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GEORGE REEDY ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW VII
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Date

INTERVIEW VII

DATE: May 24, 1983
INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY
INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette
PLACE: Professor Reedy's office, Marquette University,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tape 1 of 1

R: Let's go back. One of the issues involved situs picketing. I'd better explain that just so it will be clear to anybody that's trying to find out what it means. Situs picketing was a problem with the building trades. The difficulty with plumbers, with electricians, with carpenters, with laborers, is that if they have a contract dispute with their employer, there's no sense in their picketing their employer's offices because there's nothing going on there that puts any economic pressure upon the employer. But the Taft-Hartley Act specifically forbids their picketing on the site of the building that's going up, which meant that the building trades felt that they had been placed in a very, very bad, disadvantageous position. What they were trying to get was a law that would permit them to picket on the site itself.

Now, the difficulty with the thing, they had a rather good case, but the trouble was that the case was so terribly complicated that you couldn't explain it to the public at large. And when you get that kind of a bill before the Congress, the only way you can possibly get it through is by having complete, absolute agreement on the part of

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everybody involved. And that was simply impossible. Some of the contractors refused to go along. Some were perfectly willing because they had no problems with the closed shop. But most of them were not willing to go along.

(Interruption)

When you get a bill that complicated, there's no sense in fighting it out on the floor, because your battle doesn't get you anywhere. You can only fight a bill out on the floor when it's something that is comprehensible to the public. And situs picketing was not comprehensible to the public, just not comprehensible. Even the word itself, I think if I walked down Wisconsin Avenue and stopped a hundred people, I bet not one single one would know what I was talking about.

That was one of the things that was involved. Johnson was rather anxious to get something done about it if he could. Because even though it was a rather technical matter, it was still rather important to George Meany and to the whole building trades department of the AFL-CIO. Now, again, there of course everybody had sort of mixed feelings, because the building trades have traditionally been Republican rather than Democratic. That's the one segment of labor that really did stay Republican long after everybody else had swung over to the Democrats.

Now the other bill, and I've forgotten the term that was used, that was really causing trouble again, what it involved was the closed shop provision of the Taft-Hartley Act. There's an absolute ban on the closed shop in the Taft-Hartley Act, and you've got to explain

what the closed shop is in order to get an understanding. Most people do not know. Under a closed shop an employer is allowed, under his contract, to hire only union members. He cannot hire from anybody else. The union shop on the other hand, he can hire anybody he wants to, but that person must join the union within a set period of time. Now, the trouble with the damn thing is that the closed shop is really a provision that's meaningful to only two types of unions, the building trades, and strangely enough, the longshoremen. You see, those are people that work by the job. They really are not on payrolls. Longshoremen, there are two ways you get them: one, there is a union hiring hall where their names are put alphabetically in a roster, and every time a job comes in, the guy in the top of the roster gets the job. That's one way of doing it, which is what the unions wanted. The other way is the famous shape-up, where a pier boss will stand in the middle of a cluster of people looking for jobs as longshoremen and say, "I'll take you, you, you and you," which the unions definitely didn't want and which was very unpopular with most workers, because obviously the pier boss had too many opportunities of getting kick-backs from everybody that he hired. It was a pretty nasty business, especially when you're dealing with a type of labor that's the bottom of the scale. You know, longshoremen are entirely muscle, not much of anything else.

Then of course the building trades. The problem there is much more complicated. The problem is that buildings again are built by the job. The building contractor, let's say he'll want to start out

with a couple of stationary engineers because he has to operate those huge cranes. Then after that he's going to want some laborers to set up the various forms that hold the dirt back while the foundation is being laid. Then he wants some cement finishers. So one day he may want forty carpenters, the next day he may only want three. The following day he may want twenty electricians, and the next day he may only have one electrician and maybe ten structural steel workers. So therefore what was developed in the building trades was a form of contact in which the contractor would send a work schedule to the union, and the union would supply him with the workers on the basis of the schedule, and he would only pay them when they were actually working. So everybody was reasonably happy with it.

Now, when the Taft-Hartley Act was passed--well, I better go back a little bit because it's a little more complicated than that. The old Wagner Act, which was supposed to be the magna carta of labor, [did] actually forbid the closed shop, but then put in a special wording which said that the closed shop shall be legal. What they did when they passed the Taft-Hartley Act was just take the wording of the Wagner Act and eliminate that exception, and for a long, long period of time after the Taft-Hartley Act was passed, the National Labor Relations Board just didn't notice. They went right on with the closed shop. It was the damndest situation that anybody has ever seen. The law was being openly and deliberately flouted, and the National Labor Relations Board pretended that it wasn't happening. They just didn't pay any attention to it.

Now, that brings me to where we are in 1954. In 1952-53-54, a general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board decided he'd had enough of it. He knew that you obviously could not have union relationships in the construction trades without the closed shop, but his whole point, which I think is a good one, [was] you've got a law, either enforce the damn thing or repeal it. So he started to enforce it, and it came fairly close to chaos in the building trades industry because--well, the things are even more complicated than that. The contracts in the building trades industry are negotiated out at what is known as area conferences, in which a representative of the Associated General Contractors and a representative of the AFL building trades department get together and they negotiate contracts for that whole area. Now, that's illegal under the Taft-Hartley Act, because the Taft-Hartley Act says specifically that the only negotiations can be by representatives of employees employed by the employer. And you see, none of these people they were negotiating for were employed, because they were just sitting around waiting for a building to go up, and when they were employed, they'd only be employed for a couple of days.

The thing was really a bad goof. The act was so badly loused up because the Republicans who had passed it knew so little about labor that they really didn't know what they were doing. They'd carried on this big campaign against the closed shop, and most of that was directed against Walter Reuther. They knew so little that what they finally did was to leave the union shop in, which is what Reuther

really wanted, and to eliminate the closed shop, which is what the Republican unions wanted. It was really very, very funny. As long as nobody enforced it, who cared, but when they began to enforce it, something had to be done. Well, boy, there you really got into a tangle. It was like walking through flypaper. The Republicans, for one thing, could not permit a bill to go through which would legalize the closed shop. They had just spent so much time and invested such heavy political capital in being against the closed shop that they couldn't go back on themselves.

And of course there was another aspect of it, too; that's Section 12-B [14-B] of the Taft-Hartley Act, which is another one that really got George Meany's ire. That permits a state to enact tougher anti-union shop laws than the Taft-Hartley Act itself. There are some twelve or fifteen states in which the union shop, which is permitted by the Taft-Hartley Act, is outlawed. It's kind of funny. I remember Jerry Holleman, who was head of the AFL-CIO in Texas, once telling me privately he really didn't give a damn, that they could bootleg contracts just as well with 12-B and the Texas open shop law as they could otherwise. But it was a national campaign. Meany felt strongly about it.

Now you can see all of the elements that are involved here. What had happened is that something illogical had been done. The law had been passed in such a way that it really didn't get at what the people that passed it wanted, which was to hurt unions. It really didn't hurt them too much. But what it did was to just screw up the industry.

Now, how do you get out of it? Boy, that was a tricky one. The situs picketing thing was never solved, and of course 12-B is still on the books. But what they did do, they began playing around with the closed shop ban, and oh, Lord, that was a complicated one! The answer to it was one in which the time in which a worker had to climb aboard the union under the union shop provision was very drastically reduced, reduced so much that for all practical purposes what the employer was going to do was to hire from the union. And Lord, the thing was so complex that very, very few members of the Congress understood it at all, least of all Lyndon Baines Johnson. That was pathetic. That was one case where he was completely, absolutely and totally dependent upon me.

I remember on one occasion he got to talking to some southern senator, I think it was Willis Robertson from Virginia, who said, "Why, under this contract two men can stand and determine the wage rates for a whole area." Johnson met me in the hall and said, "Is that right?" I said, "Well, yes, that's right." And before I could stop him, he started to charge off; he was going to go out on the floor and make a big speech against this kind of dictatorship. I had one hell of a hard time pulling him back and explaining to him that first of all, that was better than the present situation where one man could do it. And that secondly, even though they could determine the wage rates, those wage rates were subject to an overall vote by the union members. He really knew nothing about organized labor. Probably, of all social structures, this he understood the least. He had

the usual idea that all unions are alike. That later got him into awfully bad trouble in the White House, on the airline strike.

G: Did he get advice from Brown and Root and other contractor friends on the labor--?

R: Some, some. But I don't think it had too much to do with his thinking, because Brown and Root didn't particularly care. Brown and Root ran a very peculiar operation. If you got a Brown and Root contract, they'd give it to you union or they'd give it to you non-union, it didn't matter. They had two totally separate operations; I don't know what the names were. But if you wanted to build a dam, and you wanted it union labor, Brown and Root could step in and give it to you with straight union labor. If you wanted it without union labor, Brown and Root could step in and give it to you without union labor. You've got to realize something else, too. That is that Brown and Root were the kind of construction people with whom the closed shop was not a particular problem. You see, when you're building a big dam or something like that, you don't have the problem of having your work schedules change every day. When they start pouring cement on a dam, they pour a hell of a lot of cement, and when they start digging in a dam they have to dig a hell of a lot of dirt. When they start putting in the steel structures, they put in a hell of a lot of steel structures. It's not the same problem as building a building where the number of workers changes every day. He didn't know many housing builders, strangely enough.

You know, Johnson's relations with business were rather oddball. He always had good relations with a few businessmen, but by and large he and the businessmen were not too simpatico. Later on when he got in the White House, when he became president, by that time he had learned how to get the business community on his side. But there was an inherent suspicion between the two of them. The businessmen were quite right to suspect him. At heart he was a populist. If he had a chance to put the knife into a businessman, he never passed it up. There was a real streak of the sons of the wild jackass in Lyndon Johnson; that was real.

But his main trouble with labor is that he simply didn't understand it, and because he didn't understand it, he was constantly getting in trouble with it. If he hadn't eventually developed a very good relationship with George Meany, I think that his presidency would have been badly plagued. But he did, he developed a good relationship with George Meany. And when it came to some of the other unions, Walter Reuther and I were very, very good friends; that's something that goes back way beyond the time when--I knew Reuther long before I knew Johnson. So Walter and I were fairly close, and that helped out.

But at any rate, to get back to this thing, the situs picketing thing was never solved. It just simply couldn't be solved. And Section 12-B is still in there, but that really was not nearly as important as George Meany made it out to be. That's why he withheld support from George McGovern when McGovern ran for president, because McGovern would not come out for repeal of 12-B. I think George

Meany was about the only leader in organized labor that really cared about it, but he did. But as I recall, we did get something through in that closed shop thing. That you'll have to get out of the record. But I think we did get something through on that.

G: To what extent, do you recall, was it Johnson's doing?

R: Very little. Very little. It was my doing. Well, it was his doing in the sense that he was leader, but he didn't understand enough about it. That was one of the few occasions in which he ran across something where he had no understanding whatsoever and had to go along with somebody--in this case it turned out to be me--that really knew it. This is one thing I know by the way; I know labor legislation and labor history inside out. He was helpless in this case.

G: Let's see where we are now. Another complicated one that we were going to talk about was the atomic energy filibuster.

R: Let's simplify it first. What really happened there, it was about time to open up the whole atomic energy process to private development. And it was time, there's no question about that. Up to that point it had been solely and simply a military project. Now, Eisenhower sent up a bill which to the liberals looked like it was opening this tremendous resource solely and completely to the greediest of American industries and to the most unpopular of American industries. Nothing is more unpopular than the utilities. We got to pay the goddamn bills every month and we never forget it.

Now, what happened is that the bill came out of the committee and the liberals at a certain point started to filibuster. It was a

rather strange filibuster because most of the people who were doing the filibustering were people that had been trying to change Rule 22 all their senatorial careers. They were really embarrassed as all hell about it. But one of the difficulties was they really didn't understand the filibuster. The filibuster is not the simple thing that it looks. The southerners who do understand it knew that you could only get away with it as a last ditch proposition, that the only way you could really succeed in a filibuster and hold your own was first of all to have an issue that was so damned important that if the bill gets passed you had better not go home, because your constituents are going to be waiting for you with noosed ropes. And number two, that the second other members of the Senate start getting reasonable and are willing to meet some of your objections halfway, you'd better drop that damned filibuster. This is something that you better remember, because it played a very important role in the later passage of the [1957] Civil Rights Act. That southern awareness that once you're met with a show of reason or a show of accommodation, you've got to stop filibustering, you can't keep it up.

But the liberals were very, very inexperienced in filibustering. The great liberal filibusters had been in the early part of this century when most of them were staged in order to prevent some of the railroad land steals. You know, the filibuster really began as a progressive weapon used by people like the LaFollettes and George Norris and Tom Walsh and the old Senator [Thomas] Gore, not the one from Tennessee but from Oklahoma, in order to stop some of the big

railroad giveaways. The filibuster did not become a civil rights weapon until the twenties. It never occurred to the southerners to pick it up until that time.

Well, the basic problem was that a couple of amendments were offered to that act which went a long, long way to meeting the liberal objections. One was by Senator Ed Johnson from Colorado, and I think that involved patents, I'm not sure. The other I somehow have the feeling came from Clint Anderson of New Mexico. Do you have any kind of an account of what happened?

G: Let's see. . . .

R: Well, it's irrelevant. That's easy enough to get. The important point was that while with those two amendments the important--all of the liberal objections had not been met. Very important objections were met, and yet the liberals went on filibustering. Well, the spectacle as far as the country was concerned was terrible. Here a very popular president had sent a message to Congress on a subject with which everybody agreed; they had to get into some commercial development of atomic energy. Here there had been some objections to the bill, and those objections had been met. Maybe not completely, but there had been some give and take. And yet these people went on talking and talking and talking. Johnson finally just broke the filibuster. He did it by a rather standard maneuver, which is to ask unanimous consent to bring an end to the debate, say, by noon tomorrow. Then that's denied, so you make it noon the next day. That's denied, you make it noon the next day. And you keep on. If you're in

January you might say, "I ask unanimous consent to end this debate on June 30." It doesn't matter; the date doesn't matter. Once you get unanimous consent you find the whole thing collapses.

G: But how do you get unanimous consent if--?

R: You just keep asking for it and eventually the people that are blocking you look so damn ridiculous that they have to give in. Unless the cause is one that is so bitterly felt by the constituencies back home that they don't dare give up. On a civil rights battle, for instance, if you merely stood up without anything else and kept saying, "I ask unanimous consent to end this debate Tuesday at two o'clock," or "Wednesday at three o'clock," you're never going to get it. Unless the other condition has been met, which is first of all to demonstrate a form of reason. That I'll go into more fully when we get to the civil rights debate.

But for the moment what had happened here was that a form of reason had been demonstrated. Those two amendments had been adopted. They weren't ideal, but what the hell, nothing's ideal. And to have those people go on filibustering then was really becoming intolerable. So Johnson just got up and he kept saying--I remember Herbert Lehman was the main person to try to stop it, and poor Herbie, he never got even close to an understanding of the Senate. How a man could serve as long in that body as Herbert Lehman did--he never even got the rules straightened out in his own mind. He couldn't handle himself at all in floor debate because he didn't even know the rules. And you know, the rules of the Senate are very simple. Any intelligent person

can learn them in the course of an afternoon. Of course, that doesn't tell you how the Senate works. If you learn the rules of the House, by the way, that takes you several months, but you will know how the House works. Not true of the Senate.

Well, of course, everything looks different in Washington than it does out in the country. Out in the country this filibuster just looked like a silly, degrading exhibition on the part of a few of the liberal northern senators. But in Washington, D.C. of course, which is a highly political town, what it looked like was a valiant last stand or something like that. And these people were really being insulated from the public reaction. They weren't getting much in the way of mail because that's not the kind of an issue upon which people write letters. So Johnson did manage to choke off the debate with this tactic of making just absolutely ridiculous [motions]. I think at one point he offered two months from the day he was asking, something like that. Herblock had a very nasty cartoon about it showing Johnson firing from the rear on the Democratic troops and that kind of thing. Within a week or so the thing did get cleared up, because once tempers cooled down it became apparent that the debate was unconscionable, that you simply couldn't filibuster an issue like this.

Let me digress for a second for a philosophical point, because it's a philosophical point that has a direct bearing on an awful lot of things that happened later. There is a justification for the filibuster. Let's assume that you have an alignment of forces in the United States, 70 per cent are for something, 30 per cent are against

it. Now, you can just bring that to a vote, and the 70 per cent of course will carry because they're a majority. But let's suppose that the 30 per cent who are against it are so strongly against it that to pass the measure is going to bring on something equivalent to insurrection. The role of the filibuster is to prevent that kind of a situation, to prevent the majority from acting under circumstances where the majority can really provoke a split in the fabric of national unity that is so basic that it's going to really hurt.

Now the trick to the filibuster is a very simple one. It's a test of endurance. These are very elderly men, and for those men to stand up there four, five, six, seven, ten, twelve, twenty-four, in one case twenty-six hours and talk, there has to be something that is absolutely overwhelming and vital for them to keep it up. Now it's a very raw and it's a very crude test, but I myself would be very much worried about the United States Senate if that very raw, crude test were ever eliminated.

G: Was there ever a consideration in filibusters about when they came up, so as to what legislation, in addition to the one they were filibustering, was being held up?

R: Oh, sure. Those things are always timed by the leadership. That was not original with Johnson. If you know you've got an issue coming up that is going to start a filibuster, and you know you have some terribly important bills, you try to get those bills out of the way first for two reasons. First of all, the important bill obviously has some priorities. But second, if you don't get that important bill out

of the way, the important bill becomes a weapon for the filibusters, you see. Because everybody sitting in that Senate knows, my God, we're holding up this bill to supply oxygen to people dying of asphyxia or something like that. The leadership is never for a filibuster, so the leadership always tries to get the decks cleared before a filibuster comes up.

Of course, there's another aspect of that, too, that's not quite as simple as it looks. Nothing is, around Congress. Congress is a very subtle body. If you wait too long, then what is going to happen is that the looming end of the session becomes a weapon to be used by the filibusters. You know, at a certain point Congress just walks out. That's all there is to it. It doesn't matter, you can't keep them there. Therefore when a filibuster is inevitable, what the leadership tries to do is to get as much important legislation out of the way as it can, but bring up the thing that's going to cause the filibuster at a point in the session where the end of the session cannot become a weapon.

You know, there are a number of tricks to keep Congress in session. One of the things the leadership always does is to hold back one appropriation bill. You can be sure Congress will stay there as long as an appropriation bill is still before them. They will not walk out on that. For a long time, I don't know what it is now, but when I was there Johnson always held up either the foreign aid bill or a very famous bill known as the third supplemental bill. That's a standard in Congress. Congress spends the whole year cutting the hell

out of the president's appropriations. That way they get a reputation for being saviors and frugal and that sort of thing. Then at the end of the year they pass a third supplemental appropriation, which puts almost all of it back. And because it's called third supplemental appropriations, the public does not get an idea that what has really happened is all these big cuts have been restored in the third supplemental. It's a game they've been playing for about eighty, a hundred years. But Johnson would always hold up either the foreign aid bill or the third supplemental, because he knew that once that last bill was through, that was the end of it. You couldn't get anything done.

G: Amazing. Now, another thing that happened in 1954 of course is the Supreme Court rule on the regulation of natural gas. The FPC picked that up and began to regulate it at the wellhead, I guess.

R: Yes.

G: Johnson asked for a study commission to investigate or explore I guess the correctness of that course. Was he just trying to buy time?

R: He was trying to buy anything he could get. Again, every once in a while you come across a problem to which there really is no reasonable solution, and this was one of them. That whole natural gas thing is much more complex than the public realizes. And it's very unfortunate because it's one of those issues which always comes down in the public's mind to a bunch of thieves who are clustering around trying to steal something. Now of course there are thieves clustering around trying to steal something; any time you got anything worth anything somebody is going to try to steal it. But the natural gas thing is

much more complex than that. There are all sorts of weird economic problems associated with it, the most important being the transport of natural gas. You can't transport the stuff unless you build pipelines, but pipelines are awfully expensive to build. And what that means is that you aren't going to build a pipeline unless you're sure there's a hell of a lot of gas at one end of it and a hell of a lot of customers at the other end. You see my point? It's not something you can put in a truck and haul, although they're trying to do that now by various liquefaction methods. But you can't load it in trains. You've just got to build that pipeline, that's your carrier.

So therefore what you have to do on the one hand is everything you possibly can to encourage people to go out and explore for it. And the rewards have to be pretty damn great, because most of those holes you dig in the ground come up with absolutely nothing. It's the same problem you have in the oil industry, except in gas it's worse, because in oil once you find it you've got no real problems with the transportation. There are always ways you can transport oil. Gas you have that same problem but worse, which means that you have to have some kind of an extra reward. I don't know what the ratio is. In oil, I know that the last time I looked at the figures only one hole out of every eleven produced anything. Only one hole out of thirty-two produced moderate quantities of oil. And only one out of three hundred was really profitable. At that particular point drilling any kind of a hole was up in six figures, even a rather limited one. Well, natural gas is like that, too.

But of course you have another problem. That is, if you look at it from the consumer end, first of all, once the consumer gets hooked up to natural gas he's got problems because he can't unhook very easily. My house is heated by gas. My God, I'm getting socked by bills! My bills in the winter run to about three or four hundred a month. I'm on what they call a budget account whereby right now in the summer when I use virtually no gas, I'm paying a couple a hundred a month. But then in the winter when I'm using an awful lot of gas I'll only be paying a couple of hundred a month. I thought for a while of switching, but when I looked into the costs of moving over to coal, which would be a lot cheaper, or oil, which now would be somewhat cheaper, the cost of converting my heating, it would take me seven or eight years to make up for it. Not worth it.

So you've got a kind of a double--well, first of all the consumer can be gouged very easily once he gets installed. But secondly, there's a little problem of being damn sure the gas will be there at all. You know, you get a city like Milwaukee--you have to convert whole cities by the way--it converts to natural gas and suppose the supplies run out. That pipeline only goes one place.

You've still got one other problem, which is that there are two types of customers: the industrial consumer and the home consumer. Now, the gas people, of course, would rather sell to industrial users. They're more reliable; they've got no way of doing without gas. They've just got to have gas because their mills are being run on gas, whereas in a home you can always cut down the amount that you're

buying. You may not be able to do without it completely, but you can cut down in your consumption, by dressing more warmly, by putting more insulation in your house, by burning wood, all kinds of things.

So therefore what you have is first of all the possibility of the consumer getting gouged outrageously unless there's regulation, or being deprived altogether. But on the other hand you've got the very distinct possibility that there ain't going to be no gas if you put on too much regulation. And this was really what was at the base of the battle. The real fight in this whole natural gas bill was not between consumers and natural gas producers; it was between consumers [producers] and northern utilities. The northern utilities wanted the gas regulated at the wellhead, simply because they didn't give a damn what it cost them to buy gas, they were going to pass that on to the consumer. The southern gas producers, on the other hand, they wanted gas regulated at the point where it was fed into the homes and into the factories, because that passed the headaches on to the utilities. Now, neither of the participants in that battle had very laudable motives. If you were looking for honor, or if you were looking for public weal on either side, Diogenes would have to throw away his lamp and get a carbon arc, night lights for the Brewers baseball stadium, because it wasn't there. And for a Texas senator the thing was excruciating.

One of the problems of Texas, which is not well understood up here in the North, is that oil and gas have popular support in that state. You know, in most states, even the big oil and gas producing

states like Louisiana, California, they're not particularly popular, but in Texas oil producers are popular and gas producers are popular. That's because of that section of the [Texas] Constitution which turns all the revenues from the public lands over to the school system, and most of those revenues, of course, come out of oil and gas, which means that the average citizen of Texas looks upon oil and gas as educating his children.

So Johnson really was in a very difficult position here. I think he was looking for any way out of it, just anything that could be done. Now your basic trouble was that if you'd just sit down and study the situation--I won't say objectively, I don't believe in objectivity--but if you study it without having any kind of a pecuniary or selfish interest in the outcome, you're going to walk away with your head spinning. This is one of those issues where if you genuinely try to find a good solution, you aren't going to. Therefore what happens, of course, is you're going to get very emotional about it. People always get very emotional when they can't find a solution, and that was what was happening here. I think Johnson was flailing out in every direction. If he could have found a reasonable solution, then he could have found a way of doing it. But he couldn't find a reasonable solution, that was the problem. There was no reasonable solution to it yet. Even today this whole question of regulating gas is causing tremendous problems.

But the other point, of course, is that in the North, you very obviously have a basis for very emotional feeling. You just go

through one Wisconsin winter, just one, that's all you need. You begin to realize why the issue is so hot up here.

G: The argument that [Robert] Kerr made in debate with [Paul] Douglas was that why regulate natural gas, a resource of the South and the West, and not regulate coal, a resource of the--

R: Oh, there's an easy answer to that. I doubt if Douglas made it, because Douglas never looked good in his debates with Kerr. Douglas was a great economist, but when he got into the rough and tumble with a man like Bob Kerr, who was kind of an alley fighter, it didn't work out very well. The obvious answer is that they don't have to regulate coal because coal can be transported by truck, by train. It comes from a number of different sources, whereas gas comes from one source and one source only. Once you get hooked up to gas, you are absolutely dependent upon the gas flowing through that pipeline. That's the reason for the regulation. See, coal is not a monopoly; it cannot be a monopoly. There's a hell of a lot of coal all the way from Pennsylvania down to Georgia and all through the West, and there's an awful lot of ways of transporting it. You break it up into small chunks and you can dump it into trucks, you can dump it into gondolas on the railroad, you can dump it in ships. But gas you can't do that way. Gas is the sort of thing that lends itself to a monopoly.

G: Well, do you think the fact that there were a lot of royalty owners in Texas, people that owned gas wells or property in which gas wells were located, did this increase pressure on Johnson to--?

R: Oh, sure. Oh, the pressure was terrible. The pressure was terrible. As I said, gas and oil have a constituency in Texas, a popular constituency. They do not have popular constituencies in other states, but in Texas they have a constituency. I tried to explain this to many of my northern friends. They couldn't quite capture the point. You see, to them, when they thought oil and gas, they just thought of a lot of very wealthy people increasing their money and maybe a few stockholders getting something out of it. But down in Texas when you think of oil and gas, what you think of is all of the money going into the school system and all of the prosperity that it's obviously brought to the state. So Texans can get quite emotional in favor of an industry that everywhere else in the United States is regarded with deep suspicion.

G: Well, of course, we'll have a lot more to discuss on that when we get to succeeding years.

There's one other issue I want to ask you about in 1954 and that was the appointment of Wright Morrow to the U.N. delegation. You remember he had supported Eisenhower in 1952. Did Johnson object to that appointment? It was not made, it was not confirmed I guess by the Senate.

R: I just don't recall anything about that one. The name, of course, I know. If Johnson did anything like that it would have been in the privacy of the White House. I haven't the faintest idea whether he did or not.

G: Now he went on that speaking tour in the western states and you went with him I understand.

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

G: Let me ask you to recall as much as you remember about that.

R: Oh, that's burned into my mind, that whole trip. Wow!

G: I have an itinerary here that may be helpful to you. Let's see.

R: Let's see the itinerary. I think I could remember it for you right down to the--oh, that was a rugged trip. Wow! For one thing he was having a lot of trouble with a tooth. That didn't help in the slightest.

Seattle, Washington. Oh, brother. Okay. That trip was one in which the Democratic National Committee gave me a bunch of tickets and an itinerary, which turned out to be a very faulty itinerary in many respects. It gave us an awful lot of trouble. And we took off, first going to Seattle. The Seattle part of it was rather routine. In fact, the only thing I remember is a couple of humorous things. We ran a little bit late. They still controlled the city of Seattle, even though the Republicans had taken over the state fairly well. I can remember a wild dash into the city with a police car that had a siren and none of the drivers paying any attention to the siren whatsoever. We got into the city--most of this is humorous, it really is not of very great importance--and they were running House members, there was no senator up that year. I can still remember Maggie, Warren Magnuson's speech introducing Johnson in which he said the

trickle down theory of the Republicans was that if the horses are fed the sparrows will eat.

Also the other thing was that here it was on a Friday night in Seattle, Washington, and my God, they'd only provided 10 per cent fish with about 75 per cent of the people there Roman Catholics. This was back when you still were not allowed to eat meat on Friday.

Johnson had a reasonably good speech. I don't remember too much about it, because it was just one of those affairs that went over all right. My main memory really is after the speech walking down the street about one or two o'clock in the morning and picking up a paper and seeing a headline, "Hurricane So-and-so Hits Washington, D.C. Three People Dead." My thinking, my God, Billy and Mike and Lil, and dashing to a telephone and calling back and discovering that the headline was somewhat exaggerated. The tail end had hit Washington; it hadn't done any damage at all, and the three people it had killed I think had just died that night for reasons totally unrelated to the hurricane.

The real problem started the next day when we took off for Billings, Montana. That was one of the weirdest trips I have ever taken. I didn't understand what was happening at first. The plane was going up and down so often that it hardly even raised the wheels. And later, looking at it, I found what was happening, it was going up and down Montana like that. It was a real milk run airplane. Billings is way over in eastern Montana, and we went up to that city in Montana that's way up north, almost on the Canadian border. Then

we went down to Butte, then we went up to something else, then we went down to something. And Johnson's sitting there--he always hated that kind of an airplane ride anyway--in regular steerage, so to speak, getting madder and madder and madder by the minute.

And we got into Billings, Montana where he was supposed to campaign for Jim Murray, and boy, Murray was in trouble, bad trouble. There was--what the devil was his name? He had been a reporter for the New York Times and he had gone over to the far, far right wing of the Republican Party. He'd been down in Mexico and he'd written a couple of books on the communists taking over Mexico, meaning the seizure of the oil companies, and that had established his reputation among the right wing. So they had set him up at some radio station that was right on the border line between Montana and Wyoming, and his principal job was to see if he could get Jim Murray defeated in Montana, and Joe O'Mahoney defeated in Wyoming. Both gentlemen were rather elderly. Neither one of them were accustomed to the kind of attack that could be mounted by a right winger on the communist issue. They'd written one pamphlet called Red Spider Over Montana. The truth was that Jim Murray had had a couple of people on his staff that were questionable. I don't know whether they were communists or anything like that, but obviously they were somewhat questionable. And here were these daily broadcasts coming into the state and the Red Spider pamphlet all over the place, and by God it looked like Murray was really going to be taken to the cleaners.

That night everything went wrong. I'd prepared a speech for Johnson which was based upon a rather clever lead-in that Johnson came up with himself. It really was very clever. He'd start out by hitting the audience directly with this whole communist issue and saying, "They're trying to tell you there are nothing but a bunch of communists among the Democrats in Washington. I suppose they mean that good old red communist Harry Flood Byrd." Well, of course that would get a laugh out of the crowd. Then he'd go down naming all of these very conservative southern senators. "Do you think that Walter George of Georgia is a communist?" and the crowd would whoop and holler. "Do you think that Dick Russell is a communist or Big Ed Johnson?" And then you finally get to Big Jim Murray, and of course by that time the crowd would be so fond of hollering. And it was a very clever device. Murray's people picked it up, and I think it may have salvaged Murray's seat because he got through by about that much.

But everything went wrong that night. In the first place the crowd--most of my classes are larger than that crowd. They just got a few in there. And secondly, I had worked out this speech for him on the plane. I'd roughed it out longhand, and I gave it to the hotel typist so I could get a clean copy. And Lord, what that woman was doing. I told her I'd wanted a couple of copies. Well, she'd make a copy of one page and then she'd make two or three copies of that one page, then she'd go on to page two. By the time Johnson needed the speech, only about six out of twelve pages were ready. God, I could have broken her neck!

Second of course the main person handling it was Jim Murray's son, whom Johnson disliked very much for some reason. I don't know why, but he did. And so his temper was foul, and the tooth was really acting up. It was getting worse and worse and worse. I got him to bed that night, and as I said, the crowd was very, very poor, but nevertheless he had given the Murrays a line, which they went ahead with.

G: Was he pleased with the speech?

R: Not particularly. He was so mad about everything else that I don't think he was pleased with the speech.

Then we went on to Cheyenne, Wyoming the next day. Oh my God, that was just about as bad. The tooth was giving him more trouble. Joe Hickey, who was the state chairman, took him to a dentist, and as he later said, the dentist was probably a better politician than he was a dentist, and that didn't particularly help.

But one of the funniest--let's see, was it here or Casper? Again, he pulled the same line for Joe O'Mahoney that he'd pulled on Murray and it worked very well. Then we flew to Casper, Wyoming. There a really funny incident happened. It's one of the funniest I've ever seen. After his speech in Casper--there were a lot of Texans in Casper, you know, because of all the oil. And after the speech, a little tough guy walked up to Johnson. I took one look and I said to myself, "Oh boy, here's trouble." He was one of those Texas oil operators that was up there developing the oil industry around Casper. And he said, "You're Johnson, I'm so-and-so," whatever his name was,

it doesn't matter. Johnson said, "Howdy, partner," all of a sudden getting real Texan. Now, Johnson could be ten times as Texan as any Texan in the world when the occasion called for it. "I'd like to buy you a drink." Johnson said, "Well, I've got Senator O'Mahoney here and I've got Senator"--who was the other senator? He was a young fellow, political science professor from the University of Montana. Funny I can't think of his name. It doesn't matter.

So he went across the street, Johnson, me and this little tough Texan, O'Mahoney and the young Senator. So since O'Mahoney was the eldest, the Texan turned to him first, said, "What will you have, Senator?" And O'Mahoney, thinking of two or three speeches he had to make the rest [of the day], said, "I'll have a lemonade." Oh! I could see the look on this man's face. I knew that Wyoming was going right down the drain right there. So then he turns to this young Wyoming man, said, "What will you have, Senator?" He also says, "I'll have a lemonade, too." He didn't want to upstage O'Mahoney, you know. I thought, oh my God, there goes another Senate seat. So he turned to Johnson, he said, "What will you have, Johnson?" He was expecting--he was really mad at that point. This is one of those real macho types. And Johnson said, "Oh, let me belly up. I want some of that red liquor, that good old red liquor." He said, "Oh, you want soda?" "Nah, just give me a glass of that red liquor," meaning bourbon. Johnson hated bourbon, oh, he hated bourbon! But he sat there and he downed that bourbon, and I, honest to God, think that that bourbon he downed saved that election in Wyoming, because as I remember O'Mahoney

won by one quarter of one per cent or something like that. And a little incident like that, when an election is that close, could really trigger it, because there were a lot of Texans up in Casper at that point. This may sound ridiculous, but I will never forget the look on that man's face when O'Mahoney ordered a lemonade. "What kind of a bunch of queers am I hooked up with?"

G: Did Johnson's role in Wyoming and Montana in these campaigns affect his relationship with O'Mahoney or Murray?

R: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. They were both under very, very heavy indebtedness to him. They wouldn't have made it without Johnson. They would not have made it. Neither one of them had the skill to do it on their own really, and the Republican campaign was extraordinarily effective.

G: How had Johnson been asked? Who asked Johnson to go out there to campaign?

R: I don't know. I don't know. That is, I don't know how it originated. I think though, my judgment is that it originated mostly with the candidates themselves because they suddenly recognized the fact that the communist issue was the important one of that year and that these very, very heavy attacks were being made in the Democratic Party mostly because of the eastern liberals. So what they were looking for was any Democratic Party symbol that was not eastern liberal. They all realized the fact that Johnson really was not that conservative, but still he was the Democratic leader of the Senate and he was a Texan.

G: Can you think of any particular issue in the years ahead that Johnson was able to get their vote on?

R: Civil rights. O'Mahoney offered a key amendment to the whole civil rights bill, one without which we--now you know, one of the things you have to be careful about here, don't ever say that this led to this. In other words, I have no way of knowing whether what Johnson did for O'Mahoney in 1954 is the reason that O'Mahoney offered that key amendment to the Civil Rights Act in 1957. I've got no way of knowing that. I've seen an awful lot of studies which try to trace those things out, and they aren't valid. But what you do know is that all of these people got under obligation to Johnson one way or another, and over a period of time they had to repay some of those obligations. Now, one of the reasons they were under obligation to him was because of what he did for them in 1954. Neither one would have made that without Johnson. But just what that's related to, you really can't tell. You see, there's another--

G: Why--

R: --well, let me add one other point that you got to be awfully careful about. On most of the controversial issues of that particular period, the westerners had a flexibility that was denied to other people. The westerners could be flexible on civil rights, whereas the northeasterners could not be flexible on civil rights and the southerners could not be flexible on civil rights. Now, when you get an issue in which there is a high degree of inflexibility in the United States Senate, the only thing that can save you is to find a group of senators

somewhere who can go either way as far as their constituents are concerned. So consequently, when you get to the Civil Rights Act what you're going to discover is all of those westerners were absolutely essential to it, absolutely essential. So the fact that they produced does not necessarily have to be related back to the campaign.

G: I guess really what I'm asking here is how is an obligation met?

R: Here you're in one of those realms that can't be measured and can't be traced. Politicians just know. There's an awful lot of instinctive reactions in politics. A politician knows when he's under an obligation. He knows when he's discharged that obligation. He can measure to a very fine point. When he does a favor for somebody, he can usually calculate to a very fine point just how far he can reasonably expect that other person to go to reciprocate. There's no quantitative way of measuring this and there's no way of describing it either; it's just these people know.

G: Now you go to Provo I think to speak at Brigham Young [University]. Remember that?

R: Oh, and how I remember! That was one of the funniest of all days. He got into Provo, and by that time two things had happened: his tooth had really gotten just horrible, and I had picked up one of those very bad flu bugs or colds. Now he had two speeches in Utah, that is, two that I knew about. One was at the Hotel Utah, where he was supposed to make a Democratic Party luncheon speech, and I had written a complete speech for that. By the way, there were no senators up in Utah; it was only House members and we lost every seat. That was a very bad

year for the Democrats out West. No, there was no senator up in Washington either, and we lost all the House seats except one I think. Young Allan [Don] Magnuson ran for the House at large, and he won because everybody thought he was Warren Magnuson, and it's illegal to vote against Warren Magnuson in the state of Washington.

So he got in there, and first of all I had written a speech for him out at the Hotel Utah and I had written some memorandum for him for Brigham Young. He was going to make the speech freehand. We made the luncheon speech at the Hotel Utah and then Milt Weilenmann drove us out to Brigham Young University. He made a hell of a good speech out there. The main reason I remember it is because I was deeply moved by it myself. The provost at the University said they were making a tape of it, would I edit it some and send it back to them. I'll never forget when I saw what had been recorded. Have you ever read Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy where sentences wander all over the page like that? That's what that speech was like. God! Sentences that ran a whole page, dangling participles. It took me three or four weeks to get that damn thing into English, and yet when you sat there listening to it, it was just a very compelling speech. He did a hell of a good job.

G: What did he talk about?

R: About twenty minutes is the best way I could put it. Just whatever leaped into his mind, his hopes, his dreams, the young people. It was a marvelously stirring sort of a stump speech, which moved everybody. And he'd done a good job and he knew it. He was relaxing then. There

was a woman out in--and I've forgotten her name now, but she had taken him to a dentist that really had been able to do something about his tooth and the only problem was me then.

As we drove back into the town, to my surprise we went past the Hotel Utah. I was sitting up front with Milt Weilenmann; he was in the back seat with this woman congresswoman. And I said, "Milt, this isn't the way to the Hotel Utah." He said of course not. I said, "Where are we going, Milt?" He said, "To Sandy." I said, "Milt, what in the hell is Sandy?" He said, "It's the next speech." I said, "Milt, what next speech?" He said, "Well, it's been in the schedule for three months." And I said, "Milt, not any schedule I ever saw." Let's see if they have it in this schedule. No, they didn't even have it in this schedule.

G: I have it here. Evening rally--

R: Yes, 7:30 p.m. rally at Sandy. Nobody had told us anything about it. I didn't know about it, Johnson didn't know about it. And I said, "For the love of God, Milt, what is Sandy like?" He said, "Well, it's an industrial suburb where you got a lot of workers living," I think a magnesium or aluminum plant. I started to scribble something to hand back to Johnson, and I said, "How far away are we, Milt?" He said, "Here we are," and they pulled up right in front of the meeting hall and Johnson was hauled into that place not knowing he was supposed to make a speech, not having the faintest idea of what he was or where he was. And Milt, he came up with a corker. Oh, God what a speech that was.

G: Really?

R: Yes. It made no sense. It didn't have to make any sense. But he was playing that crowd like an accordion player. He had them laughing, he had them cheering. He had them screaming. Oh, it was just tremendous. But he didn't even know he was supposed to--he was supposed to speak about ten or fifteen minutes, and instead he spoke about fifty [?] minutes and the crowd still hollering for more. That was the greatest speech he ever made in his whole life and I can't give you one word of it. But what he'd done, he'd taken all of the speeches that I'd written for him in the last seven or eight months, and they'd been churning through his mind. There wasn't even any recording of it. I would have given my right arm for a recording. It was a great speech. It was the most moving thing I've ever heard in my life. Oh, Lord!

Then we went on back to the Hotel where Weilenmann--Milt was a very, very devout Mormon. He didn't drink, but he'd set up some Scotch and stuff for me and Johnson. By then though Johnson was really disgusted. He had finally gotten ridden of the tooth, but here I was sick. He said to hell with it. That's where he called Brown and Root. Now, Brown and Root had a little A-20. Do you remember the air force A-20? No, you wouldn't remember the air force A-20, of course not. It was a little, light, very fast attack airplane that was developed by the air force. It was about the fastest propeller job. Brown and Root had reconverted one of them into as much of a luxury plane as you could. You couldn't do much with them because they were small; they were an attack bomber. And you had to climb

into it from the bottom, there wasn't even a door on the side. And the plane went straight up and went straight down.

Well, the Salt Lake City airport is in a bowl sort of, and so we got into this Brown and Root plane and--oh, he also called and got Dorothy Nichols to come out. Well, she met us in Las Vegas, because we badly needed somebody to take care of both of us at that point. Well, the plane took off like that, almost straight up, and what that meant was that as we went in the higher altitude, all of this phlegm and stuff rushed right up into my ears and into my forehead, and by the time we landed at Las Vegas I couldn't hear a gun going off this far away from my head. I'll never forget it. He and I both went and we had dinner together in I think it was the Desert Inn we stayed in that night, and he was talking right into my ear and I couldn't hear what he was saying. Well, after dinner he went to bed and I finally managed to locate some ear, nose and throat specialist who did something, I don't know what, but got me to a point where I could hear fairly well.

The second day we went around, and I made a little tour of Las Vegas because a thought had suddenly occurred to me, for the love of God, almost everybody here is a tourist. Where in the hell are the votes? So after I got him to bed I went out and tried to find the votes. Strangely enough, the most important single organization in the whole damn state of Nevada was that union of waiters, cooks, hotel employees; that's where all the votes were. I've forgotten the speeches. They didn't particularly matter. Alan Bible was up for election

though, and I think he was obviously a shoo in. You know, Pat McCarran really ran Nevada, and Pat made a custom of keeping his eye on the law school at the University of Nevada. Now when he saw bright young men that he suspected would make pretty able leaders, he'd help them get through college, and by the time they graduated with their law degree they thought Pat McCarran was great. And then if they became a senator or something like that. . . .

Well, Bible was a pretty good liberal type. That meant that whatever liberal votes were in Nevada he was going to get, and he had Pat McCarran's backing, so you know the election was kind of a formality. I don't even know why we went down there. It gave me my first look at Las Vegas, which I have never liked.

And then the next day I remember we took off from Las Vegas. Dorothy Nichols had joined us by then, thank God. Where did we go? We went to--

G: Tucson?

R: No. Yes, Tucson. Tucson. And again, that was kind of a--I think he just went out there to make Carl Hayden feel good. I can still recall the room and he kept talking about he had to come out to Arizona to see the stud duck, which made Carl feel very good. That particular part of the trip was routine, you know, it really didn't matter.

There wasn't too much either in Albuquerque. I remember we were actually met by Clint Anderson. Here it says met by Ralph Trigg of Senator Anderson's office. Actually Clint himself met us out at the airport and drove us in. Clint wasn't worried about anything; he had

things under pretty much control. You don't remember things like that because there were no great problems. He was just sort of touching base to go in there.

We took off that same day for Minneapolis. Now that's where it really got interesting, because that was the first time that I had ever seen the Hubert Humphrey campaign entourage at work, and it was impressive.

G: Was it really?

R: Oh. They really had that organized. A man named Herb Waters--later got into an awful lot of trouble, because he had kind of sticky fingers--but he was a marvelous organizer. He had that office organized. There was no shouting, no yelling, none of the usual furor that was going on in a campaign office, everything very quiet, very efficient. I took one look and I knew Hubert had that one made. Because you can always tell when a campaign staff knows if it's winning. And he made a fairly good speech there. I remember they were having some trouble. What time of the year was that?

G: October, late October.

R: Yes, they were having some trouble with the Mississippi River. I can remember going out and looking at it, some sort of flood waters or some reason. But that again had no problems. My only real memory of it is having a marvelous steak at Murray's [?] that night, which is always worth doing when you get to Minneapolis.

G: Anything on Johnson and Humphrey together on that occasion?

R: No, they got along beautifully. You know, Johnson really was very

fond of Humphrey, which forms one of the paradoxes as to how nasty he was to Humphrey when Humphrey became vice president. I think he envied Humphrey. He envied Humphrey's ability to get up and talk about anything every time he felt like it, and also Johnson himself I think would have dearly loved to have represented a state where he could be a free-wheeling politician like Humphrey. He would have loved it. And the two men really got along very, very [well]--they had a certain bond. The state directors of NYA formed a sort of a community. You know Kissing Jim Folsom down in Alabama was one, Hubert Humphrey was another. The guy in Mississippi, the governor who started out the BTAWI program, Bring Together Agriculture With Industry in Mississippi, what was his name? He was another one. Oh, and Soapy [G. Mennen] Williams. Strangely enough, all of these men felt a certain bond, almost a sort of a form of fraternity. So Johnson and Hubert had a natural way of getting along.

I think that pretty well describes it. The next day I flew back to Washington, D.C. and Johnson flew on back to the Ranch.

(Interruption)

G: Just before you left on the trip, Eisenhower made a nationwide television address in which he warned that a Democratic congressional victory would mean a cold war of partisan politics between Congress and the executive branch. This seems to have really offended Johnson and Rayburn.

R: Sure.

G: Do you recall that episode?

R: I do remember it. They weren't quite as offended though as they were amused, because it really played into their hands. It was very easy to handle, seeing there had been so many examples of Eisenhower getting Democratic cooperation on very, very crucial questions against an obstructionist Republican minority. This is one of the things that we had counted on in 1952 and 1953, that the Taft wing of the Republican Party was going to be so anti-Eisenhower that we could make a pretty good living by being for the President and against the Taft wing of the party and make it look like we were for the President against the whole Republican Party. I don't know why Eisenhower did it, I think it was one of those things, he had to make a political speech. And actually if you could recreate it, I think you'd discover that neither Mr. Rayburn nor Mr. Johnson were quite as upset by it. They had to be indignant in public, but it was more indignant to call attention to the fact that they had been very cooperative with Eisenhower.

G: I think that the following session of the Congress they did remind him of the statement and list all of the pieces of his legislation that they had been--

R: Sure. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

G: Another thing I wanted to ask you about before that. Nixon was speaking in Houston shortly before that to the Druggists' Association and had originally planned to come to the LBJ Ranch and spend the night. It was ultimately cancelled. But do you remember anything about that?

R: No. It sort of stirs a memory. I don't think it was terribly important. I think it was--oh, I better not say because I really don't remember. What date was that?

G: Let's see. It was October 14.

R: 1954?

G: Yes.

R: Well, obviously I think both of them would have been rather ill advised to have had such a meeting in October of an election year.

G: Yes. Well, I think that covers everything that I have in 1954. Of course, you have talked about the McCarthy censure.

R: Yes. I think you're pretty well up on that, aren't you?

G: Yes. So the next thing we have is 1955.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview VII]