

Oral History Interview
with
HAROLD L. ENARSON

Independence, Missouri
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by Ray Geselbracht, Randy Sowell, and Sam Rushay, Harry S. Truman Library and David Atkinson, Enarson's Second Cousin, Professor of Political Science, University of Missouri at Kansas City.

GESELBRACHT: It is Monday, August 5, 1996, and present for this interview are Harold Enarson, formerly of Truman's White House staff, Randy Sowell, archivist at the Truman Library, Sam Rushay, also an archivist, Mr. David Atkinson, a professor of political science and law at UMKC, and Ray Geselbracht. Let me first ask Mr. Enarson how did you get into government service, and how did you end up on the White House staff?

ENARSON: I think I arrived there through a series of fortuitous accidents. They say that chance favors the prepared mind. Well I'm not sure I was always prepared, but I was lucky in my choice of friends. I had served in the infantry and fortunately could exercise the right to return to my prior job, in which I had been a budget examiner in the U. S. Bureau of the Budget. Incidentally, the Bureau of the Budget was a splendid graduate seminar for anybody fascinated with the art and diplomacy of public administration, and I treasured my years of service in the Bureau of the Budget. There I worked for David Stowe, a North Carolinian, whose interests were in labor mobilization, the use of the employment service, manpower, and its larger dimension. That began to help focus my interests in that area. Remember, in the times following World War II we had this huge clash of big labor and big

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corporations. It's almost impossible to reconstruct the passion and anger of the times. Just as today, 1996, health is the major focus of controversy in the country and in the Congress and in the political situation, at that time labor-management relations were the focus and the heat was enormous.

There built up over time, in the Congress, an insistent demand for reform and it emerged in the form of the Taft-Hartley bill. Taft was, of course, Senator Bob Taft of Ohio. Hartley was Fred Hartley of Indiana. So the Taft-Hartley Bill emerged finally as a major contentious issue. I had followed it very carefully as had my colleague, David Bell, who also worked in the Bureau of the Budget, and who later figures in the life of Truman and his staff. Dave and I -- and this is unbelievable, because I was either 32 or 33 at the time -- were invited over to the White House to meet with Clark Clifford who was Chief Counsel and speech writer and confidant of Harry Truman. The question was what should the President do about the Taft-Hartley Bill? Should he veto it? If so, why? Should he not veto it? If so, why? Now I reflect back on this and think upon my innocence because there was no way in hell that Truman was not going to veto that bill, given his ties, given the forces at work in the Democratic Party. If I saw that at all, I saw it very dimly. My focus, quite properly, was on the merits of the legislation and Dave and I were careful

students of the legislation. We thought it was bad in a variety of ways which I can't remember exactly today. I should add, parenthetically, that at the time I was so immersed in this, that I practically lived it.

Clifford was a very, very impressive man. He listened. He listened very carefully, took notes, and forced us to say clearly why we thought a provision was bad, et cetera, et cetera. Following that meeting, we helped draft the Taft-Hartley veto message. Dave Bell was a superior writer and soon, through sheer intellect and drive, subsequently returned as a major speech writer in the White House. But that, I think, was Dave's first excursion

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and assignment like that. That event was capped by a special invitation from the White House for me and for my wife to sit in on the veto message.

Of course, the Taft-Hartley message had incredible fallout and the area that I was fascinated with was the emergency provisions. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on fact-finding in national emergency labor disputes and I felt very deeply that we did not have the answers to national emergency labor disputes.

Well, change of scenery. Then I'm off to Whittier College, and then to Stanford. We had just finished our first year of teaching at Stanford and I had a call from someone I have forgotten. I think it was Dave Stowe. But in any event, I was invited to come back in the summer of 1950 to work for the National Security Resources Board, then headed by Stuart Symington of Missouri. So this was a three-month summer assignment, great fun, and I dug deeply into the history of wage stabilization and price control in World War II and got rather deeply into that.

Traveled to Canada to study their system at one time. I'm not clear on the exact dates and I don't know exactly when the Korean crisis heated up, but, in any event, by the end of the summer, I was suddenly invited -- I guess it was by Dave Stowe -- to go meet Dr. John R. Steelman. Dave said you can go to work with Dr. Steelman if you'd want to. I don't remember the first time I met Steelman, which is a curious omission. In any event, I phoned the people at Stanford and I asked if I could have a leave of absence for a year and they said, reluctantly, yes, because as academics they thought that academics was far more important than anything you could possibly do in government. I should advance the discussion by saying that at the end of the year I asked for another year, and they said they didn't think that was advisable. Well, there was no way I was going to leave the White House where I was having great fun. In retrospect, that was a career decision, a turn in the road, that changed my whole life because I gave up the whole dream of being a college professor, which is the good life.

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Well, let me comment briefly a little bit about John R. Steelman. He had been a professor of sociology, as I recall, at a small college somewhere in the south. I don't know where. Frances Perkins, then Secretary of Labor, came through and she spotted this young man, and she said, later, I want you come to work in Washington. He headed up at one time what was then called the U.S. Conciliation Service, subsequently renamed the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. John R. Steelman was a remarkable man; by any measure of the word, remarkable. He

was physically imposing. I think he was well over 6 feet tall. There was an electric quality about his personality. He was quick in everything he did -- in his movements, in his thinking.

My most vivid and lasting memory of John R. Steelman is that he's leaning back in his desk and he has the phone cradled here, and he has cards that he is writing notes on. The secretary is waiting there, and he [Steelman] is smiling as he talks to somebody. He could convey warmth over the telephone like nobody I have ever known. I never saw the man lose his temper. I never saw him angry.

There were three of us in that office. There was Russell Andrews, who had been brought over from the Budget Bureau. Russell Andrews was your classic Bureau of the Budget man from the olden times. He knew every provision of the federal code. He knew how to find anything and everything and anything that Steelman did was checked with Russ to make sure that there was no error in it. It was a function I couldn't have begun to perform. Then, John R. had an economist who worked for him to advise him on economic matters. I don't recall his name. I was never well acquainted with him. I was brought in to focus on the whole issue of emergency labor disputes, wage stabilization, and price stabilization, really the functioning of the stabilization agencies.

The relationship that I had with John R. was -- it was distant, in the sense that you never walked uninvited into his office, and he never walked

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across the hall except rarely to step in to see me. He was one of the most efficient persons in the terms of managing his time and his work of anybody I have ever known or worked with. I am having difficulty articulating this because it is such an unusual experience. He was never unfriendly in any way. He was never critical in any way. He never called me in and criticized anything. I communicated exclusively by memos and I sent these memos in about every other day or so. I said I really think the President ought to write a letter, or the President ought to do this or you ought to do this, and he'd say or I'd say, I would like to do this and he'd say "OK, JRS."

Incidentally, he cherished the "doctor" designation -- Steelman did. It was "Doctor Steelman." He was, of course, The Assistant to the President and he owned the word "The." He gave that "The" a certain umph that you wouldn't believe. To race ahead a little bit in the story, I served there almost two years in his office, at one time going on quick loan over to the Wage Stabilization Board where I served as Assistant to George Taylor who was then Chairman of the Board. He was a very distinguished labor arbitrator from the University of Pennsylvania, a first rate man and a first rate teacher. I learned so much from him because it was a "mentor/mentee" relationship. This was a time when we had not yet learned the mentor/mentee [relationship] but he was kind enough to explain what he was doing at various times. I don't think John R. ever called me in and shared a confidence or gossiped about anything. That was not in his nature. But I want to stress the point that he was always totally friendly. He gave the word affability its distinctive cloth. He was an affable man, with a razor quick mind and the capacity to learn quickly. How this fellow, who came up from a small college where he taught sociology, could adapt to the climate of big pressure groups and deal easily with Ben Fairless, the head of U. S.

Steel, and Art Goldberg, who was General Counsel to AFL-CIO, and with Phil Murray of AFL-CIO, I never knew. But

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John was not arrogant. He was not presumptuous. He was not overriding. He was not overbearing. He was very much there and he clearly had the confidence of the President from day one and the President had great confidence in him. It was a great learning experience to serve him.

I'll inject one little note on John R.'s methods. Later on, when Eisenhower came in as President, Sherman Adams became, in effect, his chief of staff, because that was the way that Ike operated. And at various times you would read about somebody exercising political influence: somebody would call the White House about this or that and there would be a big fuss about who said what to whom. John R. Steelman had a record system that couldn't be beat. He had 3 x 5 cards and he had three secretaries in his office. They were absolutely totally devoted to him and loyal, and he would jot things down. Let's say you got an inquiry, really a request, for intervention in price stabilization matters and it came from a prominent businessman in Indianapolis and that kind of thing. John R. was superb at saying no, without saying no, or saying I'll look into it, but never making too much of a commitment or comment.

He was an artful dodger and superb at it. He was taking notes at the time and the secretary was taking notes and then when the conversation was concluded he would dictate, "talk with so and so, on such and such a date, tell him I'll get back to him, etc." The action item might have been a "must call to the head of Office of Price Administration," or something like that. So then he had the action taken ultimately. He had a record of every conversation that he had on any official matter, and what happened, and what he said he'd do, and what he said he wouldn't do. That was before the time that we had become so acutely conscious of fraud and deception in high levels.

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GESELBRACHT: Did Dr. Steelman restrict his area of interest and activity to the labor relations area and stabilization area?

ENARSON: No, in no way. The way in which the White House operates is inevitably the function of the personality of the President, his or her set of experiences and mind set, and if there is any perfect way to organize the White House, it's not yet been discovered. Centralization has its advantages but you bear with it a terrible price. And the notion that one person can become the exclusive channel to the President is, I think, absurd because, in effect, that person has too much power so I think what you want -- and Dick Neustadt's book deals with that -- let's call it "creative tension" which is a graceful way of camouflaging real tension. But you must never have an exclusive channel into the President. On the other hand, there has to be some degree of order in the damn place as Clinton has to learn repeatedly. There were two centers of power in the White House as far as I could see it. One was Dr. Steelman's office, dealing largely with price and wage stabilization matters, defense, the mobilization effort as we got deeper and deeper into the Korean conflict and as the Chinese marched across the Yalu. Then, there was Charles Murphy, a North Carolinian, who was the President's General Counsel, speech writer and confidant. The arrangement, as far as I could discern from my level, was one of cordiality

and easy reactions, easy interaction. I never got any feeling that there was any kind of hostility or antagonism between Charlie Murphy and John R. It always seemed to me they got along splendidly. It was a loose division of function. It was never tight and, of course, the President met with his top staff -- I've forgotten how frequently -- but I think they met daily, and so the President would say "Well, do this," or "do that." Parenthetically, I think McCullough's book is superb in a number of respects but one thing that is so great about it is that he pointed out that Harry Truman learned administrative skills, and they were put to good use in the White House. He was not administrating a little,

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tiny outfit when he was county judge. He was administrating a very substantial budget with quite a few people reporting to him and he learned how to select people. Now he had his indulgences and this was the general, his old buddy from the army, he kept around, I think for poker and jokes and just the pleasantries of life. I think the more that the press got angry with him because of -- what's his name, the general, you know...

GESELBRACHT: Harry Vaughan.

ENARSON: Harry Vaughan, who would blunder occasionally. And the more Truman would set his teeth and say you're not going to push me around on that. I should add that I reported to John R., and on the Murphy side, shared gossip with Dick Neustadt, who subsequently wrote an outstanding book on the Presidency. Milton Kayle, who is now a member of your Board of Directors, a lawyer, Harvard Law, worked for Charles Murphy. Dave Bell, as I recall, worked for Charles Murphy at that time too. So you had two or three assistants, and that was it. There was no army of people in depth. Milt Kayle talked to me on the telephone recently. I think he said there were now 1700 people working in the White House, and there were 36 who had the label "Special Assistant." I was incredulous at that, incredulous, because the more people you have, the less the focus and the greater the opportunity to trip over one another's feet.

GESELBRACHT: Did you feel the White House staff was big enough to do its job in Truman's time?

ENARSON: I never had any feeling that we were short of staff. No. Now there were other people who served in the assistant role and I don't recall what their titles were or what they did. Well, for example, if there developed a civil rights issue

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or a minority issue, as there always was, I recall Philleo Nash dealt with that. Don Dawson was another one, on personnel matters. There was a whole series of things that happened which require somebody's attention to report to the President, but I repeat the two centers of power with respect to policy and diplomacy and the direction that the Presidency was taken were really in the hands of Murphy and Dr. Steelman.

Murphy was a quiet-spoken North Carolinian with a first rate mind. He was patient beyond belief, well organized, courteous to a fault. I recall one time Dave Bell and I were in his office. We were warming up for a speech we were working on and we were jammering away, coming

up with all kinds of ideas, and finally Charlie said, "Well, I think we've had enough discussion. I think it's time for you fellows to put pen to paper. Why don't you just excuse yourself and do that." It was done in the most gentle but forceful fashion.

GESELBRACHT: Was there any political dimension separating the two power centers? Historians like to talk about the advisors to the President having different types of influence on him, and that perhaps the counsel's office -- certainly Clark Clifford -- was a liberal influence, and that somebody else might be a conservative influence on Truman. Was it this kind of division between these two centers?

ENARSON: Well, my sense of the situation was that Clark Clifford played an absolutely key role, as subsequent studies have shown, in the management of Truman's successful campaign. I don't think there is any doubt about that. Clifford was clearly at that time, the master strategist. I don't know that there was a master strategist on Truman's effort to get reelected in '52. If there was, it was not apparent to me. I do recall about the time that I was over on loan. No, I guess I had already gone over to the Wage Stabilization Board because John R. Steelman recommended to the President that I be appointed a public

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member to this agency in its last three or four or five months, before the end of his regime. I do recall arguing with my colleagues. They were all optimistic. They said Truman's going to get reelected. I said, he's not. He's not going to get reelected. That's just self-deceit, and so we bet on it. I won the bets and lost friends. Well, I thought it was a classic case of people that are loyalists and are too close to the situation and they don't read the situation.

GESELBRACHT: But was there any division between Steelman's office and Murphy's office, in the type of advice the President would get? Did it have a political, or I should say, an ideological colorization? Was he more likely to get advice of a more conservative or liberal nature out of one office or another?

ENARSON: I really can't say. I think I saw Murphy as a classic -- perhaps not a classic, but a pragmatic liberal; maybe that would be the phraseology that I would use on that. John R. Steelman was essentially an operator. He was not an ideologist in any way. He was a problem solver. What are we going to do about this? Let's solve it. I don't think he ever wasted his time -- that would have been his version -- writing out draft policy statements or saying "Mr. President, you ought to give a speech out here in Des Moines; it's a great opportunity. I understand you're going there and here are some things you ought to say on farm policy." I didn't get any sense of that.

GESELBRACHT: I want to ask one other question about the Steelman-Murphy situation, since a division of responsibility in terms of subject matter was not clearly defined. Was there ever any confusion about who was working on what and who should be working on what?

ENARSON: Yes, I think there was to some degree. I thought I had ownership of the Wage Stabilization Board, of labor disputes etc. etc., but as you intimate

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problems tend to blur and so quite understandably Murphy's office had an in-depth interest in controversies that were emerging in price stabilization, let's say, in some areas. I recall vividly that from time to time I would meet Dick Neustadt in the hall or see him at the White House mess and he would ask me, "what about this, what about that?" I would tell him, and then the next time I would see him I would ask him something and he'd tell me, but there was a kind of uneasy sharing of information that was a kind of hidden jealousy. Dick, I think, it is fair to say is a very aggressive person and eager to operate at the highest levels, so to the extent that there was rivalry, it was a muted rivalry. It was certainly not hostile in any way, but I think it mirrored the essential reality that you cannot divide problems in any neat, precise way in today's political economy. So I'm sure that there were some very careful conversations in Truman's office about policy issues, and probably Truman had to say, "Well, John you had better work on such and such," or turn to Charlie and say, "Well you had better work on this." I'm sure there were times in which, I'm guessing now of course, because I was not privy to those discussions, in which the President would say, "Well should we give a speech on such and such a topic," and possibly one key advisor would say no and the other would say yes. I can't imagine it operating in a different way, given the personality of the President. I want to stress that from my perspective, it was a harmonious White House.

This is extremely important. This was a time in the management of the office of the Presidency when it was unheard of by anybody from the White House staff to appear on "Face the Nation" or "Meet the Press" or to issue statements of any kind. You were staff to the President of the United States; conversations were privileged and I am confident that had anybody started yammering and talking to newsmen and getting off confessionals as apparently people do now to Bob Woodward, that person would have been swiftly terminated with a swift kick in the pants. That day was a simpler time and I

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think it was a better time. There is a notion about how to operate a White House, derived from the earlier studies in FDR's administration, that Presidential assistants -- in a memorable phrase -- were to have "a passion for anonymity." That is a marvelous, marvelous phrase.

GESELBRACHT: Was that a notion that was repeated among staff people in the White House?

ENARSON: No, it was just understood. It was so well understood you didn't have to articulate it. That is a good point because any organization operates on a series of unspoken assumptions that are so obvious that you don't have to question them. You know a violation only when it happens.

GESELBRACHT: Could you, or were you able, to determine what type of a working relationship Dr. Steelman had with President Truman?

ENARSON: It had to be one of complete confidence because following the resignation of the head of the then Office of Defense Mobilization, which created a great political fracas, people were savaging President Truman; the President didn't hesitate to put John R. Steelman in charge. He just constantly invested his hope in Dr. Steelman. I've told you a little bit about this. How did

this man, a labor conciliator, develop such supreme confidence that he could move in the highest levels without nervousness or apprehension? The man had developed his own work style, that is what I am trying to say, and it seemed to work. He had learned the nature of power and conflict and the role of persuasion in human affairs through his years in labor relations. John R. was a quick study. He read human beings and he read them quickly and I think for the most part, accurately.

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SOWELL: I have a question about his management style. I was wondering whether he held regular meetings with members of his staff, with you, or with Russell Andrews?

ENARSON: He held no meetings with we three. Each of us had our own one-on-one relation with him and I'm certain that my colleagues had the same set of relationships that I did. They shot memos in there, guessing as to what he was worried about or needed to know about. Often it was a need to know. He should know this, or a suggestion that since this is developing, perhaps the President should call the Secretary of Labor, or given this crisis that has front page stories in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, shouldn't the President do this, or this, or this. So it was a very distinct operating style. There was never a staff meeting in which we three would talk and we never talked much with one another because our domains were very separate and distinct. Each of us was chosen for our own specialization, whatever it was, real or imagined, for our expertise, real or imagined, that was available.

RUSHAY: Would you call him a delegator? Did he delegate responsibilities?

ENARSON: He never fit the traditional definitions that we use in public administration. He did the President's bidding. He advised the President. And when he was put in charge of something, he got it done, but you see, for the most part, there was not a basis for delegation. Now I hadn't thought of it before. He might have changed my title, given me a more elevated title and given me some range of operating authority, but I understood very clearly that I was staff, not operating in anyway, so we were functioning as eyes and ears and counselors and people to chase down, people and issues, etc. I think it was the appropriate way.

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RUSHAY: Do you recall how your responsibilities differed from those of Russell Andrews for example?

ENARSON: Yes, Russ Andrews -- I can see him with his cigarette, a long cigarette holder and the big books of the federal code there. Any technical question about how the U. S. government operated, Russ could find it. One other thing; Russ, of course, was a veteran of the Bureau of the Budget, so if we needed something from the Bureau of the Budget, a factual basis, a study, or what's the story on army procurement or something like that, Russ knew who to call in the Bureau of the Budget. The Bureau of the Budget is, of course, an arm of the Presidency and I think it was used in all of the proper ways at that time. It was not separate and isolated. In fact, all of us, Russ and I, and Dave Bell, had served in the Bureau so we knew who to talk to over there. If somebody was doing a study of, you name it, we would do it.

GESELBRACHT: And the third staff was David Stowe's, is that right?

ENARSON: Well, David was very close personally to Dr. Steelman. I have forgotten what Dave's title was, but he was in the thick of things all the time. Dave Stowe was a very aggressive man. He was a man absolutely dedicated to the President and determined to serve him to the best of his ability, but I'm not clear exactly what his title was at that time. He had a lot of free ranging responsibilities. He worked easily and freely with Dr. Steelman and with Charlie Murphy.

GESELBRACHT: You mentioned there were three people on Steelman's staff yourself, Russell Andrews, and ...

ENARSON: And an economist whose name escapes me. I'm sorry to say.

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SOWELL: Was it Dale Doty, by chance?

ENARSON: It was not. Again, there were other individuals who had direct personal relationships to the Presidency. I don't mean to imply that only Murphy and Steelman did, but I was only vaguely aware of those folks.

GESELBRACHT: Did you meet with Truman very often?

ENARSON: We didn't. No, again this was part of the nature of John R. Steelman's personality. I think he held sacred that very personal relationship he had with the President and I think he read the President rightly, because I don't think the President wanted to have large numbers of people in the room. He looked at people on a chain of command -- to do things.

Now, I have a framed picture in my study at home of Truman and about eight or ten of us including Steelman, Dave Stowe, Philleo Nash and others, and we are in brilliant Hawaiian shirts. We were at Key West, Christmas 1951. I recall vividly when Dr. Steelman came back and he said, "Well, do you want to go to Key West, Harold?" I said, "Well sure." He said the boss had said, "What about these young fellows around here who work so hard. What about those fellows?" So we were taken along on that trip and we spent, as I recall, a week down there. We were not included in the poker parties and that kind of thing, but we would stroll along the beach walking with the President, walking behind him at a discreet distance. Now, it wasn't that the President was unfriendly; the President has to conserve his time and energy. The President is relating to too many people on too many important issues too much of the time, and so I never felt that I was entitled to any one-on-one conversation with the President.

GESELBRACHT: Your office was in the East Wing, is that right?

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ENARSON: Yes, and those were simpler days. There was a guard around the corner there, next to the Treasury Building. You just walked through there and went into the place. Subsequently, it became an armed center. It is today.

GESELBRACHT: And what did Dr. Steelman typically call the President?

ENARSON: I'm not sure, but with us, staff members, he'd say, "I'm going to talk to the boss about that." I'm sure that in the person of the President, he said Mr. President. He very likely alternated between saying "Mr. President" and "boss." Just like I'm doing some work with a federal judge down in Alabama and the court monitor refers to him as "your honor," and then he shifts over to say "Judge Murphy" and then he refers back to "your honor," always respectful.

SOWELL: Your papers contain a great deal of information about the 1952 steel seizure case. Would you care to offer comments on your role in that controversy?

ENARSON: A wartime economy is incompatible with the free enterprise system, so in a national emergency, when there is an abbreviated freeze on prices and on wages, which creates enormous problems with respect to the settlement of disputes, you're dealing with a highly volatile uncertain environment, both in terms of public policy, and in terms of the politics of the situation.

I recall, vividly, Dave Stowe coming back from a meeting in the White House and saying in excited tones, not excited perhaps, but very newsworthy. He said "The Chinese have marched across the Yalu." That told me that we were now in deeply, deeply, and the mobilization of our war machine was utterly fundamental. We had to keep that going. Then head of the Office of Defense Mobilization was Arthur Flemming, who had been an early member of

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the Civil Service Commission. Many years later he was the President of the University of Oregon. I attended a session involving Arthur Flemming and the top officials of the Pentagon. The issue was war production and the investment that the Pentagon had in the continuing supply of war material, the continuing flow of war material to Korea to fuel our war machine, if you want to call it that. The Pentagon people gave detailed reports on the need for steel, aluminum, etc. etc. I think there were several subsequent meetings but it was very clear, very clear, that the Pentagon felt deeply that a failure to keep up a flow of weaponry to our boys on the front was a clear threat to our national interests and unsupportable in anyway. Now, we had this immense, troublesome conflict between U.S. steel and the steelworkers, and it seemingly was beyond resolution. In fact, it turned out to be beyond resolution. Both in the coal dispute involving John L. Lewis, and in the steel dispute, John R. Steelman was a born conciliator and he was a born optimist, and these two elements conspired to give him the conviction that if he just had a few more hours, or minutes even, he could settle this dispute. He knew from experience that labor issues like the current political issues in our time, on the hill here, in 1996, get resolved at the very last minute. So he always wanted just a little more time, but meanwhile, if you're going to seize the steel mills and take some incredible remarkable action, you've got to move. The President had available to him something that was the chosen instrument of the Republican Party; it was called the national emergency provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act. So he was damned if he was going to use the Taft-Hartley Act emergency provisions. I and others around him were persuaded it was a bad use of the emergency provisions. For one thing, it sets up -- I'm vague on the details, would you believe after a half century -- but it sets up a fact-finding

procedure and delay, but it does not stop the strike. The only method for stopping strikes, national emergency strikes, we've ever known, is the seizure of the mills. So the

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decision was made and I was not privy to any discussions on this except in a general kind of way, but the decision was made, the absolutely basic decision that the President would seize the steel mills.

At that time, I do recall it vividly, my wife and I were invited to come to the White House and be in the room when Harry Truman delivered his message to the people. He delivered the message in a firm voice. He was relaxed. He was strong in his delivery. It was just a very impressive performance and I was struck once again as I got close to the man of his physical vigor, of the color of his face; and his hands; I always thought were lovely because they were farmer's hands. They were strong and sturdy and his smile had a radiance about it that I liked a lot. Well, of course, all hell broke loose. I mean all hell broke loose. Congress went into spasms of anger on this. The Republicans and the press went berserk. And as we all know, the case went to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court found that this was an illegal usurpation of power.

Now recently I've had some conversations with a professor at Duquesne University who is writing a book on Archibald Cox, and this involves the Wage Stabilization Board and so forth. There is going to be a documentary on Truman done by, I've forgotten the name already. It's a firm out of New York City. They did the documentary on Lyndon Johnson.

GESELBRACHT: David Grubin?

ENARSON: Yes. I spent about an hour and a half on the phone with the young man who is doing the basic research on that. I was going over this whole matter of the steel seizure and he interrupted and said, "I don't understand how the President of the United States would have had the audacity to seize the steel mills." I said, looking back I can see how you would say that and how you'd feel that way, but, look, you are the President of the United States and you have

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troops on the line and your closest advisors tell you that they need an uninterrupted flow of war materials. I said there is only one test you can have. That is the dominant national interest. And I said that once the decision is made and if it doesn't work out well, anyone can easily do twenty-twenty hindsight and say well it wasn't necessary, but who is to say, even now, that seizure was not an appropriate option. It could not have been predicted that the Supreme Court would have rejected seizure. More to the point, seizure guaranteed continuation of war production and flow of military weaponry to our troops. It was, and still is, not self-evident that Taft-Hartley would have guaranteed continued production after expiration of the 80 day cooling off period. Truman revered the Presidency and the role of the President as Commander in Chief. I remain convinced that the seizure of the steel mills in the undeclared war stemmed from Truman's deepest convictions about the President's role as Commander in Chief. Politics and pride only added support for a decision premised on powerful substantive reasons. To me, that is the key point of the steel seizure. The President was acting in good faith on that. But anyway the steel seizure

occupied a great deal of my time and attention during that period, and to say that I was obsessed with it is understatement.

GESELBRACHT: What happened in Dr. Steelman's office when the Supreme Court reversed that seizure? Was there a mood, anything, any sign of what was put forward?

ENARSON: I don't recall anything about that. I think those of us who were around this, that we read the opinion with the critical eye that only a 33 year old would have of a Constitutional case which goes against one's perceived best interests.

GESELBRACHT: Was your response and Dr. Steelman's response then just to go on to the next item of business?

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ENARSON: Absolutely; John R. Steelman was the ultimate pragmatist. He was, what I would call, an operator. You work with what you had. You work on the problem you have. He, subsequently, after he left the White House, broadened his interests beyond labor relations and became a consultant to companies. He would come in as a consultant to a big corporation on delicate matters, on such things as how you reorganize the board, things like that. As I said earlier, he was a quick study. He had total self confidence and for years he served in that role. There is a story about him, and I don't know if this has ever been written up, but the President had a limousine with all the defensive features. I guess it was like a tiger tank. Anyway it was a fairly conventional looking automobile. Steelman found a way to buy that, and he bought it and when he was retired in Florida he had that car for a time, and how he ever got that car only John R. Steelman would know. It was an unusual sale; let's put it that way. Now I hope that's not apocryphal. I've forgotten how I learned that, but it fascinated me.

One other footnote on that; from time to time we traded Christmas cards and that was about all. He always added a little personal note. When President Reagan came in, Steelman wrote, "Well, they called me. I could help them out, but I don't think I should. I don't think they know what they're doing" or something like that. But I was struck by Steelman's attitude. It was the old warhorse. It was the feeling that I could do this. I could get in there and I could show them how you organize the White House if they would just listen to me. I thought it was just a delightful response to the call from the White House. Actually there was no way Reagan was going to call Steelman or anybody from the Truman administration or any Democrat to advise him on how to organize the White House.

GESELBRACHT: Can you describe what the day after the 1952 election was like? Was there a sense of shutting things down right away?

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ENARSON: The President had responded favorably to Dr. Steelman's request that I be named as a public member of the Wage Stabilization Board. At that time I was over in the Wage Stabilization Board, participating there in a very important episode in the history of labor dispute resolution in emergency times. Archibald Cox, subsequently famous for a number of things, was then the Chairman of the Wage Stabilization Board. We had a breakdown of negotiations in

labor, well, specifically, the United Mine Workers muscled out -- let's put it that way in negotiations with coal.

SOWELL: We were mentioning Archibald Cox and the Wage Stabilization Board, the coal agreement that had exceeded the standards for wage increases at that time.

ENARSON: Well, big labor and big corporations were increasingly restive at that time, and John L. Lewis was not going to settle for a wage increase that would fit within the wage guidelines. The wage increases that he proposed wouldn't fit within the price guidelines so we had an immediate, immediate crisis and there was a flurry of activity back and forth, and an attempt on the part of a number of people to find some way out of this situation. Finally, the decision was made to put through the wage increase and it clearly broke the guidelines. There was no doubt about it. Archibald Cox, professor at Harvard, well-known even then for his rectitude, felt that this was intolerable. The credibility of the Wage Stabilization Board would be utterly destroyed if this would happen.

A very prominent labor arbitrator who had been a member of the earlier wage boards, Nathan Feinsinger, professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin, a close friend of Archie, advised restraint. John Dunlop, professor of economics at Harvard, who has been in every labor dispute for the last fifty years, also advised moderation. In effect, they were saying, "Look, it is not a

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nice situation, but it's important to win when you can, and move on rather than just bring the whole thing down." Anyway, Archie deliberated and finally decided to resign. That put a moral issue before the rest of us as public members. The industry people, of course, resigned immediately. My conclusion was that the incoming President Eisenhower deserved the opportunity to dismantle the system if he chose, but if for any reason he chose to keep it on in anyway, moderate it in some way, that he should have that and we would be arrogating to ourselves a decision that ought to be made by the incoming President. Now I have often wondered, was that self-justifying logic or not? But I think since Archie had resigned, there was absolutely no reason for the rest of us to resign, and we had only a couple of months more.

At that time I was also Chairman of the Loyalty Review Board and I must say I think that was one of the major mistakes the President ever made -- to get into this loyalty system. I, for the first time, had occasion to read these FBI files and read the files on about half of the people I knew. I saw how outrageous the files were. I also discovered professional staff people were beginning to move onto other jobs and they were being blocked. They weren't getting hired and I finally figured it out. They were being blacklisted. I thought it was just a terrible, terrible thing that they were doing.

Anyway, that wound up the Wage Board and at that time there was a feeling it was an end of an era, an end of an administration. I was so totally preoccupied with my work that I had failed to remember that I had to earn a living. So I didn't have any job of any kind at the end of the Truman administration. I was rescued by friends. There were some friends from Stanford who

were now in the city of Philadelphia, working for a reformed mayor up there, Joe Clark, so I went to work for Joe Clark.

But there is one concluding anecdote that I must share with you. One of the most engaging chaps who worked in the White House was Kenneth Hechler.

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I'm sure you have all kinds of news on Ken Hechler. He was the President's advance man going around on the whistle stops and knowing instantly about everything you could do. This weird professor of politics with his big horn-rimmed glasses, the most academic man I had ever known, had the audacity to think that he could be elected to public office. So he searched the country for a place where he thought he could win, where there was somebody ready to be knocked off. So he went down to West Virginia. Well, the rest is history. He became a Congressman and was repeatedly elected. But, anyway, he had a pixie sense of humor. People moved out of the White House, an orderly move out of people. But Ken didn't leave. He clearly was through. He didn't leave. He went down to the White House mess, had his lunch down there, went into his office and I think this went on for about 8 or 10 days. People would ask what he was doing and he would give some evasive answer. It took about a week or more before they found out he was pulling their leg and having a great time. After a long time in Congress, Ken became Secretary of State in West Virginia. He is a very engaging chap and I trust that you have his tapes because he was one of the most delightful and perceptive men that I have ever known.

GESELBRACHT: May I ask how you ended up on the Loyalty Review Board?

ENARSON: Well, all agencies had to have a Loyalty Review Board and so I guess my colleagues said, "Well, Harold you had better do it." So, we had, as I recall, a three-person board. This was within the Wage Stabilization Board. We were set up to hear cases but we didn't have any cases. Nobody brought any cases or questions about disloyalty or anything like that. What I did stumble into was, as I mentioned a moment ago, people being blacklisted because of negative information in their files. I don't recall how that was ever resolved because I left. It was all over.

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GESELBRACHT: How did that blacklisting occur? Was it informal?

ENARSON: Well, an agency, let's say the Department of Interior, was looking for somebody. A person goes in for an interview and there is an FBI report and he has not been cleared. Well if he has not been cleared, why fuss with him. Who wants the problem. So it puts a premium on lazy bureaucrats. It wasn't malicious. It wasn't intended to do that, but it's the law of unintended consequences.

GESELBRACHT: I've got a last question I would like to ask and that is, was there some kind of indwelling core of belief that just kept everybody going in the White House? That got them started in the morning, kept them there late at night, or something like that in Truman's White House?

ENARSON: You'll be amused but not surprised. When I went over to the White House, at no time then or subsequently was I ever asked about my political affiliation. I was a Democrat and I guess they assumed, of course, that I would be a Democrat, but I was not chosen on the basis of any political recommendation by anybody. I think we all had a core of beliefs, liberal democrats, I suppose. Probably most of us had been in Stevenson's camp. We were not ideologists; most of us had not come up through party activities. We believed in Harry Truman. There was no doubt about that. We believed in his policies. We thought he had a feel for the pulse. We had a sense of where America should go. And I think that's what sustained us. We all knew that this was a temporary affair, that you did not make a career out of working there. The beauty of the place is that I think I was not alone in never ever spending a moment to speculate what I am going to do next. If you're doing the most interesting and exciting work that you can imagine, why would you think of leaving? Cut off a brilliant academic career? Exclamation point.

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GESELBRACHT: Sam and Randy, do you have any last questions? Professor, would you like to be involved in our interview?

ATKINSON: One question is, when the special assistants were doing their work, did you have any staff yourself or did you have to go out and do the research and make the calls? In other words, you did your own calling out?

ENARSON: No, two of us shared a secretary. I had no help of any kind and the raw material I dealt with consisted of reports, newspapers, conversations, luncheon conversations, cocktail parties in the evening, etc. Later I was to learn how pure we were because at that time we were guests occasionally of Arthur Goldberg, legal counsel for the AFL-CIO. Conversations were in no way improper, in any way, and that kind of thing, but anyway, I was pretty deeply involved in the way in which the labor movement, and particular, Art Goldberg, was operating in the steel case. Well, in subsequent years I was invited by *Public Administration Case Study* -- invited by Edwin Bock, who headed the Inter-University Case Program in Public Administration, then assisted with the Maxwell School of Public Administration at Syracuse University -- to do a case study of the steel seizure. They asked me whether I would do a case study on the steel industry case. I said, "Well I am awfully close to it, but I'll try. I think I can do it but only if I can find somebody who will work along with me." I found Grant McConnell, a professor of political science at the University of California, Berkeley, who I didn't know at that time. We decided to co-author a study. I wrote the first draft, a couple of hundred pages as I recall. Then I had sessions with Grant, and we didn't jell. I thought he was bringing a limited after-the-fact point of view, that he didn't enter into the times and the circumstances. In any event, we didn't work together very well. But in the process of doing this, I had shared a draft with Arthur Goldberg -- an old friend, why not. I got a letter back that just deeply hurt me, because it said, in effect, Harold, these were

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conversations that were privileged and you have no right to publish it. Well, that just did it. I just closed that operation out, and Grant McConnell published it and I was crushed. Ponder the innocence of that action because today leaking and telling stories after the fact is part of the

mode of operation. I had functioned in a different society, and the thought that I was sharing anything -- well I didn't share anything that was important, in any event.

GESELBRACHT: Thank you very much Mr. Enarson.

ENARSON: Thank you.

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