor that I know. They are wonderful fellows and great--very able fellows. You know to be a machinist you have to become a technician and a very skilled man. You'll probably find mathematicians among the machinists who are comparable to the best of mathematicians. But they are very fine people and very intelligent people, and they had all been my friends.

Well, they had the fellow who is head of their Department of Education, Bureau of Education, the

[15]

machinists, very fine guy. Had been a machinist all his life, a very intelligent fellow too. Another thing, he, one time I was talking to him about this thing, I said, “Now, you have in the labor organizations no educational bureau to really help the members of labor to know anything beyond just something associated immediately with labor.”

And this fellow said, “If you could do something about that, John, I'd be the first.” He said, “All I can do running this, I've got to go out and tell them how to organize the union. I've got to tell them something about the bylaws, the rules of order, Robert's Rules of Order and a few more things. That's all we can do.” He said, “We never get outside that in labor, this organization or any other organization, but if you can do something.”

So I got Lou to call a conference on education for the representatives of labor. And we, labor, came in, we had probably, oh, I'd say we may have forty or fifty people representing labor down there, the heads of labor organizations and their labor staffs.

When Lou came in and made a speech in which he told them what he wanted. He wanted to see if he could be helpful and develop the educational programs for labor and so on, so on, so on. And then said that he would ask John Carson to stay and report to him,

[16]

get in touch with him if they needed him and soon and so on.

Well, I stayed two days and immediately got down to the question of what was the duties of the heads of the educational divisions of labor organizations and their duty was primarily that of teaching and telling the people how to organize the union and what to do about the union and so on. And then there was a discussion of that and that only, and so on, and so on, and so on. And after two days I said, "It's absolutely hopeless."

HESS: It just didn't get off the ground.

CARSON: Didn't get off the ground. But he was always reaching out. Lou was always reaching out, he was a fellow that just worried himself sick about accomplishments. He was responsible at all times to it, he was always trying and a very able fellow, but...

HESS: You think the pressures of his job brought on his death?

CARSON: I think so, without a bit of doubt. He had the tubercular condition, and that's why he wanted to get on the Supreme Court I found. He told me at that time that he wanted to get there because the doctors

[17]

had told him he couldn't stay in the Senate and carry that load in the Senate.

HESS: Well, just a couple of questions about that taskforce that was brought in when Mr. Schwellenbach first took over. Who were the other men that were on that? Now there was yourself...

CARSON: I remember Steelman and a fellow named Dave Twohy, T-w-o-h-y.

HESS: What area of activity did he have?

CARSON: I don't recall what, he and Lou had been very good friends you see. Jim came here, the Twohy banks in Seattle and Gonzalia--or at Spokane, Gonzalia--or Spokane and Seattle, and then Jim's banks went bad in the '32 depression, and I was told by Preston Delano who later became Comptroller of the Currency, and was a great friend of Jim's and Jim's lawyer, that Jim

had stayed with those banks until every depositor was paid off in full, and the stockholders got the value, the original value of their stock or something. And Jim was broke. He had stayed with the ship, however, until everybody else was taken care of and then he came here and he was offered first the vice-presidency of the Bank of America and he didn't take that, but he came here.

[18]

And incidentally, as a tribute to Jim, when this nomination was made, came up for confirmation, every Senator, Republican and Democrat west of the Mississippi River signed the petition having him made to this job. And all the Senators from west--there was only two or three Senators from the other eastern states, and they did--no one opposed him, but two or three were absent and didn't sign, but he was highly, highly regarded and out there and down here, very high.

Well, he was one of them and I don't know what--he took on some part of it, but then there was one other fellow, I can't tell you who it was, but I doubt that we helped Lou very much in that.

HESS: What was--do you recall, thinking back the many years, what was the attitude of the members of the department about this task force coming in. Were you met with open arms or did you--were you viewed with indignation?

CARSON: I found--actually I found, the press department, the fellow in there resigned when I came in, he was no good, he knew that I knew his--he was incompetent that's all. And he got out, but I went into Steelman's division. And one night I got a telephone call and a fellow who had been there before had resigned and had gone out with some of the big businesses as their

[19]

representative of labor issues. He sent me a statement, a report, or something he had made proposing to do just what I had proposed to do, to put the department under Civil Service and get rid of the acts. And it had been--he had been the head of the place, I think before Steelman, and then he resigned and--but so I--probably the member from the employees they didn't know too much about it at all. There wasn't--and there was very little interest except where their jobs were concerned. There wasn't nothing there developed.

HESS: Just one more question on the Department of Labor, but Madam Perkins has usually been regarded in most histories as a very hard-working Secretary of Labor. Do you feel that she was successful, or unsuccessful, or...

CARSON: I didn't know...

HESS: ...what's your view?

CARSON: No, I don't think that she added anything to the Department of Labor at all. But, I think that she did the job that a good Secretary would do under the conditions that--another good

Secretary had done if there had been any--well, there were good Secretaries but there were just no--well, I remember one night in this connection. Now this one night after playing

[20]

golf with Bob Wagner we stopped at the nineteenth hole out at the club and old Bob Wagner said, "John, you've seen many hundreds of Senators around here in your time, what particular talent or characteristic, or ability should any man have to become really a great Senator?"

I remember I said, "Well, first you got integrity."

He said, "Well, John, you have realize that you're--let's lay aside and forget about our personal fluky prejudices and soon, most of the Senators have integrity."

And I said, "I'll agree with you, I hadn't thought of it, Bob, but I'd say," then I said, "courage."

And he said, "Well, again, most of the Senators have courage, some of them don't, but they have courage, there's something..."

I mentioned something else and then he said—I said, "Well, what do you think they should have?"

And he said, "Vision."

And I said, "Yes, and one Senator..."

He said, "Yes, I know, but that's only one Senator, George Norris. You'll say George Norris and everybody will agree. He's a guy of vision, but," he said, "it isn't—very few really among the Senators that have vision."

Well, that's the same thing we found in the

[21]

Department of Labor, that very, very few people had vision.

I remember that I went to the AFL convention in New Orleans while Madam Perkins was there and one of the representatives of—no, he had gone into his own business of being a labor adviser for corporations. I had gotten him a job, a job one time as a copyboy in Indianapolis. He told me that he and Fannie Perkins were very good friends, and he said Fannie Perkins came out to his house for dinner the night before, while the convention was going on. And he said, "Do you know what for?"

And I said, "No."

And he said, "She's going to get rid of John Steelman and she wants me to take the job."

And I said, “Well, Charlie, you’ve got your own business now.”

He said, “I told her that I wouldn’t take the job at all.” And he said, “I know what that job is, John, and I’m going to stay in my own business as a labor adviser. My business is now, I’ve got several lawyers working with me and I’m going to stay.”

But Fannie had told him that night she was--Truman was--John Steelman.

HESS: Well, at the time you were at the Federal Trade

[22]

Commission, Doctor Steelman was the assistant to the president...

CARSON: Yes.

HESS: ...down at the White House. Did you ever have any relationship...

CARSON: No.

HESS: ...any workings?

CARSON: No, he and I—he and I, he knew what I thought of him and he thought probably the same thing of me, just—and there was no reason for him because he never had any vision, he wouldn’t have had an idea about the commission that would have been helpful that I could find. No, he didn’t—I don’t think Steelman, outside of the Congress, knew many people around.

HESS: All right, well, moving on to the Federal Trade Commission, today let’s discuss a few of the men that served as your fellow commissioners during the time that you were there. If you could tell me just a little bit about the man, about his philosophy of what the commission should do or could do, if he had an interesting philosophy of business, perhaps we could go into that, but in 1949 before Jim Mead came, Lowell B. Mason was

[23]

acting commissioner. Let’s start with Mr. Mason, tell me a little bit about Mr. Mason.

CARSON: Well, I didn’t know Lowell. He had been a friend of Truman’s; he had ability to make friendships. Lowell is a very pleasant guy, always amiable and so on, and he had been, he was the son of old Billy Mason, the Congressman from Illinois, and Billy was probably one of the worst of the--not one, the worst, he was one of the conservatives of conservatives in the House. Billy--nobody had much interest in Billy. Well, anyhow, in what Billy was doing. But Lowell came out of that background, came here, I think as a lawyer, got a wartime job I think, but he was on the commission by appointment. I guess that Truman appointed him, he may have been appointed before, but anyhow, he and Truman were friends. Lowell had--was--I’m only

saying what everyone in the Department would agree, he was wholly dedicated, he expressed constantly a philosophy that—he was a showman of showmen.

He liked to tell that he made one campaign, I think, for Congress or something and took with him in an airplane or something, a piano and played the piano for them, that kind of stuff. I don't think anybody in the department disliked Lowell, and no one, none of the gang that

[24]

I knew in the department intimately, I had known many of them before I went in of course. They were all, a good deal of us were really in my philosophy, which was the Woodrow Wilson philosophy. And Lowell didn't agree with them, they didn't agree with Lowell. Lowell had no influence in the department at all, but the--except from any particular person that came along, and there were a few of those in the department who leaned over to the far right for business, and so on; to the right for business. On the other thing...

HESS: Was that his philosophy, that to the far right for business?

CARSON: Oh, wholly, his philosophy and he was honest about it. Lowell was not dishonest about it, that I know, very pleasant fellow, like, I enjoyed his friendship and he was very kind to me, and I tried to be helpful to him, but he was just--I would have never have appointed him if I'd been President, to the Federal Trade Commission. I think the Federal Trade commission was what Wilson said it was going to be. You know an interesting thing, when the Federal Trade Commission was first created, Wilson only appointed two lawyers on the commission, and it was reported, and I think the

[25]

report is--oh, I think we can accept it that he said that if he had his way he wouldn't have appointed any lawyers on the commission.

HESS: Why?

CARSON: Well, he felt that the commission, he had Brandeis' philosophy that the commission was to be, if it was to succeed, it would be an educational organization more than a legal organization. And you know, there was a fellow here representing the Newspaper Enterprise Association, he's dead many years, a fine guy, that was the Scripps-Howard Feature Service. He joined with Brandeis and some--he joined with Brandeis and some more and with Norman Hapgood and some others in promoting and lobbying to get the Federal Trade Commission bill passed and so on and so on.

And I remember Brandeis telling, or I saw it, this I either saw it in the Record or Brandeis but he--Brandeis, he wrote to Brandeis about three months after the commission was organized, put it in a letter, he said to Brandeis, "This damn commission of yours has been in existence now three months and hasn't tried one case."

[26]

And Brandeis wrote back and said, "I hope it doesn't try to try any case within the next two years. Trying cases is not to be its particular job," and so on so on. And at that time the commission, I'd say ninety percent of its staff, only about ten percent of its staff were lawyers. Well, when I went on the commission, about ninety percent of the staff were lawyers or assistant lawyers or their help, and about--there were about six or eight people would be on the commission.

HESS: Has it still gone that way, too far that way?

CARSON: Yes.

So that's--well, Lowell would have believed in that, he got along with the lawyers, they disagreed at the time, but it was very pleasant, always very pleasant.

HESS: Even when he was disagreeing with you, huh?

CARSON: Yes. Nice guy and a very talented guy. If he'd gone on stage or gone into the writing for theater I think he would have been a success.

HESS: Now there were two gentlemen who were listed in the Official Register for '49, who are not listed for 1950, I am not sure that they were there before your time

[27]

or not, but Garland S. Ferguson, Jr. and Edwin L. Davis.

CARSON: No, Ewan.

HESS: Is it Ewan?

CARSON: E-w-a-an, Ewan Davis

HESS: Oh, I've got it wrong here; I've got it wrong, Edwin.

CARSON: Well, let's begin with Davis, Ewan Davis. He's from Tennessee, was in the House, had a very fine record in the House. He's a brother of Norman Davis who was vice president of the Morgan banks and they are both very close personal friends of young Cordell Hull. In fact, Norman Davis, I have all the regard in the world for Norman, even though I don't have too much regard for bank presidents. But I knew Norman Davis and he was really a great guy, a good guy too. And Ewan was just the same, Ewan was always devoted to the job and so on. He was a progressive, a moderate progressive.

For example, I remember Ewan was in the House in the Harding administration when the scandal developed, or alleged scandal developed in the shipping, United States Shipping Board, which was presided over by--over which presided a fellow named Lassater of Chicago,

[28]

There was a big Lassater agency out there, advertising agency, one of the biggest in the country. And for a time there was some discussion in the House and then you find that Ewan Davis got through a resolution to investigate the Shipping Board in the House, and he conducted that investigation, Ewan Davis did and I remember it rather hazily now, because it's been fifty years. But I was impressed rather tremendously at the fine job he had done, that was a very progressive fighting job. He was very devoted to the commission, he didn't see the duties of the commission, he didn't see the duties of the commission as I saw them.

HESS: What seemed to be his views?

CARSON: He was the lawyer again; he was the lawyer and served in the legal department. I don't think that he...

HESS: He looked on it as more of a regulatory agency, is that right.

CARSON: Yes. And by regulatory, by order of the courts and so on. Now if you want me to speak of that more for a moment, the commission, the Federal Trade Commission did the biggest job that has been done on the government service in this century I think, of any of the commissions, and it did it by accident.

[29]

We had at that time, which was right after Tom Walsh had gotten through with this Teapot Dome investigation and gotten tremendous accord and respect and esteem for that. George Norris was trying to get an investigation of the power trust, electric power trust, and Walsh joined with him, supported him. And oh, of course, a lot of people supported him, but the power trust was too powerful, they didn't get any place and the debate went on and on.

Just at that time a fellow, oh, he was a member of the firm, the Attorney General at that time in the Harding administration, not [Henry M.] Daugherty, but on in there you know, that was Daugherty, Bob--Robert Healy, a fellow named Robert Healy was nominated to be--named to be the Chief Counsel of the Federal Trade Commission.

Well, when it came up, the nomination came up in the Senate, Norris and all the rest of them, including myself, we got on our horses to fight Bob Healy to prevent that confirmation. He was in the law firm of this Attorney General for Coolidge I guess it was, at that time, and he couldn't have been appointed, active in that law firm up in New Hampshire or Vermont whichever it was, without being, poor guy, a conservative reactionary and so on. And you'd find that there were speeches made in the Senate attacking Bob Healy.

[30]

Well, he got the job. And nothing developed of any distinction about the commission at all until this question came up at the time you get this investigation of the electric power industry. And I was in the Senate chamber the night they finally passed the resolution, but with a provision that it wouldn't be done by any Senate committee, by either Tom Walsh or George Norris, but would be done by the Federal Trade Commission. And I waited until the session had ended and then Norris and I walked back to his office and Norris said, "Well, John, that's a situation that develops that tries your soul a bit--mind. I didn't want to vote for that damn resolution to send that guy on the Federal Trade Commission, and you know what that commission is now," it had become corrupt at that time, "but nothing will be done. That just buries it as I said in my speech in there, that buries it. I'm afraid there is the possibility of something might be done, you come around to your final judgment of what you should do," and I finally came to the place that said, "Well, I'll vote for it. If we get something out of it, okay."

Well, Bob Healy took that thing, and the chairman of the commission was against him. There was nobody on the commission really that would fight for it, but young Bob Healy took that thing. That was the most

[31]

important investigation that was ever made I think in our government. Out of it we got TVA, and if we hadn't had TVA we'd never got the atomic bomb. We got the Rural Electrification Administration, later, not out of that--not from the commission at all, but we got it from--as related to the development of the facts about the electric power trust.

HESS: That's right.

CARSON: And Norris broke up the power trust. Norris then developed, and that's one thing that I would like to put in the record if you don't mind. You know in all that work that Norris did, and he did it practically alone with the help of some people like Judson King of the National Popular Government League, who was a great guy around here in those days, just a private citizen, but a great guy, and other. And I helped, and others helped too. Well, he did it alone, he traveled to the far west, he traveled up through Canada, Niagara Falls up in there, traveled down through the south in his own automobile, never took a cent of expenses from the Federal Government at all, in all those years, never was paid anything, fought alone and so on, and he finally won. He got the--he was one hundred percent responsible for TVA and so on.

[32]

Well, later on he said to me, when he got to the REA bill, which he didn't--he was not the--the idea had not been his at first. I think it came, the idea came from Senator [Henrik] Shipstead in Minnesota, he took it down to Roosevelt and Roosevelt called in a Morris--Morris...oh, a fellow in Philadelphia that's an engineer who gave up his life and later life and time to public service, Morris something. Great big man, Morris, I'll think of his name before I get through. His father was the--not his father, but his grandfather was the head of that famous bank in the Jackson administration when the Jackson--President Jackson killed off the bank. Morris Cooke, Morris L--Morris Lewellen Cooke, C-double o-k-e. He took it around to Shipstead to go back to talk to

Shipstead. He talked to Shipstead, he was convinced that Shipstead couldn't do it and I was convinced he couldn't do it, I knew Shipstead very well, but Shipstead had become--had been a sick man. So I took him around to Norris and Norris took it on immediately and Norris was the one that got the REA job done. And Norris said to me one day, "That's the biggest job, more important job than this TVA job." It may well be I don't know.

HESS: It's really helped to develop the farms.

[33]

CARSON: Yep.

HESS: All right, how about Garland S. Ferguson, Jr.?

CARSON: Garland S., "Fergie" came out of Norfolk, Virginia, a very conservative Virginia citizen and so on. There was nothing in his record that I could find that was bad and nothing very good, he was a sick man when I went on there. I don't remember at any time that he accomplished anything that--and there wasn't a thing that I saw that Fergie did that was good or bad. He was just--he was just a sitter, a pleasant guy, good man and a man of honor, integrity. Yes, I liked Ferguson, Fergie, Fergie they called him. I liked Fergie very much personally, and they had a big turnout at the press conference when he left. A tremendous big lunch, and I spoke at that lunch, saying what I said right now that he had friends that are very true to him and he certainly sent a good ship--lots of good ships to sea that came back to him, because they were good friends. But he was of no value.

HESS: How about William A. Ayers.

CARSON: Bill Ayers was one of the--came to Congress from Kansas at the time that the Democrats weren't elected to the House. He was elected and he was

[34]

elected year after year, Kansas went Republican, Republican, Republican, but Ayers always won. Ayers was a progressive, always, even in the time he was being elected to...

HESS: Do you know where from Kansas? That is where he was located in Kansas? Which county or district?

CARSON: I don't know, but he was--I could get it for you if you have to get it. I can go...

HESS: No, we can find out.

CARSON: Well, he was a very, very able man. Ayers left the Congress about, oh, I think in 1914, '16, '18, '20, someplace in the '20s, someplace, left the Congress and resigned the Congress. He could have been re-elected again and took a seat on the Federal Trade Commission, he stayed there. Ayers was always looked on in the commission by the staff as

being a very fine man and a very honorable man and he was all of that and a man who was really interested in accomplishing things that could be done through the law. He was--the lawyers all liked him very much, I liked him too, very much, and he liked the lawyers. He didn't know much about administration or much about economics or anything else.

I ought to tell you a very funny thing about that. I proposed at one time that the commission seek

[35]

to do something, and that--the time I compelled the reorganization of the legal staff, got rid of the authority, or to establish the examining staff of examiners. I remember Ayers after I got through arguing for what we wanted, Ayers turned the tide for me. Ayers--that was, "John, I don't know a damn thing about what you want, or talking about, but it sounds pretty good and I'm going to vote for it." And all the lawyers with one exception, the commission was against him at that time on that, even--they were against me and him too on that issue.

Well, a long time I was trying to get something through in the way of an investigation by the commission and Ayers said to me, after it was over, he said--this will tell you the story of Ayers. He's talking to me, we are always very good friends, in fact he wanted me to become the chairman in the place of Jim Mead and I said, "No." I don't know that I could have been but he wanted me to take it.

And Ayers said, "No, John, you remember back in the days of the Harding administration, Hoover administration," he said, "those Senators over there, Tom Walsh," he said, "and other Senators. That damn Senate in those days," he said, "that damn Senate, they would introduce resolutions for investigation

[36]

and they'd make them--and they were getting all the publicity and all the honor and everything else." And he said, "We were over on our side voting the money to help them do it in those days." He said, we had--no, we were over on our side, we weren't getting any of this publicity, we weren't getting the investigation," he said, "They were sending investigations down to the government departments too, and doing these on their own and the departments were carrying out the investigation, the power industry," he said. And he said, "Well, when it came down along '32 or '33 or something like that," he said, "we began to talk around the House." He said, "We just decided we'd stop that. We were going to take care of our interests." So we got through the resolution that the commission and the appropriation bill, thereafter the commission down here couldn't make an investigation without authority from both the House and the Senate and so on, you had to get an appropriation through.

I said to Billy, "Bill, do you know that you did the damnest disservice to the Federal Trade Commission that day? It's absolutely impossible almost to get an appropriation approved by both the House and the Senate for the commission. You've got to--the commission

[37]

has to make all of its investigations out of the annual appropriation. In the old days the Senate would instruct the Federal Trade Commission to make the investigation or the House if they wanted to, and then they'd appropriate the money thereafter. The commission was able to make the electric power investigation because...but," I said, "Bill, who told you that, who got that started?"

He said, "It was just talk down there that somebody started."

"You go back and find out, you'll find it was the electric power trust lobby that got to you at that time. And you, Bill Ayers," I said, laughed as I told him, "you voted to destroy the Federal Trade Commission at that time," and that was largely true. And he laughed, he didn't know.

HESS: They tricked him.

CARSON: Well, they tricked him, yes, but he--he wouldn't have--he was an old man really at that time.

HESS: He probably thought he was doing the right thing at that time, but just wasn't.

CARSON: Yes. They just tricked him but Bill in the last years of this administration, he just was, well, this--will--will you stop the thing just a minute--I don't

[38]

want to put that in. But that was what was going on.

HESS: All right, and then in 1950 James M. Mead was appointed chairman.

CARSON: Yes, and Jim had been in the House you know. He came down here, he was a railroad conductor or something and ran for the Senate--the House from Buffalo and won. Jim was about--then he ran for the Senate and won. There was nothing in Jim's record in the House or Senate that would distinguish him as being a great man. He was very--he was a fellow that was very competent at making dinner, after dinner speeches, and things of that kind. He was constantly seeking for funny stories and kept a record of them and put them away for use and so on and all that. He didn't know--he didn't have the slightest understanding of economics, in my opinion he didn't have. He succeeded Truman in heading the Truman Committee, you know, after Truman left the Senate. And all he always talked about that Senate committee, and so on, what he had done at that Senate Committee. Well...

HESS: Why had he been appointed chairman?

CARSON: Jim had won the election up in--for the Senate in New York and had become one of the powers in New

[39]

York in the Democratic organization. A very honest guy, exceptionally honest, exceptionally pleasant, he had the ability with the--he got into an argument, I remember in the Standard Oil case when they brought in the first proposals from the lawyers that sent over that case here, Jim had agreed to the proposal and the other three members there, Steve Spingarn agreed and [Albert A.] Carretta agreed, or whoever it was, and Mason agreed, of course. And I went to the blackboard and drew a diagram on the blackboard and said, "Now this is what you say in your first preamble, what you're going to stop, what this order will stop, Standard Oil can do, continue to do and so on."

And I said, "Look at this blackboard. Here is the of gasoline in Detroit, so on, now you tell me how this order will stop that."

And Steve Spingarn had the case, which his lawyer had I'm sure done all the work on it, his legal counsel in his office, who later became chairman of the Federal Trade Commission and I'm sure was put there by oil, I think that at least.

HESS: What's his name?

CARSON: Hmmm, I forget his name, I forget his name. He was in the commission as a lawyer and then became

[40]

Steve's, and then he became chief counsel of the department and nobody would have ever chosen him for chief counsel. A very industrious guy and able, I think. He worked, but his point of view in the oil case was--he prepared the order I'm sure that they wanted to adopt. It was so wholly bad, so bad in my opinion at least, that I got it--I had to throw it out and Jim Mead listened to me that day. Somebody said, "Well, are we ready to vote?"

And Jim said, "I have made up my mind how to vote, but I think I've changed my mind, I'm going back and study this case I think a bit more." He said, "Since Carson talked about it now, I think there's things in this thing I didn't know."

And they came back in and threw out the points in the case that I had objected to and we got an order that I wanted, but Jim--that was Jim, he took over the--his legal counsel, this fellow named John Wheelock. And John Wheelock had been counsel, legal counsel for Ewan Davis for many years. In fact, I tried to get with Hull's--tried to get John Wheelock named to the commission while I was on there, there was a vacancy came and that's when Spingarn was appointed. Steve had had some trouble down in the

[41]

White House you know, one of Truman's assistants.

HESS: What trouble had he had?

CARSON: Well, he went up to the Hill representing the White House on a lot of things and I never found out what it was, but Steve was a pusher, you know, and quite eloquent at times, and a lot of complaints began to go, and I heard them from some place in the White House. I don't know--I don't think it was Charlie Murphy and it wasn't Max, but it was somebody like Charlie Murphy or Max, somebody down there. They told me that Steve was--had a lot of trouble and that Truman had finally transferred him out. He got rid of him in the White House. And Steve indicated that, he didn't--said he didn't want the damn job on the commission and that he had never done anything up in the Congress except try to tell the truth, but he tried to tell the truth that he wanted done in a way that, "I want this done," up there.

HESS: And you had a lot of contact up on the Hill. Did you ever hear anything from some of the people that you knew on the Hill about Mr. Spingarn, his method of operation?

[42]

CARSON: I had--no, I heard occasionally that they didn't like--Steve wasn't a good personal publicity man at all, he didn't do his cause any good. He was too dogmatic in his approach to things that he wanted. He tried to run things when he was up there, that was their complaint.

HESS: What kind of commissioner did he make?

CARSON: For the first--I'm around Steve, I'm not upset to say this because Steve would say it--I don't think Steve was in the office for the first two or three months more than one tenth of the time. He just--he appeared and didn't appear, and just didn't--he was just so angry over the appointment, and so--and he made it clear to me and I guess to others, that he didn't have any interest in the commissions for the first two or three months. Then he settled down and he was--I think he was--Steve was a fine guy. I thought he did have some faults, personal faults; otherwise he was a fine guy. He made a good commissioner I think.

HESS: What seemed to be his view of how the commission should work and what was his view of business, economics?

CARSON: Well, he--I really don't--I don't think there

[43]

was--that Steve had had enough experience at that time to have any view that would have been--that he would have expressed or insisted on expressing. I don't think that Steve and I would have been far apart on anything if we got together on. He and Mason were laughing at each other quite a bit all the time, and kidding each other, but...

HESS: They both had strong personalities that they--where one would be liberal the other would be totally conservative, I suppose.

CARSON: Steve and Jim Mead got in one terrible ruckus over something that Jim Mead wanted done and Steve wanted done another way, and I always remember it was funny. Steve set up a press conference down there to present his minority views on his end of it.

HESS: Did that go over very well?

CARSON: Well, I think he had twenty or thirty newsmen down at the press conference. I didn't go into it.

HESS: How did it go over with the chairman though?

CARSON: Oh, terrible.

HESS: What did the chairman think of it?

CARSON: Jim was inclined probably to laugh at it, but he

[44]

was sore as he could be about it. He and Steve, I don't know whether he made the--resolved their differences or not after I left. Steve was a good guy--I don't--I've never—I haven't seen him since I left the commission I don't think. I think he's around town though.

HESS: Yes he is, he's still lives here in town. And Albert A. Carretta.

CARSON: Carretta was a surprise appointment. I don't know what his background nor why he came out of Virginia to the Commission, and he had been somewhat prominent in politics, but I never knew what were the forces that Truman--what caused Truman to appoint him, and I think Truman appointed him.

HESS: And then in the 1953 Official Register, Edward F. Howrey is listed as chairman. I think he replaced Mr. Mead. What kind of a man was Mr. Howrey?

CARSON: Well, he was--he had--I had gone from the commission when he was appointed of course. Ed's still practicing law you know in Washington down in the Briggs Bank building or someplace there. He came in at the time that the Eisenhower purge, or the Sherman Adams purge of government departments, when big business took over down here you know. They appointed a guy, I forget

[45]

his name, but you'll get it in a minute, Attorney General, and...

HESS: Herbert Brownell.

CARSON: Brownell, I think--yes, Brownell. And Brownell immediately announced that one of the things that he was going to do was to cure the antitrust law, the Sherman law and all that, and so made a public announcement and then you know Capehart of Indiana, Senator Capehart of Indiana, got a special committee appointed and got the counsel to come down to investigate, to establish the basing point price fixing system which would have destroyed all of the monopoly laws. And they got that through the House and the Senate before Capehart got through. I think the attorney for his committee, for Capehart's committee went over to Ed Howery and is now a partner with Ed Howery. And I heard that an attorney was brought by Capehart from United States Steel down here to do the job.

Well they did that there you know, they got clean--they fired some very--compelled the resignation of very fine men under appointment of the Federal Trade Commission, a half a dozen of them, and changed the department around and so on. And this whole atmosphere here at that time was to big business from top to bottom.

[46]

HESS: What happened, how did you leave, what day did you leave the Federal Trade Commission?

CARTER: I can't remember.

HESS: Would you have liked to have remained, did you feel that you were a part of the purge?

CARSON: Well I—oh, yes, I knew I was going to be a part of the—in fact, you see, Truman was still in and my term had expired in, let's see, January or February, and Truman was still there and Truman...

HESS: See he left on January the 20th.

CARSON: Yes. And Truman--I went down to see Truman, I think, I wouldn't be sure, but I know that Max came down and others came down and said that...

HESS: Mr. Lowenthal did?

CARSON: Yes, said that they wanted me to agree to ask Truman to reappoint me, Mr. Truman would reappoint me and I told them, "No sir, there isn't a chance of his getting me through because I am an independent and a Republican will want the job in the first place, and the second place, big business will fight

[47]

my appointment, and Mr. Eisenhower is now committed wholly to the welfare of big business, there isn't a chance."

But my folks in there, everybody said, "Well, let him renominate you for reappointment." And Truman did, and Sherman Adams didn't get around to getting me out, they let me ride for seven or eight months or a year, something like that, before they finally appointed Ed Howery, to succeed me and then made him chairman.

Well, the woman who is now, or has been, the stenographer down there in Ed Howery's law office is--was my stenographer in the office. She wasn't in the commission, she just came there to me and she was a very fine person, still is. I have very much regard for her. She was--admired Howery and this lawyer that conducted the steel--the basing point fight, that was an interesting thing, when I was being confirmed. When I was first appointed, because of the Fulton Lewis fight and other things, all the oil and steel and everything, fighting me and the advertising institute of New York was--went out and went through my whole record and the record of my family out there in Indianapolis looking for stuff on me. I saw the report. But--well, anyhow, that's what happened with

[48]

Howery, she--I don't know, where did I get off.

I was going to say though that I did very well, that if anything, they couldn't possibly get me through and I didn't--I don't want to impose on Mr. Truman with that, but he said, "We'll try it."

So he sent in my nomination and let me stay until they appointed Howery and took over the commission.

HESS: Yesterday I did ask in fact about the possibility of phone calls from the White House to ask for favors or to give pressure, when we were talking about five percenters, and you indicated that there were none, but did you, when you were a commissioner, receive--was there pressure applied from other areas?

CARSON: Oh yes. Yes, I remember--not within the administration, from big business, constantly. I remember--well, I remember the sparkplug cases which were very important. I forget the big sparkplug...what is the biggest sparkplug?

HESS: Champions?

CARSON: Champion, out of Cleveland someplace. The fellow is an Irishman, or Irish, his name or something, the president of the company came down and who did he hire? He hired Fergie, and Fergie called. I just

[49]

didn't know what Fergie wanted. Fergie wanted to see me and he came down to see me and brought this fellow with him and introduced me and they knew that I was behind the--it was my case and I had brought in these facts to justify an order of the case, and I'll defy anybody to, although the courts defeat us, I'll defy anybody to say that that order was not right in every

particular. This fellow, this fellow told me about it, very very pleasantly, he was president. Fergie didn't say a word, he didn't know a thing about it, the case, or anything else, but he did introduce me and so on and I

HESS: Still they were using him as the contact?

CARSON: Yeah, oh yeah. And I remember this fellow finally said, "Well," when I indicated; I just sat and listened to him, and told him that when the case came up, why, we'd have all the facts in there, and so on and so on. I didn't--I tried to treat him politely because of Fergie, but I didn't give him any consideration. And then he said, "Well," he said, "I notice a lot of influence being brought on this commission up to this time."

I said, "I don't, but you have brought it in now, you've hired a commissioner, a former commissioner to come down here and influence this thing, to try to—

[50]

you're not going to influence me by that kind of stuff?"

And he got up and started to say something and I got up and I walked towards the door with him and Fergie and he--they went out then and they never came back of course. And that was the last I saw of Fergie, but that was the only time that--from the outside I had one member, a lawyer in the commission, come in to me--oh, it was on the sparkplug case, but he had left the commission and was in the law business, a very good friend of mine and a very good fellow, but he came to me to tell me that it was known throughout the motor industry that I was in this and he had his offices back in the Middle West, a big city in the Middle West, Cleveland, and told me that--to be sure that I knew what I was doing in that case, because they would not only be out to kill the case, but come after me too and so on so on so on. I don't think he tried to influence me in the case, I think he tried just to help me to know what was going on.

That was all about that.

HESS: Did you ever tell Mr. Ferguson after that time your views of how you saw this, the morality of a former commissioner coming in to try to apply pressure?

[51]

CARSON: No. Fergie was far beyond, mentally, far beyond the ability to understand anything. I don't think he had another client, that he had another client in the years he practiced law. I asked one time, they said he had an office downtown, but his family had just gotten him the office to go to. And he was far beyond knowing what was going on.

HESS: Okay, I have another question just about Mr. Truman, but before we get into those, is there anything else we should cover on the Federal Trade Commission?

CARSON: Nothing else. I think that, I always think that if Ellis Arnold and I and Truman had been able to get through the investigation that I wanted to establish, a continuing study of the consumer's dollar, we'd have--there wouldn't have been--the commission would have become a real consumer's agency of government.

HESS: Did you attend the 1948 convention?

CARSON: I didn't go up to that. I don't know why.

HESS: That was in Philadelphia.

CARSON: Yes. I don't know why, I knew Truman was going to be renominated of course, but I couldn't have

[52]

have done anything and they wouldn't need me at all, but if I had known that Barkley was willing to take the job as Vice President I'd have gone up to see if I could have helped him, but I--because I esteemed him very highly.

HESS: Well, there were some efforts that year, before the convention, by some Democratic groups, to try to get someone other than Mr. Truman as the nominee. As you recall the ADA was even thinking about trying to get General Eisenhower to run. Do you recall anything in particular about that?

CARSON: No, and I didn't know it, that's one political fight that I just didn't know anything about that, anything like that was happening. I'd have gone to Philadelphia if I had known that.

HESS: Were you present at any time that the President spoke during that campaign, and...

CARSON: No I wasn't. I didn't leave; I was in Washington all the time and I didn't remember any speech that he made. I know I was in touch with Max constantly and anything that Max suggested and I could think of to do, we did. I was with the Cooperative League,

[53]

I think, at that time. Yes, I was with the Cooperative League at that time, and I certainly--of course we had a bylaw that prevented you from getting into politics at all, that is the organization, but I certainly did a lot of personal propaganda. Murray Lincoln I think was--did some work, he was president of the league, and he was--came out of a Republican background, but he had become pretty much of a progressive and liberal too, a very able guy, head of the nationwide, what's now Nationwide Insurance Company. I was with Murray a lot during that time and I certainly did everything I could among the cooperatives and labor to help Mr. Truman, but I don't remember any particular thing that I did.

HESS: Where were you on election night, do you recall?

CARSON: I was right here, right in this apartment.

HESS: Did you think that Mr. Truman was going to win that election?

CARSON: No I didn't, I was--probably--I don't--I will take a drink, but probably on that night took several and went to bed. I was so sick and sore and angry and everything else at the conditions at how successful the Republicans had been in their campaign, and organized the whole economy, you see. They got

[54]

control of the Senate I think in '46 or so.

HESS: And you thought it was a foregone conclusion almost that Mr. Dewey was in?

CARSON: Oh yeah. I remember the next morning when I got up and got the paper, and saw the picture of Truman with something, "Dewey elected" and so on.

HESS: That was when he was holding up the Chicago Tribune edition of "Dewey Defeats Truman."

CARSON: I think that was the next day or after, I was just, I think I--Max Lowenthal had--I'm sure it isn't the original, but has a copy of that picture signed by Harry Truman and I know that Max had a picture up, and it's over his bed.

HESS: Yeah, I think that was a couple of days after the election, because that was on the train trip back through from Independence, back to Washington.

CARSON: But I know I knew the next morning that Truman, of course, was elected, and boy, that was one of the greatest elections. I really think, Mr. Hess, that I knew--I didn't know Willkie, he was a very big man, of course I had known him, I mean I didn't know him personally, but I knew Jim Tumulty very well who was the secretary. Jim Tumulty was the ablest secretary

[55]

to a President that ever came to the White House in my opinion.

HESS: Who is that?

CARSON: Joe [Joseph P.] Tumulty, Wilson's secretary, he ran that White House with not more than two assistants, and all during that war too, everything, he was an exceptionally able guy and very fine guy. Well, that way I knew Wilson, I saw him in parades, I saw him down at the White House, Capitol signing bills, on mining, all that, but I didn't get to know him personally. I

admired him tremendously, on his economic views and so on, because they were mine. I followed him well enough, and then I knew Harding personally and...

HESS: What was your opinion of Harding?

CARSON: Harding was probably one of the most unfortunate guys that--he should have never got away from being a small town newspaperman. He was as Senator, he was a very pleasant guy, very affable, handsome, all that, but a man of utterly incompetence for a big job. You won't find anything in all his career in the Senate that would be any different from the worst of the Senators up there now. He was that. I just tell

[56]

you one thing that is typical of Harding that I always liked. He had one press conference and after it finished while we were all there, probably forty people, he came around and sat on the desk with his feet on the floor, got in amidst us, then he said, "Fellows," he said, "I wish you'd do something for me now." He said, "I think you had ought to play fair." He said, "I am trying to do the best I can on this job and nobody could do it well, I can't do it very well, I'm doing the best I can on it. I'm here all day and every night, days and nights here, I never get away. Now somebody comes in and wants to go play golf, and asks me to go. I go out and play golf, then you fellows parade around in the paper with the story, "Harding's playing golf again." He said "In reality, the public just thinks that I'm playing golf." He said, "Now, won't you agree, if there's anybody plays golf with me that there's a story in I'll give it to you, but if I just go out to play golf and have a friendly game, will you forget it and not publish it?"

Well, we all agreed.

HESS: Sort of censor the news?

CARSON: We all agreed that we would do it for him.

[57]

HESS: Is that right?

CARSON: Yeah, we all agreed. I remember another night Harding got out alone and walked over to the Press Club, sat down in the Press Club with the gang. Said he wanted to get away from that damn White House. But he was a very pleasant guy, very--and not an ignorant man, but certainly he wasn't an educated man.

HESS: What was your opinion of his successor Calvin Coolidge?

CARSON: He was far more dangerous than Harding. He was--I have nothing but contempt for him at the--he was the tool of anybody that came in that wanted something. You know how he got the Presidency by accident; he got the Vice-Presidency by accident.

HESS: When Harding died.

CARSON: Well, he got the Vice-Presidency before that in 1920 by accident. Joe Tumulty really made him Vice President, and made him Vice-President by accident.

HESS: How did he do that?

CARSON: Well, Joe was Wilson's secretary, and after the Republicans won the 1918 congressional fight--wait a

[58]

minute I'll get a cigar. I quit, I used to smoke ten or twenty of these a day, but I...

HESS: Is that right?

CARSON: ...but I quit some time back and I find now I only smoke when I'm doing something like this when I want to relax a bit when I'm doing it.

Well, the League of Nations fight was on, and Joe Tumulty, loyal to Mr. Wilson of course, was giving everything he could for Mr. Wilson to get the League of Nations through. And we came to the time when the Boston police strike was on and that became the biggest story of the newspaper, the Boston police strike. The Mayor of Boston had no control over the police force, it was under the control of the Governor, and this fellow, I forget his name, I know it very well, it will come back to me in a minute, he was doing one very fine job trying to get that police strike settled, but couldn't get it settled. And he was trying to find the Governor, the Governor wasn't in Boston. He was traveling in the western part of the state all those days of anguish in Boston.

And then Coolidge—the strike was settled and Coolidge made a statement about it that he stopped the strike or settled the strike, he wasn't there at all.

[59]

Why then, Joe Tumulty, I'm sure I can't prove this, but I think I have it, the New York Times—Wilson sent Coolidge a message congratulating him on settling the police strike and so on, law and order must be preserved and soon so on, published all over the New York Times the next morning. Well, Coolidge grabbed it of course and used it.

Well, I'm sure that Joe Tumulty wrote that telegraph to Coolidge to help Wilson because Joe at the time had to get the support of Tumulty to get the League of Nations through. It was building bipartisan support you see.

HESS: For the League of Nations.

CARSON: For the League of Nations. But Coolidge, it made Coolidge President in 1920. If you'll find it, there wasn't—I have--the biggest lobbyist in the country was up at that convention

where Harding was nominated and I have the copies of a couple pages at least of his report. There wasn't any question about the Vice-Presidency at all. Penrose was satisfied if he got Mellon as Secretary of the Treasury, and they had, for one reason or another, this lobbyist was the first one for Governor of Illinois, [Frank O.] Lowden, or something like that, and then there was a

[60]

general in the race too at that time, had a lot of support and the lobbyist was willing to take him, but preferred Lowden, and Lowden had been a good Governor. And then he tells how he came down to see Harry Daugherty, this lobbyist, were very good friends and pals. But there's no evidence of any time, they finally, I can't—I have no evidence of facts to support this, but I'm sure after they agreed on Harding in the dark rooms, and Penrose had got what he wanted, the others got what he wanted, somebody said, "Well, how about bringing Coolidge on the scene?" And that's when he was put on. He was—I was told by a fellow who covered the Statehouse for the Boston Globe at that time that while Coolidge was Governor that he went into Coolidge's office as Governor time after time and he said there wouldn't be a paper on his desk, anything but a pen stand, nothing else on the desk at all. And he never got any information from Coolidge at all about anything. But after he became President, you know, is when—he was the one that inaugurated the habit of—not the habit, he insisted on it—that any questions from the correspondents had to be written and he took the list and if you didn't want to write it, and this was the rule, he turned it over and you couldn't say anything at all about it. Oh yes...

[61]

HESS: He would decide which ones he wanted to answer, talk about?

CARSON: He didn't answer very much at all. He was utterly, he was--his wife was a wonderful woman I think. We liked her about as well as--I think everybody loved Mrs. Truman, but his--Coolidge's wife was a very wonderful person too.

HESS: Now what about Herbert Hoover?

CARSON: Herbert Hoover, I was on his--I was in his "kitchen cabinet" for a while. I was a great admirer of Hoover's. I thought he was a Democrat probably, but after the Belgian Commission, the work, food for children's work, I admired him and I was very glad to see him appointed. He was probably one of the canniest guys in some respects that I dealt with. I found that he could resolve his difficulties. I remember one time he told us in the newspapers, we--he laid down these rules for the conferences, that was that he would fill us in on everything, any question that we asked, but we weren't to use it at all, unless thereafter the White House, the President in a conference, mentioned it. And we'd tell what the President said, then we could write all that Hoover wanted.

[62]

But I remember this. He was determined to kill off the postal savings banks, Hoover was. And he filled us with stuff about the postal savings banks, and Will Hayes, who was Postmaster General. Well, I didn't see what was going on until one day Harding said, "Well, in the Cabinet today we discussed the question of postal savings banks and so on, and we're going to consider this proposal, what shall be done about the postal savings banks," that's all he said, and then all the rest came from Mr. Hoover's conference, the denunciation of postal savings banks and so on so on.

Well, I got to wondering, "That's what I'm here for, and he's using me--Mr. Hoover's using me for," the tariff bill came through and got--it was in the House and it was a very lousy, dirty tariff bill you know, and one day I said to Mr. Hoover see, I said, "Mr. Secretary, how about the Ford-McCumber, Ford-McCumber tariff bill?"

And he said, "Oh," he said, "why discuss it, it isn't worth discussing it," he said, "it will never pass the House or the Senate and it's a waste of time to discuss it." I think that he called it an economic monstrosity.

Well, it passed the House and some months later it got through the Senate and I said, "Mr. Hoover,"

[63]

I was sitting right at his desk like other newspapermen, "How about--now about this Ford-McCumber tariff bill." And he went down to the lower corner--edge of his--drawer of his desk and took out a cigar and brought it up and laid it on the desk, and I notice there were two cigars there already, but he--that was, but as he went down he said, "Well, it can't do any harm and it may do a lot of good," as a lobbyist.

So he wouldn't look at me while he was getting a cigar, that was--but that was another guy.

Well, I--then of course, the reason that Norris--I went in to Norris' office one morning and Norris was walking up and down the floor of his private office, and he was swearing a bit, Norris never swore, but this morning he said some very hard curse words, and I said, "What's the matter now?"

He said, "This man Hoover." He said, "That man, that's why I hate the man, the dirty so and so that would do what he has done."

And I said, "What?"

He said, "Well, he has denounced the--"no," he said, "Well, what happened," he said, "You know he had that young engineer from his staff and his Secretary of Commerce come up to me when I was Secretary--chairman of the House Agriculture Committee to write a farm bill." And he said, "We

[64]

wrote that farm bill together as you know, John.” I did I knew, and he said, “And every night just after we got through a couple of pages, sections, so and so, the young engineer that Hoover had, took it back to Hoover and Hoover okayed it, so everything in that farm bill was Hoover’s bill.”

“One Sunday morning,” he said, “he had me out to his house to breakfast and we talked about the bill, what a wonderful bill it was and so on.” He said, “Naturally, when I started the hearings this morning I announced that Hoover would be the first witness for the bill.” And he said, “Last night,” this was Monday morning, he was talking to me, he said, “last night I got a call from Louis, his representative, Hoover’s representative, saying that Mr. Hoover wants me to know that he was going to appear,” and he had to appear, of course, “that he couldn’t be for the bill, he would try not to say too much against it, but he couldn’t be for the bill.” Told me that Mr. Harding and his associates had called Mr. Hoover into the White House, that Mr. Harding and his associates had called Mr. Hoover into the White House the night before and told him if he appeared up there that he would have to appear against the bill.” He said, “This is his child, this bill is his child, Mr. Hoover’s bill, and here is the

[65]

blankety-blank now runs out.” He said, “That is the kind of a man I cannot bear.” That was the issue with George Norris to support Al Smith in ’28. He got that when he--of course, thereafter Hoover fought him on the Teapot Dome right along and fought Norris right along too at the time, trying to beat Norris and Norris finally whipped him. But he was--he was a trickster, he was smart, shrewd.

I remember one time he told us that he and Charles Evans Hughes, who was Secretary of State had reached an agreement that if Harding could get rid of Fall and Daugherty out of the Cabinet that they were going to resign. Well, Harding didn’t get rid of--and I don’t think Hughes ever said that. Hughes was a very honorable, fine man, in my opinion, but I didn’t like him, I knew him for years.

HESS: What’s your opinion of FDR, Franklin Delano Roosevelt?

CARSON: Well, I told you that the other day, I just--I was enthusiastic for him after ’32, between ’32 and ’36 I think he saved the country from revolution.

I saw the night, Mr. Hess, when I was over in the Senate, 9 o’clock with Couzens. We went back

[66]

at 9 o’clock. Just before he went back the Sergeant of Arms came through and said nobody could go across the sidewalks or the street to the Senate Office Building, we’d have to go through the subway. We went through the subway and when we came out from the Senate Office building and went up to our office and got our coats, came down to get in my car, I noticed the steps to the Senate Office building there were three bonfires on the Capitol out there

that night, big bonfires, and there must have been a thousand men, it was cold, bitterly cold. This was 10, 11 o'clock; they were marching around these bonfires chanting hymns of hate. And that was only the final picture in my office day after day, the returned soldiers came in and told us they had made it clear that we're not asking it, we're telling you what we want, if we don't get it this way, then we'll get it another way. And they are with blood in their eyes, and if you saw the hunger around here and everything else in those days, you knew something was going to happen. We were very close to a revolution at that time in my opinion.

HESS: Were you here the day of the bonus march?

CARSON: Oh, yes.

[67]

HESS: When they chased the bonus marchers out to Anacostia?

CARSON: Oh yes, I stood on--in the--just happened to be over in the committee room, Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce that evening. I don't know what I was doing there, but I was over there, nobody else was there. And it was about 4:30 as I recall, maybe 3:30, sometime, cold, bitterly cold, and I saw the soldier's parade coming down, Mr. Eisenhower with--what's his name?

HESS: MacArthur?

CARSON: MacArthur and Eisenhower. I didn't know who they were but I saw the brass at the top and I saw the cavalry or whatever was coming down and then I saw these poor unfortunate bonus boys running across Pennsylvania Avenue and running down around the White House, all running, and the soldiers running after them with the bayonets and everything. I don't know that they hurt anybody, but they--and burning the huts they had and so on. It was--a newspaperman Grant Cairnes came down to my office that night to watch. He came in, he was never a violent guy at all, he was a progressive, not a--a Democrat but not a--not given to emotions, but that time he was right in the midst of that. He said that exhibition--he would

[68]

have been ready to fight if they had been--if the soldiers had fought he would have joined in the fight. So that--I saw that, yes.

HESS: Okay, let's turn this over.

SIDE TWO

HESS: At the time that Mr. Truman won in '48, did you think that he would try to run again in '52?

CARSON: Well, that--no I didn't--you asked me--no I didn't think Mr. Truman would run. I didn't, I don't know that I talked to anybody about it, but I didn't think he'd run again.

HESS: Were you present at the National Guard Armory the night he announced that he was not going to run? The Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner?

CARSON: No, I wasn't there. No there was some reason going on that time that I wasn't getting out nights, maybe illness or something, but...

HESS: After Mr. Truman took himself out of the race who did you think that the Democrats would put--who did you think that the two parties would put up that year? As you will recall, on the Republican side

[69]

there was quite a fight during the primary between Robert Taft and General Eisenhower.

CARSON: Oh, I thought Taft would win. Oh, I'll tell you what--tell you an interesting incident, at that time. Along some months before the primary got started, the lobbyist for the railroads, a good friend of mine, old newspaperman, came to my office one morning, and he said, "John, I have been ordered to develop information that—and I'll depend on you for your opinion." I developed a reputation around here of being a political authority of some of this. At least some fools thought I was, at least. He said, "What would you think of a general being candidate for the Republican Party this time?"

And I said, "It would all depend who the general was."

And he said, "What would you think of Eisenhower?"

And I said, "Oh, I think Eisenhower would probably be a very, very strong candidate, Bill."

And he said, "Why?"

And I said, "Well, he obviously was sent over there by Truman and Marshall for one reason, and that was to be a mediator between all the contending forces. I doubt that he was a great general at all, but he really was a public relations man more than anything else, and he did a good job and he's got a good press

[70]

and I think probably he would be a very good candidate."

And he said, "Well, don't you think the tag of a general in war would hurt him?"

I said, "Well, you can work that out very easily." I said, "You can get him a job someplace," I said, "for example, you could get him a job as president of a university, let him run a university,

sit in a university chair as president for six or seven months as president of a university and so on, and..."

HESS: Exactly what was done.

CARSON: Exactly what was done, Chase and Columbia University, of course, they put him in there pretty early you know, brought him back as President of Columbia. While he was in that campaign, the president of the machinists was in the building, called me over one morning, and went over, he was--he was real angry about--he said that he had been called down here with a--that someone had developed a public relations job, had three economists and authorities on labor legislation and they had three representatives of the employers and three representatives of labor sit there.

[71]

He said there was--well he said that we were called down, said that Hoover, or Dwight Eisenhower was with them, they brought Dwight Eisenhower down here because they thought they could develop a plan through which the difficulties between labor and management would be settled and the program was for these men, fellows, to ask a question and then labor was to answer and the employers was to answer and then we was to question them and so on. And Mr. Eisenhower sat there and listened. He said, "John, the first question was innocuous. The next question wasn't innocuous," and he said, "management talked about it at length and these three stooges of the congress, they had talked about it and so on, and finally one of the students, one of the congress said, "Well, now we've heard the views of management I think in here, doesn't somebody from labor want to talk?"

And a fellow name of Al something, he's up in Wisconsin now, Al Hayes, Al Hayes said, "All right, I want to talk."

And he said, "John, it was so wide open I just asked about three questions and asked either one of them to begin to answer these questions as straightforward answers, give me facts and so on."

[72]

And he said, "They didn't answer the first question, they didn't answer the second, the third question, the meeting adjourned."

Mr. Eisenhower--he says, "Can you think of a damn fool like Eisenhower coming down, being--thinking he can sit in here and solve all the problems of management and labor and get us together?" So he walked out on them.

HESS: Well, one last question, what in your opinion will be Mr. Truman's place in history; just one or two hundred years from now, how will people view Mr. Truman?

CARSON: I think that they'll look on Mr. Truman, in my opinion, I think that of the Presidents I saw, I saw them all a good bit of them, he'll be the greatest President of this period. I think in

many respects he may be even greater than, esteemed as being even greater than Mr. Roosevelt. Certainly the whole plan, the whole program of postwar aid, the Marshall plan and all that, that he agreed to it, approved it, it may have been somebody else's idea, I imagine Marshall helped him, but even in the selection of a Marshall to run the war and to do the job he did, everything there is--Truman is going down. Now, the second thing, I think it will be well-known, will

[73]

well admitted by everybody that there wasn't a man of greater courage in the White House than he had. The fight he made--one fight that I was intimately associated with was the basin point fight. That fight, someone was, oh, Morris, the Senator from Oregon, said on the Senate floor, he knew that more than ten million dollars had been spent for the lobby trying to get the basing point bill through, that's in his speech. And I am sure that's true, because this town was, I imagine the Carleton Hotel was filled with the lobbyists in the rooms in those days. Every Senator was seen, every member of Congress was seen by three or four or five people from his home town and they put such pressure on, you can imagine how the pressure was when the House passed that bill and the Senate passed that bill.

HESS: And still he vetoed it.

CARSON: And still he vetoed it. He vetoed it. And I doubt that...

HESS: Was there a great deal of pressure on the Federal Trade Commission at that time?

CARSON: Oh yes, oh yes. We fought the bill, but--and we appeared against it. And I was--had a hand in

[74]

that, but he--but when only the Federal Trade Commission appeared, I remember, everybody else was for it, but it was, gee, it was a vicious, vicious bill. And I and--I know the pressure was going on in the White House by night and by day. I doubt that any President in my time, and I even doubt that Roosevelt would have stood up against that kind of pressure. That was terrific. He was--there was no question about his courage at any time on anything, what was right, no question about his integrity, and honor and his good judgment. The guy was--had come through with--I don't know anybody that was around here in the--one of the newspapermen I think, I don't know any newspapermen that have greater admiration for Truman.

HESS: That pretty well conclude it?

CARSON: Yes.

HESS: Well, thank you, thank you very much.

Index

Adams, Sherman, 44, 47
AFL, 10
American Federation of Labor, 9, 11
Arnold, Ellis, 51
Ayers, William A., 33, 34, 35, 36, 37

Barkley, 52
Belgian Commission, 61
Blair House, 2
Boston Globe, 60
Boston, Mayor of, 58
Brandeis, 25, 26
Brownell, Herbert, 45
Bureau of Conciliation, 7, 8

Capehart, Senator, 45
Carretta, Albert A., 39, 44
Carson, John, 15, 40
Champion, 48
Chase, 70
Chicago Tribune, 54
CIO, 10
Civil Service, 7
Columbia University, 70
Cooke, Lewellen Morris, 32
Coolidge, Calvin, 57, 58, 59, 60
Cooperative League, 52, 53
Couzens, 65
Cruikshank, Nelson, 9, 10

Daugherty, Harry, 60
Daugherty, Henry M., 29, 65
Davis, Ewan L., 27, 28, 40
Davis, Norman, 27
Delano, Preston, 17
Dempsey, Jimmy, 11
Department of Education, 14
Department of Labor, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 21
Department of Agriculture, 5
Dewey, 54

Eichel, Leslie, 11
Eisenhower, 47, 67, 69, 71, 72
Evansville Press, 11

Fall, 65
Federal Trade Commission, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 2936, 37, 39, 45, 46, 73, 74
Ferguson, Jr., Garland S., 27, 33, 48, 49, 50, 51
Ford-McCumber tariff bill, 62, 63

Hapgood, Norman, 25
Harding, 55, 56, 57, 64
Hatch, Senator, 5, 6
Hayes, Will, 62
Hayes, Al, 71
Healy, Robert, 29, 30
Home Owner's Loan Board, 6
Hoover, Herbert, 61, 63, 64, 65, 71
House Agriculture Committee, 63
Howrey, Edward F., 44, 45, 47, 48
Hughes, Charles Evans, 65, 66
Hull, Cordell, 27

Jackson, President, 32
Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner, 68

King, Judson, 31

Lassater, 27
League of Nations, 58, 59
Lewis, Fulton, 47
Lowden, Frank O. 59, 60
Lowenthal, Max, 12, 46, 52, 54

MacArthur, 67
Marshall, 69
Mason, Billy 23, 39, 43
Mason, Lowell B., 22, 23 24, 26
Mead, Jim, 35, 38, 40, 43, 44
Milliman, Elmer, 9
Morris, Senator (Oregon), 73
Murphy, Charlie, 41
Murray, 53

National Popular Government League, 31
Nationwide Insurance Company, 53
New York Times, 59
Norris, George, 20, 29, 31, 32, 63, 65

Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, 13

Penrose, 60
Perkins, Francis, 19, 21

Railroad Labor League, 9
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 32, 65, 72, 74
Rural Electrification Administration, 31

Schwellenbach, Lou 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17
Scripps-Howard Feature Service, 25
Secretary of Commerce, 63
Secretary of Labor, 14
Shipstead, Senator Henrik, 32
Smith, Al, 65
Social Action Department, 9
Special Assistant to Truman, 11, 13
Spingarn, Steve, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43
Steelman John, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 21

Taft, Robert, 69
Teapot Dome, 65
Truman Committee, 38
Truman, Harry S., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 23, 38, 41, 44, 46, 47, 51, 52, 53, 54, 68, 69, 72, 74,
Tumulty, Jim, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59
Twohy, Jim, 6, 17

United States Shipping Board, 27
United States Steel, 45

Wagner, Bob, 20
Walsh, 29
Walsh, Tom, 35
Wheelock, John, 40
Wilson, 24