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Interview with
Walter White

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Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: *Walter A. White*
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: April 16, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello and J. D. Dunn interviewing Mr. Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 16, 1975, in Denton, Texas. We are interviewing Mr. White in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he served with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Other aspects of Mr. White's life will also be recorded for the Oral History Collection.

Mr. White, to begin this interview, why don't you just very briefly give us a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell us when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Then you might also point out some of the more interesting experiences you had prior to getting into the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Mr. White: Well, that's looking back quite a long ways to 1906. I was born in a mining camp--Encampment, Wyoming. The

original name was Grand Encampment, Wyoming, and this little town goes back to the meeting days of the old mountain man, and . . .

Marcello: Did you say it was called Grand Encampment?

White: Grand Encampment.

Marcello: Okay, from time to time we may be asking you the spelling of some proper names because it will help my transcribers when they transcribe this material. But pick up the story from this point.

Dunn: Ron, this is interesting. This past summer, I believe, wasn't it, Walter, that . . .

White: Two years ago.

Dunn: . . . two years ago Walter and his wife went back to . . . is the city Encampment? Is that the name of it?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Where you were born--and it's still named that.

White: Still named that.

Dunn: And that's in Wyoming. I have here a newspaper, and the date on here is Friday, March 16, 1906, and they went back and found reference to when Walter was born. There's just a notice here in the paper. Do you see that on there Walter? Where is that?

White: "Mr. and Mrs. L. White are the proud parents of an eleven-pound boy who made his first appearance on Monday last," which would have been March 12.

Dunn: Was this . . . do they have a museum or something? How did you happen to be able to find the newspaper clipping?

White: This little town is now listed in the "Ghost Towns of America." However, it's made a little comeback--157 people there two years ago.

Marcello: How many people were there when you were born?

White: Around 3,500.

Marcello: It was a booming metropolis at that time.

White: It was one of the larger towns in the West at that time.

Dunn: Was it a mining town?

White: It was a copper mining camp.

Dunn: Copper mining.

White: Primarily. The little town sits at about 7,000 feet, and the mines were close to the Continental Divide, up about 11,000 feet before you went in the canyon to where the mines were. That is all private property now, so we were not able to get back into where the mines were. But my father was a blacksmith and a carpenter--mine carpenter--there for awhile, and then he saw the opportunity of doing a little better, so he became a freighter with his wagon teams and so forth, and he freighted whatever needed to be hauled in--food, groceries, machinery--from the rail line, which was about thirty miles north. This is pretty rugged country through there, and I used to hear some wonderful tales--I wish I could remember them--about how

smart those horses were and how stupid the men were to go out in snowstorms. We have some pictures taken during this period of ladies in their long dresses and white blouses and so forth on skies, and we think that skiing for ladies is a new thing, but these were quite expert, and that's the only way they could get around in the wintertime there because one of the heaviest snowfalls occurs in that area.

Marcello: Did your father follow the mining camps as each one sprouted up, or did he go specifically to Encampment and stay there?

White: My father was born on a farm in Labette County, Kansas. That's southeast Kansas--it was about forty miles from Joplin, Missouri. He came in with a bunch of people in covered wagons--his parents did--from Ohio, and there was some relationship among all of these people who came in that particular caravan. They had eighty acres . . . and my grandfather must have been quite a skilled man in many things--all of the things that he did--as most of the pioneers had to. That's where Dad learned to be a carpenter. That's where he learned to be a blacksmith because the rocks for the old forge were still on that farm the last time I was there three or four years ago. My grandfather--my dad's father--died with typhoid when my Dad was fifteen years old, so he had to quit school.

He ran the farm. He had two younger sisters, and they completed high school at the county community high school, which was about fifteen miles from this farm, and one of them went to what is now Valparaiso University. And most of this money from the farm that my dad and his mother, with the help from an uncle, were running. But I guess he got a little disgusted, and after he was married and my three older siblings were born on that farm, he packed up his family and went to Encampment, Wyoming, directly. He'd done a little coal mining in off seasons, as most farmers did in the local area, and he knew something about it, knew a lot about carpentry, knew a lot about blacksmithing, so he had no trouble going to work. And this camp was quite a promotion nationally. It was over-promoted.

Marcello: You mean the job opportunities that could be found here in Encampment?

White: No, the job opportunitites were there, but the ore wasn't there.

Dunn: Oh, I see.

White: There was ore there, but not this much.

Dunn: But it had been promoted as being a large deposit . . .

White: Yes.

Dunn: And that's copper.

White: Well, primarily copper . . .

Dunn: Primarily.

White: . . . there was vanadium and silver also taken from those mines, but in minor quantities.

Dunn: But he went there because of the . . .

White: Because of that.

Dunn: Because of the mines and the job opportunities.

White: Right.

Dunn: Were you the first child born there?

White: No.

Dunn: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

White: Oh, yes, I was the only one born there. I have one sister.

Dunn: They were born on the farm?

White: They were born on the farm--two brothers. One brother is dead.

Dunn: In other words, this was sort of a new start in life for him, then . . .

White: Yes.

Dunn: . . . when you moved there.

White: Right.

Dunn: How long did you live there in Encampment?

White: Well, I was born there. How long we lived there before I was born, I don't know. But I was born there, and we moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming, when I was five.

Marcello: Why was the move made?

White: Well, the railroad ran a spur line from Saratoga, Wyoming, to Encampment. They hauled freight, and the freight business was out (chuckle).

Dunn: Oh, I see, I see. The railroad ran him out of business, then.

White: Well, they went first from Encampment to Rawlins, Wyoming, and Dad and another guy by the name of Bill Jones ran a feed store there. I went through Rawlins, and there was heavy snow and the train stopped there quite a little while. And across from the depot on an old false front was "White-Jones Feed Store" (chuckle).

Marcello: Now how long ago was this when you went through there?

White: That was in 1943. I was with the Mediation Service and going to Salt Lake City.

Dunn: And this was where, now?

White: In Rawlins, Wyoming.

Dunn: This is after you went from Encampment to Rawlins?

White: Yes. Now they went from Encampment to Rawlins in covered wagons--there was two of them, two covered wagons--Dad's brother-in-law, my uncle by marriage, and my family. We went by way of what they called the Red Desert. On some maps it's still called the Red Desert. My mother didn't appreciate my dad talking about it, but he'd tell stories about her shooting prairie chickens

on the fly with a .22 rifle, and I believe she could do it (chuckle) because I've seen her shoot. But that wasn't ladylike, you know (chuckle).

Dunn: Did she ski?

White: That I don't know. I've never heard that mentioned. My sister . . .

Dunn: Do you remember Encampment?

White: I don't remember Encampment at all.

Dunn: What is your earliest recollection? Do you remember Rawlins or . . .

White: I don't remember Rawlins as such. I seem to remember little things going by, but whether this was actually in Rawlins or when we moved to Cheyenne, I don't know. But anyhow, it was a long time ago, and this little town, as I said, was listed in "Ghost Towns." And there's another funny thing that appeared in a later paper, and I didn't get a copy of that . . . now, it was in one of these "Ghost Town" books. It says, "The downfall of Encampment began in 1906."

Dunn: That was when you were born (laughter).

White: That's when I was born. But it's making a comeback, and it's quite a hunting center now, good fishing. There's some real rugged country west of there, which is hard to get into, and some of it you have to pack in to get there at all, and the streams are still full of trout, and the

mountains are still full of deer. But you better take a guide.

Dunn: Do you remember Cheyenne?

White: I remember Cheyenne. I remember particularly that we lived pretty close to the railroad yards for awhile, and I used to get my butt beat (chuckle) because I went up on the viaduct which went across from that side of town over to the other side of town. And I can remember being up on that laying down on the viaduct watching trains go by, and then I'd get caught, and then I wouldn't go up there for awhile.

Dunn: (Laughter) Did you start to school in Cheyenne?

White: No, I was just ready to start school when we moved back to Kansas.

Dunn: Back to Kansas.

White: Yes. My dad, in Cheyenne, and also up in Kansas, he was a pretty good salesman. He got in with a group of people who were selling citrus land in the Rio Grande Valley (chuckle) and also in Mexico. And he ran several excursions out of Cheyenne and then several where these parties were made up of Kansas people. And we came back to Kansas. At one time, he owned 900 acres of land at Tampico, Mexico.

Marcello: Now when was it that you moved from Wyoming back to Kansas?

White: That would have been in 1912.

Dunn: He was in Kansas but these ventures in Mexico were going on while you were in Cheyenne?

White: And then later in . . .

Dunn: . . . later in Kansas.

White: Yes.

Dunn: How did he happen to purchase this land in Mexico?

White: Well, they also sold . . .

Dunn: This was Old Mexico, not New Mexico.

White: This was Old Mexico, yes. This company also sold land in Mexico, and Tampico was one of the excursion points.

Dunn: Oh, I see, I see.

White: This was kind of like the present-day advertising that they want you to go up and buy a lot on a lake in Arkansas. They'd pay part of your way, or they'd pay all of your way, and they'd take you on the excursion and hope to sell you so much land. This was the same sort of promotion. And I guess his purchase of this 900 acres of land was probably by comparison of land values . . . and he liked the country and he liked the people. I had papers on that after he died, and I tried to do something about it, and I got a very nice letter that said that all the records had been destroyed in the Pancho Villa raid, you know, the courthouse burned down and so forth. Well, all of this is history--it did

happen, so there's nothing you can do about it. That's now part of that Tampico oil field.

Dunn: Oh, is that right?

White: (Chuckle)

Dunn: (Chuckle)

Marcello: You're referring to these new discoveries that have just recently been made in Mexico?

White: No, I'm referring to the field that's been there quite awhile.

Marcello: I see.

White: It's shallow oil. It's not a heavy producer, but it's an oil field.

Dunn: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

White: I had two brothers and one sister.

Dunn: Were they older than you, or younger?

White: They're all older. I'm the baby. My sister was the oldest. She still thinks she can boss me. She's six years older than I (chuckle).

Dunn: (Chuckle) Are your brothers still living?

White: One of them.

Dunn: What were their names?

White: The oldest one, still living in Houston, is Harve. His wife finally persuaded him to put a "Y" on it and make it "Harvey." And the other one is Loyal. He's dead, been dead for about fifteen years now.

Marcello: What was his name?

White: Loyal.

Dunn: Your sister's name . . .

White: Marie.

Dunn: Marie, and she's still living.

White: By the way, she's a librarian.

Dunn: Is that right?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Where?

White: Well, she was librarian in Carlsbad High School for years.

Dunn: In Carlsbad, New Mexico?

White: Yes. First she was a domestic science teacher, and then she went back to school and took a degree in library science.

Dunn: Did your two older brothers go to college?

White: Two years.

Dunn: Two years. Each of them?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Each went two years, and she went four, or did she?

White: Yes. Well, she got a masters degree later.

Dunn: I see, I see, yes.

White: She graduated from Kansas State, which is now Kansas State University. It used to be Kansas State Agricultural College.

Dunn: You went to Kansas State?

White: No, I . . . well, yes and no. Not the same one.

Dunn: Yes (chuckle).

White: (Chuckle) I went to Kansas State Teachers College at Pittsburg.

Dunn: Where did you go to high school?

White: Oswego, Kansas.

Dunn: Did you go to elementary school there, too, or . . .

White: When we came back to Kansas, my first day in school was in Knot Hole.

Dunn: (Laughter) Two words.

White: Country school, one room.

Dunn: How many grades?

White: Eight.

Dunn: Eight grades.

Marcello: How far did you have to go to school?

White: At that time?

Marcello: Yes.

White: Well, I just went there one day.

Marcello: Oh, I see. I was thinking in terms of distance, how far was it from where you lived?

White: Oh, it was about a mile down a dirt road, but I raised the dickens, and I wouldn't go back. My folks was figuring on moving to . . . this was from my grandmother's farm. They were figuring on moving anyhow, so they didn't make me go back.

Dunn: You remember that day?

White: Oh, yes!

Dunn: What did you dislike about it?

White: I disliked that teacher.

Dunn: (Laughter) Man or woman?

White: It was a man.

Dunn: Who was he? Do you remember his name?

White: I can't remember his name.

Dunn: How many students were there?

Marcello: Is it that you can't remember or you don't want to remember (chuckle)?

White: Probably the latter (laughter). In some of the one-room schools, they had to . . . the teacher couldn't handle all the various subjects for all the various grades, so they used upperclassmen. And I remember one big country gal that was apparently an eighth grader, and she just was as mean as that teacher. I think she was the one I was really afraid of.

Dunn: (Laughter)

White: I thought they were mean. I understand a little more about what somebody might put up with in those things now. But I actually started to school at Chetopa, Kansas. It's an Indian name. They have a garment factory there now that manufactures an awful lot of J. C. Penney's suntans, work clothes, known as

Chetopans. A little river runs down through there--
catfish capitol of the world. They catch more catfish
below that dam than they do anyplace in the country--
great big ones. I've seen them go 90 pounds coming out
of there. Then I think I was in the sixth grade when
we moved ten miles north to the county seat of Oswego.
By this time my dad was in the life insurance business.

Marcello: Incidentally, was this common for a great many families
in that section of the country to continue to move
around from place to place?

White: No, no. It isn't really common yet except with the
younger people. but you still find people living on
the farms that their people homesteaded.

Marcello: This movement, then, was more or less peculiar to your
family . . .

White: Yes.

Marcello: . . . given the type of work that your father got into.

White: Well, I think he had the "itchy foot."

Dunn: (Laughter) Liked to move on, huh?

White: Yes, Mother put her foot down that last move. I can
even remember . . . I think I remember hearing her say,
"No more. We're going to raise our family here." This
was at Oswego.

Dunn: So you had most of your schooling in Oswego then.

White: Right.

Marcello: And obviously you spent most of your childhood or young adult years in Oswego.

White: Yes. After I got out of college . . . I went to a teachers college . . . never had any particular desire to teach after the first two years. I was interested in and took a lot of sociological courses. The only course I ever flunked in college was psychology, and that was because I read too many psychology books and didn't agree with the professor's book. And I mean that sincerely. That's just exactly what happened. He later became head of the psychology department at the University of Chicago, and I always wondered why (chuckle). But I went to work for the Harvester Company, International Harvester.

Dunn: Were you married yet?

White: No.

Dunn: No.

White: No, there's a lot of years between then and when I got married.

Dunn: I see, I see. International Harvester?

White: Went to work for the International Harvester Company.

Dunn: In Oswego?

White: No, I worked out of the Kansas City office. They used to have what they called traveling collectors, and the

credit office was in Kansas City, but there'd be a branch office like Salina, Kansas, Wichita, Kansas . . . well, they were the two in Kansas, and the next would be in Oklahoma City, so forth. And you worked on those territories, but you worked out of Kansas City if you were with the credit department. It was a traveling job. You were visiting farmers and always getting crossed up with what the salesman had promised the farmer they'd do when his note came due. And all we had was a note (chuckle).

Dunn: So in other words, they were buying equipment from International Harvester.

White: Right.

Dunn: Now what would they have been buying--tractors and reapers?

White: Tractors, binders, corn equipment, corn binders, combines, trucks . . .

Dunn: They weren't paying cash for those?

White: Very few.

Dunn: And International was financing them. Their notes were with International Harvester Company?

Marcello: In other words, they would actually buy the equipment through a local dealer, and the note would be carried by the home office in Kansas City?

White: What happened, the local dealer would take a note, and he would discount that note maybe to a bank. The bank might hold it, or the bank might discount it back to the Harvester Company.

Dunn: I see.

White: Or they might work a combination, and when you ran into those, you had trouble. You didn't know who to give the money to when you got it. But they'd have those combinations, but always you had that note there, and usually these notes, when they were discounted, were signed over without recourse. In other words, if I'd bought a note from you as a purchaser of a farm machine, I bought that without recourse. I couldn't come back on you for whatever you'd promised the buy. So that's the reason I say we were always running into trouble where the salesman had promised somebody something that we didn't know anything about.

Marcello: In terms of chronology, when was all this taking place?

White: Well, I got out of school in 1929, in June.

Marcello: That was a good time to be getting out of college (laughter).

White: Well, the depression hadn't quite moved that far west.

Marcello: Well, it hadn't quite hit yet.

White: No, not that far west. I had the job with the Harvester Company in writing in May. In other words, I knew I had

a job. Now I had sent out two applications for teaching jobs. I could have had one of them for a hundred dollars a month for nine months.

Dunn: That was pretty good, wasn't it, for that time?

White: Oh, no, it had dropped a little. That part of the depression had already been felt a little. But with the Harvester Company I got \$125 a month, plus a two-hundred-dollar-a-month drawing account, which actually was an expense account, but it just had a two hundred dollar level on it, plus mileage on your car or they'd furnish you a car. So after I got that letter from the Harvester Company, I took it down to the Chevrolet dealer, showed it to him, and I drove a car home-- what we used to call a "roadster."

Dunn: A new one?

White: Brand new one.

Dunn: (Laughter)

White: I drove that back out to the college, never paid a cent down, never paid anything on it till August.

Dunn: (Laughter) What kind was it?

White: Chevrolet Roadster.

Dunn: Roadster. It had a rumble seat?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Did it?

White: Yes.

Dunn: (Laughter) What color was it?

White: Baby blue (chuckle).

Dunn: (Laughter)

White: No, but that was a good automobile.

Dunn: I bet it was.

Marcello: Let me interject a question at this point. Now generally speaking, it has been said that the depression was felt by farmers in the Midwest and the Far West even before the stock market crash came about in 1929. What was the state or the condition of agriculture prior to 1929 and prior to the depression in Kansas?

White: Well, you'd have to answer that two ways. Eastern Kansas, about the eastern one-third of Kansas, is very much like Missouri. It's small fields of wheat, lots of corn, cow-peas, diversified farming. When you get west of that, it was wheat. In those days, that's what it was, was wheat. Well, they raised a lot of broomcorn, but primarily wheat.

So that is true. The farmers were hit first. This is the reason that in a year and a half I got laid off by the credit department because . . . well, there was three of us in that division who got laid off at the same time because we were the youngest, newest hired. So it was already hitting the farmer.

I transferred in the wintertime from the little town of Stockton, Kansas, which is in the wheat country, to Butler, Missouri, which is close to Nevada, Missouri, the home town of one of our big Farm and Home deals. Butler was quite a town--still is--in a very rich farming area. The day I got in Butler, Missouri, eleven banks closed. There was only twelve in the county.

Marcello: What sort of a scene was this when all of a sudden these banks closed? What was the reaction of the people?

White: Well, this one bank would cash a check on some of the other banks that had closed, providing that these banks had connections with a bank in Kansas City. Then you could get a check cashed. But I took farmers' checks that I knew, and they knew, wouldn't be cashable as we thought of it then, in the foreseeable future. They had money, but it was all tied up. I'm not enough of a financier to tell you how this guy did it, but it was in these bank manipulations which had been going on. There wasn't anything crooked about it; they were just lost in the shuffle somewhere.

Marcello: Did these bank closings create a great deal of panic among the depositors and so on?

White: Not seemingly because in the rural area most everybody was going to eat for awhile. This was early in the depression,

you see. But you could go out to a farmer's house, and maybe he had only a \$150 note. Great big rich-looking farm, good farmstead, big barn, fat cattle, fat hogs. He couldn't sell the hogs, he couldn't sell the cattle, he didn't have money enough to even pay his telephone bill in cash. But they had enough to eat. They didn't worry, but they couldn't pay. They'd say, "You can have all the pigs out there you want. If you can haul them to town and sell them, there's your money for the note."

Dunn: How long were you in Butler?

White: About six months.

Dunn: Six months. And then you were . . .

White: Back out in West Kansas again.

Dunn: Back in West Kansas.

White: Yes.

Marcello: How common were bank foreclosures against farms during this period in the area where you were located?

White: Actually, very uncommon. Now they might foreclose on machines but very little on land unless a person had a bad reputation because they couldn't do anything with the land either. And the Harvester Company wasn't foreclosing because they were selling machinery, not taking it back.

Dunn: (Laughter)

White: So we had no problem there with foreclosure. It was just a total lack of money and lack of knowing where to go get

money. Now a little while later when the depression got more heavy--I'm telling you the truth--I bought a 150-pound hog for twenty-five cents and hauled it in the back-end of my car (chuckle).

Marcello: In the Chevrolet Roadster.

White: Yes. I took him into our house . . . we had a big walnut tree, and I was still unmarried, but . . .

Dunn: You say "our house." This was your . . .

White: My father's and mother's . . .

Dunn: Your father's and mother's house.

White: . . . butchered it there in the backyard. I bought that hog for twenty-five cents. The man would have given him to me, I suppose, because he had too many hogs to feed and no feed.

Dunn: You know how to butcher hogs, then.

White: Yes, I . . .

Dunn: Could you butcher one today?

White: I could butcher a hog today.

Dunn: How did you learn that? Do you remember?

White: Well, I was raised by farm . . .

Dunn: Did your father butcher hogs ever . . .

White: . . . a farm family. No, we didn't after we moved to town, but we always went up to Grandmother's and butchered her hogs for her.

Dunn: How were they cured?

White: My grandmother came from Virginia. I'm talking about my maternal grandmother. And she was a chief hanzo so far as curing that meat was concerned, and you had the real old Virginia cure. I mean she could really cure a ham.

Dunn: Did you have a smokehouse that you stored it in?

White: Oh, yes. Yes, every farmstead had a smokehouse. Some of them up there still have a smokehouse.

Dunn: Well, after the . . .

White: In fact, I've got an old chest back here in the back bedroom that I rebuilt that I salvaged out of the smokehouse on my Grandmother White's farm--that's where my dad was raised--that my grandfather built, but after the . . . for some reason or other it got out to the smokehouse, and they were storing hams in it. So the rats chewed the corners off it. These were solid walnut boards twenty-two inches wide (chuckle).

Dunn: (Laughter)

White: The corners were all chewed off, and I had to cut it down and rebuild it, and I've still got it back here.

Dunn: When did you leave the Harvester Company?

White: They left me (laughter).

Dunn: (Laughter)

Marcello: In other words, by this time you were a victim of the depression.

White: Yes. That would have been just about Christmastime, 1931.

Dunn: Well, that was a bad time, wasn't it (laughter)?

White: Yes, it was.

Dunn: Do you remember how you got the notice?

White: Yes. I had gone into the Kansas City office to check the filing of mortgages because they didn't show in the county records, but yet the record I had showed they'd been filed. This came from the Kansas City office. So I had to go back down and check back down this way, and the boss saw me in the file room checking through these records, and he said, "Well, what are you doing in here?" And I told him. He said, "Well, didn't you get my letter?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Well, you're laid off, effective yesterday."

Dunn: (Laughter)

Marcello: What was your reaction when you heard this?

White: Well, I was pretty low.

Marcello: What was the state of your own finances? Were you in pretty good shape?

White: At that time I was because I was on the road. I was single and I lived off my expense account primarily, and I had been sending my paychecks home to my mother with

the proviso "Use what you need to and put the rest in the bank."

Marcello: How was the depression hitting your family?

White: The insurance business had gone to the devil, and they were down. They were pretty hard hit.

Marcello: Do you recall what something like this did to your father? He was the breadwinner, and all of a sudden he didn't have a job. How did this affect him so far as his pride, his attitude, his outlook on life--things of this nature?

White: Yes, it had its effect. I couldn't detail it in any manner except that he wasn't the kind of a guy that quit, so he tried a lot of things--and a lot of foolish things--as far as selling stuff that there just wasn't a market for. I think you probably run onto some of these books now where you buy a coupon book that costs you five dollars, and you can get so many pairs of pants cleaned, and maybe you can get five hamburgers at someplace else and so forth. Well, this was quite a going thing. He and I both tried that, and that's a terrible thing, to sell, especially if people haven't got money, and they don't need all that cleaning (laughter).

Yes, it had its effects. However, we had a . . . by this time I was home. I had spent the money Mother had saved looking for a job. I was cocky. I had always had a

job. Even in going to school I had had a job--two of them. So I had spent the money she had saved looking for a job. I had to be broke before I got that cockiness out of me.

Marcello: How long did it take you to go through the money that you had saved?

White: About six months.

Dunn: Your home was where at this time?

White: I was still with my folks, still in Oswego, Kansas.

Dunn: Not in a rural area, but in the city itself.

White: In the city itself.

Dunn: In other words, you were paying electric bills . . .

White: . . . phone bills . . .

Dunn: . . . gas bills.

White: Right.

Dunn: Did you have gas? Were you using gas heat then, or do you recall?

White: We had gas--open flame gas stoves. You've seen lots of those.

Dunn: Natural gas or . . .

White: Yes, natural gas. However, we had a big wood stove heater right in the center of the dining room. The dining table was on one side and . . . not that's where we did all of the studying.

Dunn: And how long were you there after . . . back home after you were out of work?

White: Well, it doesn't quite fit that way. I also was a half-trained carpenter, so I picked up a lot of odd jobs as a carpenter. I rebuilt porches; I refinished furniture. I refinished all the furniture at the little old library they have up there at one time. And I thought I was doing real good. I was making about a dollar and a quarter a day. Never worked so hard in my life (chuckle)!

Dunn: Okay, that would be about what year?

White: That would have been about 1932.

Dunn: '32.

White: Yes, or '33.

Dunn: A dollar and a quarter a day.

White: Yes.

Marcello: Let's go back here a minute once more . . .

White: But that was a contract to refinish all that stuff, see.

Dunn: Oh, I see . . .

White: . . . so much . . .

Dunn: I see, yes, right.

Marcello: Herbert Hoover was President at that time.

White: Right.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude or opinion did most people have about Hoover during the height of the depression? Now he would have been President between 1928 and 1932.

White: You know, I don't really know a great deal. I remember hearing farmers talk about Hoover, but I wasn't much of a politician at that time. I had a job. I was on the road. I was having a good time. So its kind of like going down to Naples, Florida, now. I didn't hear anything about it. You go down to Naples, Florida . . .

Dunn: Hear anything about what?

White: The recession and so forth.

Dunn: The Whites were in Florida for about five weeks, what, a couple of weeks or so ago?

White: Yes.

Dunn: In Naples, Florida.

White: But you go down there, and you don't hear the word recession mentioned. You don't hear politics mentioned. You do hear about the stock market.

So this was kind of the way I was. I had a good job, and a good automobile, and places to go.

Dunn: Well, how did you become associated with the labor movement?

White: Well, there's got to be a little preface before that. After I finally ran out of the money that Mother had saved . . . I was at home, picking up odd jobs, doing what I could. We had an old friend that was in the grain business. At one time he had two elevators operating. He was also an old baseball pitcher--never made the big leagues, but he was pretty good. He

pitched against Walter Johnson, if you've ever heard of Walter Johnson. So we made a deal with him and the bank . . . and both Dad and I knew grain because we'd worked at it all of our lives practically. We made a deal with him, and we started buying grain at the bin.

Dunn: Now what do you mean "at the bin?"

White: Well, on the farmer's farm. We'd buy it there. Now the elevators . . .

Dunn: What is a bin?

White: It's where you put the wheat.

Dunn: Oh, I see. Yes, okay.

White: A corn bin or a feed bin.

Dunn: Right, right.

White: Oats.

Dunn: Right, right.

White: You always have these storage places someplace around. Well, the elevators had been paying eleven cents a bushel for wheat delivered to the elevator.

Dunn: Now where is the elevator located?

White: It'd be in some small town near a railroad.

Dunn: Yes. In this case yours were where?

White: Well, we didn't care where they were.

Dunn: Oh, I see, okay.

White: There were many of them. There was always a team track where it's open to the public. If you had a car spotted, you would load your own car.

Dunn: That's a boxcar?

White: Yes, on a railroad. You would call it team track. Usually, there was a public scale around someplace. You may have to pay a nominal fee for the use of the public scale and have a certification on it, but it's very nominal. They were paying eleven cents for wheat delivered to the elevator. We started paying the farmer eleven cents at the bin, his bin. We would pay him--I can't remember the figures--to haul it in. We would pay him an additional sum to put it in the car. That's shoveling. Or we'd haul it and give him his eleven cents at the bin which saved him from hauling to the elevator.

Now we had that grain sold before we bought it. We made contacts every morning with several mills-- Kansas City; Springfield, Missouri; Wichita, Kansas; Oklahoma City. So we had a car, or we had two cars, of wheat sold. And we knew where to get it; we had already located it. So we were doing alright. We made a thousand dollars one week.

Marcello: That was net?

White: That was net. We really worked. We had sixteen trucks working that week, and we were paying the truckers for hauling the wheat. But we had this stuff sold, and they had a soft wheat area which firms wanting flour for biscuit flour, you know, country biscuits, they'd pay a premium for that. We couldn't get a premium at the elevator. We was paying a premium because we was getting a premium. We made a thousand dollars that one week. That was net. And right after that Mr. Roosevelt's National Recovery Act came along, and the old Blue Eagle put us out of business.

Marcello: How did this come about?

White: There was something in the law that you had to have an established place of business or something. I can't remember what it was, but they put us out of business that way, but we'd got a little cash on hand.

Then by that time my dad knew everybody in this county, and I knew practically everybody. And I had been--not bragging--a pretty well-known athlete, both in college and high school. So I knew practically everybody and again was out of a job, and somebody asked me if I wanted to go to work for the county for about three days a week. And I said, "Sure." I didn't know what at. I was just ready to go. Well, this was

running a commodity distribution center, where the government had bought this surplus food and sent it out and gave it to relief clients on the certification of the County Welfare Department. I was in charge of that three days a week.

Dunn: You were actually handing out the food?

White: I was putting out the food.

Dunn: Yes.

White: I wasn't in charge of it, actually. The county welfare director was.

Dunn: What sort of food were they distributing to those people?

White: Oh, there was a lot of real good stuff, all the way from salt pork to good bacon and good hams. I saw some of the finest English peas come in there I ever saw in my life. I haven't seen any that good since then (chuckle). They came in in baskets all iced down, and you had to get those out pretty quick.

Dunn: Who were the people that you were issuing this to?

White: People who were certified by the County Welfare Department.

Dunn: Were they low income people?

White: They were hard up as hell (chuckle).

Dunn: (Chuckle) Were they people who maybe had money at one time?

White: An awful lot of them were self-sustaining, proud, self-supporting people, but they had no jobs, no price for their farm . . .

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that one of the things that perhaps eased the hardships of the depression was the fact that everybody was in the same boat? I mean, there were so many people . . . misery . . . I hate to use the term misery likes company, but everybody else was in a bad situation, too, and it kind of made things a little easier, perhaps, for you.

White: Yes, my wife and I talk about that a great deal. In the last year . . . to diverge just a little bit, her father took a whipping--he was in the grocery business--and he was a proud little man. And he took a whipping, but he wouldn't take bankruptcy. He borrowed money to close his business out. Well, she and I had both been in the collection game at one time. She decided to get his accounts to collect because she had done so for a doctor. I had also collected for that same doctor, and we went out and got money. Well, she figured she could get money, and he wouldn't give her the accounts because he said, "Your mother and I are going to live in this town for the rest of our lives. We're not going out and making enemies." And I swear, we looked for them after they died, and we couldn't find those bills anyplace. That's just a sidelight. You're absolutely 100 per cent right. We've thought that maybe what we need in this country was a little hardships to pull people closer, to

take a little more interest in knowing what your neighbor does. Actually, around here, in our neighborhood, I guess there are only two that we really knows what goes on, I expect, and how they're affected. One of them's about my age. He retired about a year after I did, and he had had a couple of cataract operations since then, and they watch our old cat when we're gone (laughter).

Dunn: How long were you with the welfare department?

White: Well, I was working there on this commodity business, and the county welfare director came up around, and he said, "I'm going to quit this business." He was also the county engineer. He said, "I'm an engineer, not a welfare director." He said, "We can use another caseworker. Why don't you work as a caseworker for a while, and I'll let you know when I'm going to quit this thing, and maybe you can take over." He said, "You've got the education requirements; you've got enough sociology. You ought to be able to qualify."

So I worked as a social worker. This was visiting in the homes and counting their money (chuckle) and supplying clothes, seeing that the kids got some way to go to school. Anything that you could do, you did. We had county funds; we also had some state funds. And this

was prior to the start of the Works Progress Administration, the WPA.

Marcello: Okay, this would have been prior to 1935, then. It would have been before '35.

White: Right.

Marcello: Again, when people received this relief, I'm sure they were happy to receive it, but in some cases did you get the feeling, perhaps, they were a little ashamed?

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Their pride was hurt?

White: Oh, yes, very often. Particularly in my case, I knew most of these people. Many, many of them, I had worked at their house when they were farming. I'd eaten at their tables--it was some of the finest food you ever ate in your life--particularly at harvest time. I'd hunted on their farms with free access. I fished in their streams and in their farm ponds.

So here was a guy coming out who had the job of giving them an old ticket for \$13 worth of groceries at a grocery store. Yes, it hurt their pride. And they would work. These people we had hauling grain were those kind of people. We could pick up these truckers and make them more money than they could make looking for a job, and they were darn glad to get it. They'd work like the

devil! They'd work just as many hours as you wanted to put wheat in the car. There was no saying anything about how long or what were the benefits. You had a job that's going to pay you so much.

Well, I worked as a welfare worker, social worker, I guess, for about a year, and then this engineer who was welfare director, through no choice of his own, let me know that he was quitting. He was going into the livestock business in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Well, I got that job because I happened to be the only one with a college education who was even applying for it.

Marcello: How much of a role did politics play, usually, in obtaining jobs of this nature?

White: Oh, generally quite a lot. You had to know your board of county commissioners, which we call the county court here. You were better off if you knew the county chairman of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party and so forth and the chief merchants in the towns. Well, I did; I knew most of them. Yet, I honestly say I didn't get that job politically.

And I got into an awful lot of trouble right away because of the fact that the county engineer was also the county welfare director. All the actual social work was left up to the case supervisor and administrator of that

end of it. After I got my feet on the ground and found out what was going on and read the law and so forth, why, here I jumped up and cut the staff about half in two, and I didn't know how many connections some of those people had. So I think I had all my political friends on me, and right quick. But it worked out all right.

Marcello: Speaking of politics, what was your political affiliation and that of your family at this time? Most Kansans were Republicans, and I was wondering if that held true for your family?

White: Well, primarily, yes. I think as far as my dad was concerned, you probably would call him an independent.

Marcello: Now this brings up an interesting question because prior to this interview you had mentioned that fact that at one period of your life, you remembered a visit by Eugene Debs to your home. You might want to talk a little bit about that.

Dunn: Yes, that would be very interesting.

White: Well, it was. It was something that stayed with me. I can still see that house and that room. It was that impressive. And I didn't know who Eugene Debs was. I was just a kid.

Marcello: How did your father know him?

White: My dad was, I think, a very independent thinker. And he had worked in those mines . . . well, he'd worked a little in the coal mines there in Kansas. He'd worked in those mines in Wyoming. He'd been up; he'd been down. He'd worked as a carpenter; he'd worked as a blacksmith; he'd worked as a plumber. He could fix an automobile right out in the middle of the road. Even if he had to rebuild a part, I think he could have done it. So he knew working people pretty well, and most of the time up to this particular time he had been in someway connected with working people. And maybe a little of the hardship of being a fifteen-year-old when his father died and he had to run a farm, he and his mother, had something to do with it.

But I also had an uncle, my mother's brother, who was a railroad man, and he was quite a politician in his own way, and I'm sure that today he'd be called a radical--but he wasn't. He'd heckle a politician to find out what they were going to do for the workingman. Well, I can remember my dad talking a lot about rent, profit . . . three items . . . rent . . .

Dunn: Interest?

White: . . . interest and profit. They were the three greatest sins of our commercial industry . . . our commercial,

industrialized country. And Karl Marx hadn't written his book yet. Well, apparently, Debs and . . . I can't think of the local man who lived at Pittsburg and was the district director for the United Mine Workers. He was also a socialist.

Marcello: I gather there was quite a bit of labor radicalism in that section of Kansas--Pittsburg, Frontenac, that area?

White: Oh, Lord, where'd you hear of Frontenac? You bet your life there was! This was where this guy was from that I'm talking about that was there also that night, and I can't remember his name. I wish I could. He was a brilliant man. Two things got him--women and that Frontenac whiskey (laughter).

Marcello: Well, there was quite an ethnic . . .

White: Now I'm not talking about Debs. I'm talking about the guy from the Pittsburg area.

Marcello: For example, I know that there was quite an ethnic population in Frontenac--some Italians and Austrians, I think, and . . .

White: They had a basketball team out there--sort of a semi-pro basketball team--and they called it the "team of all nations," and they used to tell the story . . . this was

four miles north, right out the main street of Pittsburg, and you run into Frontenac. And they used to tell the story that if you want to find any whiskey, go to anybody in Frontenac and ask them where it is, and you get this kind of an answer: "Well, go to any house except a church, and that's where they make it," (laughter).

Marcello: Well, I gather that these ethnic groups brought a great many of their radical labor ideas with them from Europe when they settled in that area. And, again, that's perhaps how Debs happened to be active or visiting in there.

White: Well, I think Debs was in there because of this fellow from Pittsburg, and through this fellow from Pittsburg they heard of my dad.

Dunn: Now was the meeting at your dad's house?

White: Yes, in Chetopa, Kansas.

Dunn: In Chetopa. In other words, Debs came there.

White: Debs came there, and he slept in our house.

Marcello: Do you remember anything in particular about Debs that stands out in your mind?

White: No, nothing. He was a nice-looking man, and I remember him as a nice man, but not beyond that because I wasn't in the room.

Marcello: Do you remember your father ever saying much or speaking about Debs' visit?

White: I remember him talking to Mother that this was one of the smartest men in the country, but he was not going to go far because he was trying to go too fast. And also, Dad was not a complete socialist even at that time, that he wanted to take everything and divide it up as everybody equally, because he was smart enough to know that pretty soon the same people would have it all back again.

Marcello: How did your father ever acquire these ideas? What are the origins of them? Was this embitterment caused by the depression or something of this nature?

White: No. My sister and I have also talked about that. She was surprised at all the skills he had--manual skills--after she learned something about them. You know, women in those days didn't, and she's a little older than I am. But the only way I can answer that for you . . . now Dad went through seventh grade in school--that's all the school he had--which was pretty good for most of the farmers around in that part of the country. But I was never much good at math. He helped me with my algebra in high school. And where'd he learn algebra? Now geometry I could understand. I didn't

need much help except with algebra. He could help me, and he never had any. And I couldn't understand it, and I was taking it. Kind of like the new math, I guess. But I can't answer that question. He read a lot. He talked to a lot of people.

Dunn: What did he read? Do you recall? Books? Was it journals?

White: Everything from Capper's Weekly to . . . oh, we had a little set of encyclopedias. I can't even remember the name of them.

Marcello: Capper's Weekly--was it a farm paper in Kansas?

White: Yes. It was quite a paper at the time. Have you ever seen Grit?

Marcello: Yes, I sure have.

White: Well, it's in a way similar to Grit. Not quite as broad in scope, but . . .

Marcello: But this comes out of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, I believe.

White: Yes, I think that's right.

Dunn: Well, was this only one time that Debs was there, or . . .

White: Yes, all that I know of. And there was thirteen or fourteen men there. They had oil lamps. We didn't have electricity. We had oil lamps. And they just lighted one lamp in the living room because they didn't want other people to see who was coming in and out the door. Oh, it was quite clandestine. I think that's

what made the impression on me (laughter). And this railroad uncle of mine was there, and he died with the flu in that 1918 epidemic. He was a big, husky guy. That's the ones that was knocked off quick with that kind of flu.

But he was there, and I remember that he and Dad talked somewhat about Deb's visit and his ideas and so forth later, and I seem to remember them both saying that this won't work in our part of the country. But that's all kind of what . . . it's not an hallucination. It could be on the verge of it just due to faint memories that come back. But I remember Debs and that night very well, not what kind of a man he was but . . . he was a nice-looking guy.

Marcello: Well, this brings us back to 1934-1935 again, I think, when you were with the county welfare agency. I suppose we need to pick up the story at this point again.

White: Well, as I was saying, I got in trouble right quick because of cutting the staff down. Remind me of this particular thing sometime later, if you can. I've got another idea which bugs me. We worked out a pretty good setup, I think. We complied with the law, and even though we had a local Republican administration and we had a state Republican administration, but this time we

were getting WPA projects and so forth, and most of them up in that area were very commendable.

Marcello: What sort of WPA projects would be carried out?

White: I suppose the most money was spent on roads, and this was mostly done by handwork.

Marcello: Farm-to-market roads?

White: Farm-to-market roads. Rock was quarried by hand . . . oh, sure, they had to use a blasting powder, but the holes were driven by hand to put the shot in. It was broken with sledge hammers, loaded in wagons, and hauled by wagons to a little portable rock crusher that went down the road and crushed about a yard and moved on and crushed about another yard and so forth. This was the only type of mechanical means that I can remember being used in building these roads. A spreader would come along and spread it, you know, a blade.

Roads probably used the most money. We built a swimming pool in this little town of Oswego with WPA funds that to my knowledge has never had a crack in it. It was that well-built.

Dunn: Still there to this day?

White: It's still there to this day, and it's still used a lot. Also, with that stone bathhouse, which is a beautiful old structure, was a stone shelterhouse for picnickers and so forth, and concessions . . .

Marcello: Now were you in any way connected with this WPA work?

White: I had to certify all the people who worked on it.

Marcello: That's right. The County Welfare Agency certified the people who were eligible for WPA employment.

White: That's right. And I also had to certify the project as being needed. It was kind of like an ecological . . .

Marcello: Well, these projects . . .

White: You had to have somebody say, "Yes, this is good for this . . . it's not a boondoggle."

Marcello: Also, it had to be the type of project that would employ a lot of people and not use much money in the way of materials. In other words, most of the money had to be spent for labor rather than for materials.

White: Most of it had to be, but there were other kinds of projects. For instance, we had a sewing room--a garment manufacturing plant, actually--in the bigger towns--Parsons, Kansas--and I ran onto a government warehouse somewhere or other that had an awful lot of cured sheepskins. They were just the skins like they come off, only the skin had been cured and sheared. We talked the powers that be in Kansas into giving us a little more money for that sewing room to get a couple of heavy machines in, and we started making heavy sheepskin coats, and, boy, we couldn't make them fast enough (laughter)!

Dunn: There was a need for them there.

White: Oh, boy!

Dunn: How cold does it get up there?

White: Well, about as cold as in our part of the country, but it would get down to ten below once in awhile, sometimes.

Marcello: How closely were you working with the WPA, even though you were not actually a part of the WPA?

White: Oh, very closely. We were involved in nearly everything that was being done.

Marcello: Did you ever have any cases of people coming up to you and saying, you know, "Hey, even though I'm not eligible for WPA, can you get me on, or can you get my relative on?" or something of this nature?

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I would assume you were a pretty important person.

White: And not only that, but like this sewing room, this garmet factory, we made everything under the sun there--things that were certified by the caseworker as being needed in the county. All the way from mattresses to baby sheets. We bought the material as much as we could locally, and this is another place I got in trouble with Republican administration, countywide and statewide. I insisted on those bids going out, taking bids. And the hell of it was that the Democrats was getting most of them (laughter). I caught the devil about that.

Marcello: Well, who was running the WPA? I would assume the Democrats were running it, were they not? I mean, this was a federal operation, and the Democrats were in power in Washington.

White: Well, actually, there was two main people in your county--the county engineer, which was different from what we have here, and the county welfare director. So I was one of them, and the county engineer and I got along well. When we both thought a project ought to be done, we'd both go jump on the county commissioners and get them on our side, and then we had some push up the line in the regional office of the WPA. And we had pretty fair men. Particularly the chairman was a real fair guy. He was a Republican, staunch Republican, but he also realized that there was human beings that were Democrats. Some people didn't think so (chuckle).

Marcello: A lot of times it's been charged that around elections the WPA rolls would mysteriously increase in size rather considerably. Did you ever notice this taking place here in Kansas?

White: I heard that about Crawford County where Pittsburg is, but I can assure you it never took place in Labette County--not while I was there.

We had a farmer that lived about four miles out of Oswego. He was reputedly one of the wealthier farmers, and this wasn't a matter of inheritance. This was good management and hard work that he got what he got hold of, and he was supposed to have raised the best mules outside of Missouri. He had some beautiful teams. But when I took over the county welfare director's job . . . not when I took it over, but after we got deeply involved in the WPA, I found he had four teams working out on the road. Now they were not his family driving those mules, which it was supposed to be. They were hired hands. He had four teams working out on these WPA projects, and I eliminated that real quick. So I got in trouble again.

But fortunately I had a real good friend . . . he'd retired. He'd been a district judge up there for quite a long time, Judge Elmer Clark. I and my chum used to sit on his front porch down on the porch, and he was sitting on his rocking chair on the front porch, and we'd visit. Now he was raised in Louisiana and got his education down there, and he told some of the wittiest stories you ever heard in your life. But when I took that job, I went to Judge Clark and told him there was an awful lot about it I didn't know and so

forth, and he said, "Vic" . . . I have a nickname of Vic. He said, "Vic, remember this--if you have a problem and you don't know how to solve it, if you look, there's somebody that can. So look around among your friends when you run into these things. If I can help you, I will. If I can't, maybe I'll know somebody that can." This was the type of advice he gave me. Well, the times I've been able to remember that, I've always got along alright (chuckle) because it does work that way. So when I'd run into political trouble, I could go up and talk to the judge, and he'd give me a steer. Sometimes when I didn't know whether to make a decision which was going to adversely affect somebody, maybe his thinking would level it off.

I finally had to fire a case supervisor because she was also the Red Cross chairman or director or whatever you call it, and she was using county vouchers and making her reports on the Red Cross that she was putting out so many thousands of dollars of assistance there in that county, and she was getting quite a name. And she sure did when I found it out. I went and talked with her in the evening when nobody was around, and she wasn't going to give it up, so I had to cut her funds off. And that got me in trouble. Did you ever hear of the union

that was organized for WPA people? Oh, actually, I think the history started with a bunch of old "Wobblies" that started organizing this kind of union among these people that were working on WPA. Well, anyway, they organized one in Labette County.

Marcello: What were the goals of this WPA union?

White: About the same as any other union--bargain with the county commissioners, the welfare department.

Dunn: The "Wobblies"--you're talking about the IWW?

Marcello: The IWW from World War I.

Dunn: They were revolutionaries.

Marcello: Yes.

White: Well, these, I think, were a little revolutionary, too, I mean, the people that were starting it. We got this thing going, and I'd heard about it. I had some friends in the building trades up in the town of Parsons, Kansas, and they'd ask me a question or two once in awhile about what was going on with this WPA union, and I'd say, "Well, nobody's made any approach to me or anything of this kind. I hear stories, but I don't know anything."

Marcello: Were they wanting more relief jobs and higher pay, or what were the aims of this organization?

White: And they wanted their own people to be put on the staff as the social workers to displace the staff that we had.

They wanted to be furnished transportation to and from the jobs, which nobody under the sun in this small county could have done. You could do part of it and we did before they ever thought about it. Yes, they wanted all those things, and they wanted better commodity distribution and fuels of various kinds furnished and everything under the sun just like everybody else wants, only they wanted more of it.

One evening, Judge Clark called me, and he said, "Vic, I just got a tip from Parsons." He said, "This union is having a mass meeting up there in the city hall, and I think you ought to be there."

Dunn: At Parsons?

White: Yes. This was about twenty miles north of our county seat town and was the biggest town--railroad town. So I went up there and walked in the front door of the municipal building, and on this side was this big auditorium. The doors opened in, and you went down a little slope, and the stage was on the other end. Well, I went up there and this meeting had already started. I stood outside the door--the door was closed--and I stood outside the door and listened just a little bit, and it sounded pretty rugged. And I was scared.

Marcello: They were rather irate.

White: They were irate . . .

Dunn: In what way? Do you recall?

White: Well, they were just talking like they could have a mob riot. In fact, some of them were advocating to march down the street and take things over.

Dunn: By force?

White: By force. Well, I stood outside and listened a little bit, and I remember thinking to myself, "Well, Vic White, there are two things. You've got two alternatives. Either you go in this meeting and let these people see you and have at you, or you turn around and go back home and quit. And I ain't gonna quit."

So I opened the door, and I just forced myself to walk slow down that little aisle, and, gosh, I remember it seemed like to me it was a half mile long. And one guy says, "Well, there goes the big son-of-a-bitch now." Another one said, "What the hell's he doing here?" I just kept on walking. I got down to the front row, and lo and behold the chairman of this committee sitting up on the stage was an old friend of mine. I'd known him for years. He looked down at me, and he said, "Vic, what are you doing here?" I said, "I'm the county welfare director that these guys back here are cussing." He said, "Are you the Vic White that's the county welfare director? Come on up here!"

And I went up on the stage, and this guy stood up, and he said, "I've known this man ever since he was a kid. I think he'll do what he can for us. What he can't do, he'll tell you; and if he can't do it, he'll tell you he can't do it, and he won't do it." He said, "Now he's got the floor."

I talked and answered questions, I'll bet, for two hours. And I told them that--you always hear this thing--my office is open. The only thing I ask you is if there's somebody in there, be polite enough to them to wait until they leave.

And I went back down to Oswego, and I changed my office. I moved it from the back office. I left it wide open, and I had a lot of visitors. They found out that door was open, and I never had any more trouble with the union. They found out we were being honest.

Marcello: Did the union continue to exist even after your meeting with them and so on?

White: Oh, you'd hear a spasmodic talk about it, but no real existence, no. And I don't deserve the full credit for that because the building trades were very much on my side, and they let it be known. Not as a friend, but they couldn't see anyplace for a union where people were getting handouts.

Marcello: How did you go about certifying a person as being eligible for WPA relief? How did you investigate . . . what procedure did you use in investigating his background in order to certify him?

White: You had this staff of social workers, and I had a pretty good group of people. A person came in and applied for assistance, or something like that happened. You got that . . . we didn't make the initial approach. Somebody else made the initial approach. Then the social worker would visit in that home or whoever's home it might be. It might be that this family was living with the parents, and the parents were able to take care of themselves, but the son or daughter and their family wasn't--things like that. They'd make as exhaustive an examination of the background and so forth of these people as they could. Even into the sociological end of it, if there were retarded children or some injury or something that kept people from working, or a medical illness or epilepsy or whatever it might be they tried to find out everything that they could. They'd come back and write a report.

The case supervisor went over that report. She or he or whoever it might be then passed that

on to the county welfare director, who is the final administrative officer in there. And then I would have to make my judgement on the basis of a comparison. Is this person worse off than the one we've got, or is this person more needy than one that's on? So you'd have to take one off in order to put one on. You had all those kinds of decisions to make. And on top of that, our office wrote all the checks that went out, and Mrs. White used to type a lot of those (chuckle).

Marcello: I assume, then, that you got married sometime during this period when you were . . .

White: No.

Marcello: . . . on this county welfare . . .

White: We were dating, but . . .

Dunn: Was she working for you?

White: Yes, for awhile.

Dunn: Oh, I see.

White: And then she quit and went to the regional office of WPA, and that was in Chanute, Kansas, and from Chanute she moved to Washington.

Dunn: She went from Chanute, Kansas, to Washington?

White: Yes.

Dunn: What in Washington . . . or was she with . . .

White: She went up there on a temporary job with the Veterans Administration, and I think she . . . it was a temporary

job, and I think the temporary job ran out, and she just stayed there and found another one.

Dunn: You were married about when?

White: 1939.

Dunn: '39.

Marcello: How long did you remain with the county welfare department?

White: About five years.

Marcello: Incidentally, during this period you must have been forming some opinions of Franklin Roosevelt, and I was wondering if you would care to share some of those? There's no way that somebody couldn't have formed an opinion of Roosevelt, I think, during this period.

Dunn: Did you listen to his fireside chats?

White: Oh, yes, very definitely. I think I had a sort of a hero-like worship of Franklin Roosevelt. He got things done. I don't know whether actual statistical history would show it, but things were better after he started moving.

Marcello: Wasn't it true that he also inspired a great deal of confidence . . .

White: No question . . .

Marcello: . . . regardless of what he actually did?

White: No question about it. The very fact, I think, that he closed those banks that weren't already closed (chuckle) under their own weight . . . but he closed up all those

banks until people got straightened out, and then the very fact that he opened them up again gave confidence. You know, now we've got a bank open. All those things, but, yes, he had a wonderful personality to get across what he was trying to do.

Marcello: And you're referring, of course, to the fact that he used the radio and the fireside chats to get his message across.

White: Right.

Marcello: Describe what it was like when one of those fireside chats was about to begin or when one of them was going to be broadcast? It was almost like a social event, was it not? Everybody would gather around the radio and listen?

White: That was in the days of those little (chuckle) . . .

Marcello: The cathedral-type radios. Is that what they called them?

White: I know we've discussed these talks at home. Now remember I was still living at home with Mother and Dad. By that time I was about the sole supporter . . . my sister was sending money home once in awhile, but . . . I remember we talked about it at home, and not too much was said by me at least in public circles because I didn't think I could be much of a politician--an expositor of a position--

as long as I was a director in the county welfare department. I had some good friends on both sides that I talked to confidentially, and the chairman of the board of county commissioners up there was a Republican, but he thought an awful lot of Roosevelt because Roosevelt had made it so that he could sell his coal. He was a coal strip pit operator, and he did sell his coal; and vice versa, and we had other people that were selling a lot of heavy machinery that cussed Roosevelt all of the time. But the only reason that they were selling machinery was because he was making things move.

Dunn: Let's see, 1935 was when National Labor Relations Act . . .

White: That's right.

Dunn: Do you recall its passage, or did it really have much impact upon you at that time and what you were doing? You weren't really directly involved with the labor movement then, were you?

White: Not with me, but with my friends, yes, it had quite an impact.

Dunn: Were the mine workers active in that area?

White: Oh, yes. Alyea was the name of that man in Pittsburg.

Dunn: The one that came with Debs?

White: Yes, he was the man that was over there with Debs, and he's the man I said was the brilliant man, but a few things got him.

I had a friend who was one of my best friends-- had been ever since high school--who was down and out. He was about the same age I was. He had a job for a small feed mill, driving a truck delivering feed up as high as a hundred miles away and getting a dollar a day. And this maybe sometimes ran into eighteen hours a day. This thing came along, and he immediately got seven dollars a day for a five-day week, and he was--can't say the word--nigger rich (laughter).

Marcello: Did your experiences or your activities with the County Welfare Agency have any direct bearing upon your moving into labor activities and so on? What was the connection, or was there a connection?

White: Well, as I said, I'd worked a little in the coal mine in Crawford County, Kansas, and in the tri-state area in lead and zinc--not enough to be a miner, but I'd worked there. The old "blue card" union, I was familiar with. It's not very well known out of that country, but if you go out to Joplin and talk about the "blue card" union, they know what you're talking about.

Marcello: What is the "blue card" union?

White: Well, it was completely independent of either the progressive miners, the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, which was primarily coal. It was independent and it was organized supposedly for the benefit of the lead

and zinc industry in that area. That's where it first started. But it was organized primarily, I think, for the benefit of the organizers. There were some pretty rugged times there at that time.

But I'd worked there. I knew a lot of people that talked pro and con--pro-labor, against, so forth. I worked for the Eagle Pitcher Mining Company, which was pretty anti-labor. I did some research work on back injuries, not as a specialist, but helping a specialist. I read the files.

All those things went into the thing, and then seeing all these people that were willing to work but couldn't find a job, I think, had a lot of effect on my attitude.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude were you developing toward labor, organized labor, and this sort of thing?

White: I was still kind of in the middle of the road. I'd had this experience of this attempted organization of the WPA. I had . . . my father at that time was not a union man, but was pretty "pro". I had two uncles who were both railroad union men. I worked that area of my life in what is pretty much anti-union, and it still is.

Dunn: What do you mean, Walter, by that area?

White: I'm talking about southeast Kansas.

Dunn: I see, the regional . . .

Marcello: That tri-state area that you were talking about earlier?

White: Yes, that's right. They're still pretty much anti-union.

Marcello: That's southeastern Kansas-Missouri-Oklahoma?

White: Southeast Kansas, northeast Oklahoma, and southwestern Missouri. I think the whole thing probably was as much social as much as anything else. I'd done hard work all of my life. Back in my day, if you were big enough, you'd go out and get a job. My two brothers and I and a friend operated a . . . there were two friends. We were all . . . my two older brothers and this one friend were seniors in high school, and myself and the other guy were freshmen. We put down the first shaft . . . I mean, those five put down the first shaft for the Kansas Electric Utility plant on the Neosho River about twelve miles north of Oswego, and I was a freshman in high school. In this day you couldn't get a job like that--the kids can't. So I had an opportunity to learn a lot of different things and did a helluva lot of hard work. I served part of an apprenticeship till the load got too heavy while I was in college with the Rand-McNally Engineering Company in Pittsburg, Kansas. I went down there at night, four hours a night for awhile, as long as I could stand it and as long as they could.

I started serving an apprenticeship with a machinist. I've got a little old hammer laying out there someplace that I made while I was there.

Dad's background, I guess, and what I'd heard him say about laying on his back and using a single jack and driving holes into the face of this copper mine, laying on his side . . . men getting their legs crushed by somebody doing a poor job of propping up a stope . . . powdermen and the kind of work they had to do when they were shooting holes in the face while men were still working in the mine. I think all those things kind of fit in until . . . to bring you up past this time, I finally got fired as county welfare director (laughter).

Marcello: Sounds like an interesting story. Maybe we could close on that one.

White: Well, I heard rumors. I went down to talk to the board of county commissioners. Now they could fire me. I talked to the board of county commissioners, and all three of them said, "No." They heard nothing. They were perfectly happy. Next morning I read it in the paper.

Dunn: (Laughter)

Marcello: What were the reasons given for your firing?

White: I was on the wrong side of the fence by that time, I guess I was talking like a Democrat (laughter). So anyhow, I got fired.

Marcello: What was your reaction to this kind of events?

White: I was pretty mad. I was hurt because I'd worked like a dog, and I hadn't demanded luxuries in the job, no better than anybody else got. So I was pretty mad. Well, the next day I went to work back at the job I'd had when I was a kid. I went to work on the ice wagon peddling ice from house to house with a truck. This was twelve hours a day. And then, of course, fall came along, and the ice business went out.

Dunn: (Laughter)

Marcello: Well, that was the fall of 1939?

White: No, this was '36. My sister was in Carlsbad by this time. She'd gone down there to teach, and she married an electrical engineer who was the underground engineer for the Potash Company of America. So I was out of a job, had a little bit of money, so I went down to visit her. She asked me . . . Mother was dead by that time, and Dad had sold out--no house anymore, so . . .

Dunn: When did your mother die? Do you recall?

White: 1935.

Dunn: In '35.

White: Yes.

Dunn: Was this from illness?

White: Oh, she had a hysterectomy, and beyond that I don't know much. But she died as a result of that operation.

Dunn: You were still living with the family at that time?

White: Yes, I was the only one at home. But anyhow, my sister was down in Carlsbad, and I went down there to visit her, and she said why didn't I go to work down there. I didn't have anything to tie me at home, so I went out and hit the man up for a job, and he took my application and looked it over, and he said, "Well, we don't have anything here for you." And I said, "What do you mean, you don't have anything here for me?" He said, "Well, I got a couple of places where I need a mucker, but you've got too much education for that kind of a job." I said, "I bet I've scooped more wheat than any man you've got in that mine, and I can scoop all the muck he's got down there. And I came out here looking for a job, and I'm not afraid to work." And he said, "Well, by God, you've got a job." So I went to work for the potash mine, shift work, getting sixty-five cents an hour.

Dunn: That was in 1936?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Sixty-five cents an hour, eight hours a day?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Eight hours a day.

White: Eight hours a day, yes.

Marcello: Sixty-five cents an hour probably wasn't real bad money at that time, was it? That was good.

White: Oh, no, it was pretty good money.

Dunn: Were you working below the ground?

White: No, I was working . . .

Dunn: But this was a below-the-ground mine?

White: Yes, yes, it was down a thousand feet.

Dunn: You were in the refinery part of it.

White: Yes. I knew more about the refining of ore than I did the digging of that kind of ore because I'd worked in the lead and zinc mines.

Dunn: Well, those mines are different from the coal mines, aren't they?

White: Oh, very much so.

Dunn: The coal mines are rather close, are they not? You're underground, whereas these are high ceilings or . . .

White: Well, let me put it a different way. Here's the difference between a coal miner and a hard rock miner. You take a coal miner who done his work in Pennsylvania, and you put him down in the normal hard rock mine where your ores are laid down by water seepage or water courses or something of that kind where he can't reach the ceiling, and he's scared. A coal miner is used to . . . he wants to know where the ceiling is. It works just exactly the other way around . . . you take a hard rock miner down

into the coal mine, and he feels that ceiling up above him all the time, and he's scared to death. He figures it's falling on him (laughter).

Dunn: (Laughter)

White: No, I was working in the refinery. I knew more about that kind of an operation, and that showed on my application. I was always kind of a curious guy, so I ran around, particularly on the night shift, I ran around over the plant and seen how the people did things, what they were doing, and what the different operations were.

Dunn: You were working on the night shift?

White: No, I was working rotating shifts.

Dunn: Oh, rotating shifts. Were they operating twenty-four hours out of the day?

White: Yes, so they were building a new unit, and I kept going over there even in the daytime.

Dunn: This was seven days a week.

White: Yes.

Dunn: Were you working seven days a week?

White: Yes. But I kept going over this other unit . . .

Dunn: No Sundays off?

White: No Sundays or nothing.

Dunn: Eight hours a day and seven days a week on a rotating shift.

White: You got one week's vacation a year. It was after a years' service.

Dunn: Paid vacation?

White: Paid vacation. Well, I kept watching this new unit, and one night on the night shift the superintendent came around, which was unusual for the superintendent to come around after you close out the night, you see. He came around, and I happened to be working in the right spot that time, and he asked me to come up to his office. I went up there, and he said, "I've been watching you." And I thought, "Uh-oh, here it comes!" Because I had been moving around the plant quite a bit and keeping that broom gang going all the time. He said, "That new unit over there, you been over there quite a lot." He said, "Do you think you can run it?" I said, "Yes, I can run it." (chuckle) He said, "Well, okay, we're going to start it up in the morning. You come on back in the morning, and we'll get her going." So I became an operator. Now this was three months after I went there.

Dunn: Now you had gone to work there . . . what were you doing with a broom? You mentioned a broom?

White: Well, you were just a clean-up man. You were part of the labor gang.

Dunn: You weren't scooping anything. I thought it was sludge or something like that.

White: Well, everything turns into being a mucker after being around so long.

Dunn: What was a mucker?

White: A mucker usually works underground where he shovels muck.

Dunn: Oh, I see, I see.

White: It might be dry muck or it might be wet.

Dunn: You were above ground, but you were still called a mucker.

White: Yes, yes, part of the labor gang.

Marcello: Obviously, this potash operation was not suffering from the effects of the depression.

White: Oh, no, they had to have it, particularly in the southern states for the tobacco and cotton crops. And that brings up another story.

Dunn: What . . . what the cotton . . . as a fertilizer to them?

White: Well, yes, yes. The big place . . . this was all research I did after I became a member of the union. The big storage place was Atlanta. Most of the potash came out of . . . there were two mines at the time I went to work down there, and most of the potash came out of those two mines. It ended up someway around Atlanta.

Dunn: Was this a very large mine, or there probably weren't very many potash mines.

White: Oh, there was two at that time I went to work, and then there became three not long after that. I think there's about seven or eight out there now. Don't you have an assignment out there?

Dunn: I don't think it came through.

White: Well, anyhow, I was sitting on the catwalk. We were in a briquetting plant . . . well, a little explanation. Potash is laid down just like salt, and there's a lot of salt in there with it. But even after you take the salt out, you don't put it in a warehouse in its loose form because it comes out as wet and slurry. It's dried and it goes into the warehouse. Like salt, it draws water, and it gets just as hard as it ever was. So actually when they were loading it, a lot of times they had to drill holes in it and shoot it off. I've seen them shoot the roof off the warehouse (laughter). Well, the briquetting idea came up due to the fact that one operator of the drying machine, which was hand-fired in those days, built himself a real good chair out of powder boxes and padded it with gunny sacks, and he could go to sleep at night on that night shift. And the fire would get too hot, and the potash would melt and run out on the floor.

And they found out that when they were cleaning up this melted potash, it cracked up into little granules and it didn't stick together. So the briquetting plant was an attempt to put it through mixing mills and down through rolls that make briquettes just like your charcoal briquettes. And then you crack those so you'd have granules. That's how it was set up. Well, it was partially successful.

So I started out running that thing. Now I say running it, I was just one of the operators; and the guy that really should have had the job was my helper because he'd been there quite a long time and he knew more about it than I did (laughter). We're still very good friends.

Dunn: Was there no union there at that time?

White: Yes.

Dunn: Were you in the union, a member of the union?

White: This helper of mine, the fellow I say really should have had the operator's job, was named Johnny Pendergrass. He was a local New Mexico boy. And this operation was on two levels. These big presses, briquetting presses, were down below, and this catwalk went around the mixing mills up above, and then dust gathered beyond that.

So I was up on top watching these mixers, and somebody came around and handed Johnny, who was a member of

the union, a piece of paper. So after I got through checking the mixers, I went down and sat down on the stairway, and Johnny came around and handed me that and said, "What do you think of this?" And I read it over, and I said, "What's this supposed to be?" And he said, "Well, that's our new union contract." I said, "Well, it didn't take long to write it, and they didn't get much, did they?" He said, "No." I said, "Oh, I don't believe I'd care to belong to a union that didn't have any more gumption than to take something like that." He said, "You think you can do any better?" And I said, "If I was a part of the union I'd sure try." He said, "Well, why in the hell don't you join it?" (chuckle) It sounded like a good idea, and I did.

Marcello: Was this a company-type union, a local-type union, or did it have a national affiliation?

White: Very definitely not. You go back to the old IWW days, and you had the mine workers. The IWW, if I'm not wrong in my history, originally was off-shoots of the mine workers. These are hard rock miners. In fact, all the mine workers, even the coal mines, were part of that same general setup. They could never get along because they were two different types of mining. Then

John L. Lewis and others come in and make the coal mine workers into something, and what was left becomes the United Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers. And definitely, they were not company men. They were more "commie" than they were company. I mean the top all except the president. I don't think he ever was, but a lot of the other leadership was.

Dunn: They had the communist leanings?

White: Yes, very definitely communist connections, but . . .

Dunn: Did you know that at the time?

White: No, I didn't. These mines were started as a result of oil prospecting, and they found these thick beds of potash. So U. S. Mining Company put down the first mine, and this was very successful, and then the Potash Company of America was the second to go down. Now these shafts originally were about 750 feet deep. They brought down what were known among themselves as "Finn Fellows" from the iron mining district up in . . .

Dunn: What was that?

White: "Finn Fellows."

Marcello: They must have been of Finnish origin.

White: They were Finnish.

Dunn: Oh, I see.

White: They called themselves "Finn Fellows." Fine people, stubborn as all get out, and they had a union up in the iron mines, and they wanted the union there in Carlsbad. Now they weren't mean. They stuck together. If they liked you, they liked you fine, no matter what origin yours was.

So actually they started the union. Then the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers came in because none of the unions there--the electricians, machinists, and what--would have nothing to do with the common, ordinary laborer, see. So the Mine, Mill comes in and does your . . .

Dunn: Now were those "Finn Fellows" common, ordinary laborers?

White: No, they were expert miners, but the machinists and the electricians and those people wouldn't take them in either because they were miners.

Dunn: I see, I see.

White: They were craftsmen as such.

Marcello: In other words, the machinists and so on probably were affiliated with the AFL.

White: That's right. So someway, somehow, Mine, Mill gets into the picture. And I had made these cracks in my own department to my own helpers, but I joined the union. I'd always been kind of bashful about talking until I got mad down there in that union hall one night. All we had was this little sheet of paper that we'd been working

under. It didn't have a list of the job classifications or nothing about them. I got mad at something, and I jumped up, and I made myself a speech. And those were yearly contracts in those days, and the next thing I knew I was on the bargaining committee. And the next thing I knew I was secretary of the bargaining because I could run a typewriter a little bit. And we had two of these "Finn Fellows," myself, and two guys from underground and another one from on top--that was our committee. And we came out with a pretty good contract, considering what we started with.

And an international representative came into the picture--I can't remember his name anymore--but he was a lawyer by training, education, a union representative by inclination and intent. He sat with us during the negotiations, and one thing I will always remember . . . our plant manager, resident manager, there was a guy by the name of MacGraw, and he sat there all by himself, and there were six, seven, or eight of us on the other side, see.

This international representative of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers came in, and . . . of course, we'd met with him downtown. He went over and he

introduced himself to MacGraw when we went into his office for the meeting, and MacGraw said, "Well, where are you from?" He said, "Well, Salt Lake City, Bingham Canyon." MacGraw said, "Well, I want you to know something." He said, "You know when they had those fences up in Bingham and the guard towers around them, and the guard towers had machine guns in them, and those machine guns were fired? I want you to know I was behind one of those machine guns."

This international representative said, "Well, Mr. MacGraw, let's just end this real quick." He said, "I was in front of your damn machine gun, and now do you want to continue to fight that war?" And this is exactly what he said. "I was in front of your damn machine gun."

So we had pretty good negotiations. MacGraw was really a real nice guy. I think we got seven cents an hour increase, which was good money. I went to work at sixty-five cents an hour, and in a year's time I was making eighty-two cents an hour. You could do all right-- seven days a week.

Dunn: For getting overtime? Did you ever work overtime?

White: Yes.

Dunn: What was that--time and a half to overtime? That was before the wage and hour law.

White: It was before that, but they paid overtime. Yes, if you were held over on another shift . . .

Dunn: Time and a half?

White: Yes. And if you were held over, you got paid. Actually, in 1953 or 1954 those potash miners were the highest paid miners in the world.

Dunn: Well, that sounds like it was still a profitable plant for the depression.

White: It was.

Dunn: Did you live with your . . .

White: I lived with my sister and her husband.

Dunn: With your sister.

White: Yes, I paid room and board.

Dunn: Did you like it there?

White: Oh, I . . .

Dunn: In Carlsbad? Did you live in Carlsbad, the city itself?

White: Yes, yes, I enjoyed it in a way, but I couldn't see the future.

By the way, this may be a good place to stop. In these negotiations I was talking about--that started out with MacGraw talking about being behind the machine guns and the other guy saying he was in front of it--that was the first time I ever met a federal mediator.

Marcello: And this federal mediator probably came as a result of the Wagner Act and so on, which had been passed in '35.

White: Federal Mediation's predecessor originated in 1913. In the organic act which established the Department of Labor. It said that--one sentence--the Secretary of Labor shall have the right to appoint commissioners of conciliation to intervene in industrial disputes. That may be a little off, but that one sentence led to the appointment of federal mediators. So it had a hard go--being in the Department of Labor--in being accepted by the Commerce Department people at first. And that might be a good place to stop this.

Dunn: Good.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: April 18, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello continuing the interviews with Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. This is the second in a series of interviews with Mr. White in order to get his reminiscences and experiences as a labor mediator and conciliator later on in his career.

Now Mr. White, before we continue with where we left off the last time, why don't we kind of pick up some of the loose ends that you want to talk about with regard to the New Deal and your experiences with the WPA and the CCC and what have you when you were still back in Kansas yet. Generally speaking, what was your opinion of the WPA projects that were undertaken in your area? Did you think they were worthwhile projects, or were they boondoggles? What exactly was your opinion of these WPA projects?

Mr. White: Well, really, I think that the word boondoggle . . . the animosity toward some projects grew up more in cities and highly concentrated areas where it was

difficult to find a lot of work that could be done and needed to be done, so they did keep people working by doing some very funny things. But in rural areas I have no memory of a boondoggle as such. In my county we built roads. We built a hospital in a little town which is the county seat, a beautiful park, swimming pool, park buildings, which is a model, and you will not today find a park like it in a town its size. It's still well-kept, still solid.

Marcello: I'll bet some of these things are even still in use today yet, are they not?

White: Oh, very much so. That swimming pool we built was with WPA funding. I don't think it's ever had a crack in it. It was so well-built. It took a long time, all practically done by hand. The concrete was even mixed by hand. But it was a base under it that floats on sand. I'd say it was eighteen inches thick, the sand alone. Then on top of that was rick. So the total structure there must be thirty inches--walls and so forth. It couldn't crack.

Of course, we remember the good things, but I have good memories about what happened with WPA work and workers. Particularly, do I think the CCC program was one of the best that has ever been provided for the youth of the country.

Marcello: In other words, there was a great deal of CCC activity in this area of Kansas?

White: Not only in this area but . . . boys were sent to various places. A lot of the kids from southeast Kansas went to Nevada. It was a complete change for them. They were up there on the highest windswept mountain. It was 4,000 or 5,000 feet high, not a tree and nothing but rocks. So it took them awhile to adjust. But finally they did adjust, most of them. Now these kids were not all just from families of ne'er-do-well's. They were from families who were down on their luck and needed support. The kids . . . part of that money went back to the family.

Marcello: In fact, just about all of it went back to the families.

White: Yes, that's right. And they did some wonderful things.

Marcello: What did they do in your local area? Was there much CCC activity there?

White: There was a CCC camp at Scammon, Kansas. This was a coal mining camp. The town developed around coal mines--Pittsburg, Midway Coal Company. These were deep shaft mines, not strip mines, at that time. There was a camp there, although there was strip mines in the area. The CCC boys developed, I think, probably one of the first state parks to be developed out of an old strip pit area. It was north of Pittsburg, Kansas, from this Scammon camp.

Also, they had the clearing center for all of the boys that were admitted to the CCC camps from southwestern Missouri and southeastern Kansas. So you took them over in groups. You got, say, fifteen or twenty lined up. You got a caravan of cars and took them over. They went through the physical examination and medical facilities at that camp. Then they were assigned to various places.

There might be an interesting thing that happens. This is one of those human things. The CCC, of course, had Army . . . military officers, but their sergeants and corporals and so forth were CCC people. A lot of the technicians were CCC people. In this Scammon camp they had a fairly good-sized Irishman who had been with the CCC camps a couple or three years at the time I knew him. His name was Pat Mahoney. He assigned the work; he did the drilling in that camp. After the morning drills were over and report was made and so forth--very much like an Army cantonment--they were given their work assignments.

Well, not from my county but from a county next to me there was a recruit, a young man, who had spent three years in the Navy. He was the lightweight champion boxer of the Navy in his final year in the Navy. Well, he came back to . . . it was about the same thing he left, only his folks were worse off. So he joined the CCC.

His first assignment by this sergeant was, "John, you go clean out the latrine." The guy says, "I've cleaned latrines. I've cleaned my last one. I won't clean out your latrines." This Irish sergeant says, "I'll meet you down behind the barracks in twenty minutes." "Okay." So they went down there and they had a helluva fight. This happened six mornings in a row. Every morning he'd say, "You go clean out the latrine." The former Navy man would say, "I won't do it."

On the seventh day . . . and this Irishman's face was beginning to look pretty bloody. He looked like butchered beef because this little Navy man would whip him every morning. They got through with their exercises, and sergeant says, "John, go down and clean out that latrine." The old boy says, "I never run into anybody in my life that couldn't be whipped, but you can't. I'll go clean out your latrine." Now this actually happened. This is true.

I think, besides that state park, they did a lot of work around what's now Kansas State College at Pittsburg. It was then Kansas State Teacher's College. They did some on an old stadium they have there . . . had at that time. They built one of the finest tracks--the CCC boys, not WPA--you know, a track in the stadium. It was well-done, and, of course, again, took quite awhile.

Marcello: Incidentally, did you have anything to do with the certification of the CCC people?

White: The welfare department certified all of those people.

Marcello: Was the procedure just about the same in certifying people for WPA as for CCC?

White: Very much.

Marcello: I'm referring now, of course, to the relief of their families.

White: That's right. The first criteria was that they had to be in need.

Marcello: Obviously, there was a certain age qualification that had to be met to get into the CCC.

White: Yes, I can't remember what the minimum age was.

Marcello: I think it was eighteen, wasn't it?

White: I think it was eighteen, and I think the top age was around twenty-five. Sometimes you'd take boys over there, and medically they'd get turned down. Then you did something about it, or you forgot about them. Well, you were in the business of trying to help people, so most of the time we did something about it. *

I had one boy that . . . even the social worker who called at his home thought he was mentally retarded. This kid had a sexual problem physically, not hermaphroditic or transexual or anything of that kind. He was just misformed. Well, I wondered why they had turned

him down at the CCC camp. I didn't happen to take the boys over that day he was examined. So I made a trip over there to find out why because I had seen this kid work. The doctor told me. I went and got him, talked to his folks, talked to him. He had a little operation, a little circumcision, and they took him to the CCC camp. That kid's son is now a doctor, I mean, a medical doctor.

We had gone home to a reunion . . . high school reunion. My wife and I both graduated from the same high school. After the dinner and the speeches and all this that goes on at the reunion, they have a dance out in the American Legion hall. We went out there. A young man tapped me on the back and says, "Aren't you Vic White?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I've been looking for years. I've wanted to thank you for what you did in getting me in the CCC camp." He says, "It's the best thing that ever happened to me. Not only that, but it was good for my twin brother if you will remember him. He's dead now but you made a man out of both of us." He was quite a young man. He became chief of police up at this town of Parsons, Kansas. He did a wonderful job, all due to this training he had in the CCC.

Marcello: Now you certified people for the WPA, and you certified people for the CCC. Did you come in contact or have anything to do with any of the other New Deal relief

agencies that were in existence at this time? I'm referring now to such things as the PWA or something along those . . .

White: Public Works Administration?

Marcello: Yes.

White: Yes, but not to the extent that you did with the WPA and so forth or the CCC. The Public Works Administration is primarily in buildings. They needed craftsmen, skilled craftsmen.

Marcello: That's a good point to make. It is true, is it not, that most of the WPA personnel were unskilled labor.

White: Primarily unskilled labor. This refers back again in a sense to what I said earlier about these old pioneers who had lots of skills. Well, in our area a lot of these people were farm people. Actually, they had a lot of skills although they weren't skilled craftsmen. But they could cut a decent joint. They could drill a hole in a rock. They could pack a black powder shot in it. They knew how to use a pick and shovel and knew how to use a lot of the tools. They could drive a team. They could ride a horse. Anything mostly that you could do on a farm, they could do, nearly all of them even though they might live in the town. But in the cities they didn't have that kind of labor force. It was idle work to draw on. They were either skilled or they weren't.

They had more skilled craftsmen than we did in the rural areas. Was the National Youth Administration in the picture at that time, or was it just getting started?

Marcello: Did you have anything to do with that organization?

White: Again, indirectly. They came to us. They had an office in the regional office of the WPA. They came to us for assistance in the selection of people not only in need but people with basic intelligence because they were training for a higher area, and they wanted to produce people who could teach. They wanted to produce people who could supervise and all of this sort of thing. So they had people that we didn't certify. But they had a lot of people that we did. Indirectly, yes, we had something to do with it.

Marcello: How did you go about certifying these people for the NYA? What procedure was followed here? Do you remember?

White: Not particularly. The WPA and the CCC camps was a daily operation. You were signing your name to a lot of applications along that line. The NYA sometimes turned into a selling job because maybe these people weren't as hard up--the families weren't. They'd had a little better opportunity to learn, so it was a

selling job because . . . maybe they didn't have to go away from home. There were a lot of NYA people assigned to such jobs as local employment offices, particularly girls or boys who had some skill with a typewriter and maybe shorthand. Later down the line I was the Kansas Employment Service employer. I was the manager of the Baxter Springs office and assistant manager of the Kansas City office.

Marcello: This was after you got fired from your job here at the County Welfare Agency?

White: Yes, this was after I had been to Carlsbad, New Mexico, in the mines.

Marcello: I see.

White: Yes, but NYA was still going on, see. We had a secretary in that office who was paid by NYA, and she was good. There just weren't jobs for them. Again, Baxter Springs is in that tri-state mining area, very depressed, and still is in a way. Yes, they were good. I think the CCC was my favorite because it took care of these kids.

Marcello: Let me ask you this question. How much did these New Deal relief agencies mean to the local economy? In other words, how did the local merchants and businessmen benefit from the WPA and the CCC even though they perhaps weren't in the WPA or the CCC? How would they benefit from it?

White: It might have been that my wife's father would not have gone out of business if WPA employment had come quicker in the area. The old small-type of groceryman did business in a rural community on the basis of a six months' credit or a year's credit, depending on what kind of a cash crop was produced by individual farmers. Up there nearly everybody raised some wheat. So this was a more or less yearly thing. There'd be another area where the hogs were sold in the fall. So it might be six months. If those people had been able to sell their stock, sell their wheat, or have a job I think my wife's father might still have been running a grocery store.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying, then, is that these relief agencies gave people money to spend. They would spend it in the local economy.

White: That's right.

Marcello: So even though the small businessman or the small shopkeeper was not directly involved with the WPA or the CCC, he was one of the indirect benefactors as a result of those agencies.

White: Very much so. I think I said the other day that I knew people who swore at the Roosevelt administration for its spending habits and so forth. Yet, they were getting

rich selling heavy machinery to the government for government contractors for the building of buildings on public works projects, WPA.

Marcello: I would also assume that if they . . .

White: They're the ones getting money out of it on the side. That's what it was designed to do, wasn't it?

Marcello: That's correct?

White: Yes.

Marcello: I would assume, also, that a person who had one of these relief jobs was more likely to be able to get credit than somebody who perhaps was employed in some private business. In other words, that government check was a steady thing. It was going to come every two weeks or every month or however they got paid.

White: Well, it wasn't quite that steady.

Marcello: What was the normal length of time that somebody would spend on the WPA for example?

White: I couldn't give you a guess. I don't think there was a normal time. Most of the people were imbued with a Christian work ethic. Most of them wanted to work. They didn't want to be on relief. Now your WPA work assignments depended a great deal on certification, and the certification depended a great deal on the research that a social worker had done on that family. A man with a wife and

four kids, we'll say, all in school, he might get an assignment on a work project for five days a week, where a man with one child in school. . . with one child and a wife might get an assignment of three days. This might be regularly occurring, or it might be every two weeks.

Some of that depended a great deal on the amount of money that was given in grants-in-aid which came down first to the state and then to the counties. The amount of money that the counties got depended upon their ability to furnish their share or their willingness to furnish their share to see that a project would then get a grant-in-aid from the federal government, which was around 90 per cent. That ability of the local government to furnish their share depended a great deal upon the person's knowledge who was making up the project application as to what could be applied as a contribution from the local. . . you furnished a grader on the road. This was estimated as worth so much. This was part of the money that you put into the thing.

Sometimes we'd dig up some funny ones. That's really true. We'd dig up some funny ones in order to get a particular project going. This wasn't political. It was something that needed to be done where there was

a lot of people at work. You worked at it to try to get it done.

We obtained for the welfare office in this larger town of Parsons. . . a building had been built for an automobile agency. That had gone by the way with the people not being able to buy automobiles, so it was vacant. We got that on a lease for one dollar a year. It was a formal lease from the owner. It was an individually owned building. We had this big sewing room in the upstairs. We put in about thirty toilets and new sewer lines in that building. We built an office for the welfare department in the front end where the show part of it had been. A lot of that toilet and sewage disposal area came from gifts from local people who had some of this stuff and didn't know what to do with it and wanted to get it off their place. It was useable. We had more funny-looking toilets up there than you ever saw in your life but they worked (chuckle).

This is part of getting the job done to get the thing going. So we helped out the man. We kept his building occupied. It cost us a dollar a year plus upkeep. We had a place to work which was spacious. We had a place for a WPA project which was one of the best

in the state--that big sewing room. So you did a little conniving to get things done.

Marcello: Now just recapitulating once again, how long were you connected with the county welfare office before you were let go and went on to Carlsbad, New Mexico?

White: I was a county welfare director about an even four years. Prior to that I had worked as a social worker. So it was five years altogether.

Marcello: Now what year was it that you took off for Carlsbad, New Mexico?

White: This was in '36. Wait a minute, in '35, the fall of '35.

Marcello: Okay, so you had moved on to Carlsbad, New Mexico. Like we pointed out the last time, you were working in the potash mines there. It was here where perhaps you had your first contact with this labor mediator as a result of that dispute or difference that arose there in the mines between the management and labor. Pick up the story from that point. I think this is where we ended the last time.

White: Well, I never will forget that situation. I had no more idea what a mediator was than a man in the moon. I was on the bargaining committee.

Marcello: How did you get on the bargaining committee? Why had you been selected?

White: As I mentioned, I got up and made a big speech. I got mad at something that was going on in the union meeting, and I got up and made a big speech (chuckle).

Marcello: That's right. You did mention that. Also, I would assume that you were a little bit more articulate than some of the other people who were working in that mine since you did have a college education.

White: Well, this is the first time. No, I really flunked a course in public speaking in college. I was rather bashful. I mentioned the mass meeting they had with this WPA union where I had to do it or go home and quit. That was my decision. I could talk there. This union meeting. . . I can't remember what I got mad about, but I preached quite a sermon.

The next thing I knew I was on the bargaining committee. It was an interesting thing, and I'll always remember it. Later, I saw where some intelligent person had made this remark, "Never worry about making a speech if you have something to say. You can make it." I realized after that that you can do that sort of thing. Anybody can. All you have to do is have something to say. So I got on the bargaining committee.

Marcello: Were there serious differences between labor and management here at the potash mine? Or were these minor differences that simply had to be ironed out?

White: It goes farther than that. I think I mentioned that the resident manager of the Potash Company of America was a fine person. He knew unions. What his background was, I don't know, but he knew laboring people. He had worked. . . he had a board of directors, of course, who were. . . some of them were in New York and other places--the financial backers. So he had his problems there. Also, as far as wages were concerned in this particular time. . . if you compared the wages there, they were above what you could get in West Texas, except for a rig builder, or most places in New Mexico.

Marcello: Yes, I was amazed when we were speaking the last time of the wages that you received here at the potash mine.

White: But there were other conditions that were difficult. This mine was twenty-three miles from Carlsbad. There was no water. . . all of the water for the. . . fresh water, drinking water. . . where they needed fresh water, it had to be shipped out in tank cars on the railroad spur. A few people had tried to settle in the valley, but they had to haul their water out there. So it wasn't satisfactory. There were only a few.

Now they had a clubhouse at the mine which furnished room and board to bachelor officers and superintendents and so forth if you wanted to stay there. If you were

held over for an additional shift, somebody'd send over there to get you a lunch. Those lunches were terrible. They didn't cost you, but they were terrible. You could hardly eat those sandwiches.

Marcello: It was simply the quality of the food and the way it was cooked?

White: That was one thing. Another thing was that the mining of potash with the deep shaft mines and a matter of extracting the potash from what came with it was rather new. It had evaporation plants and so forth in California and Russia and France. These thick veins of potash that were ten or twelve feet thick in places were discovered, I think I said, through oil exploration. So they had to get that salt out. This company that I worked for was the one which developed the flotation process. Not the process. It'd been used in silver and gold and other things. But they found the catalyst that would float the salt off from the potash, so it was all in liquid. This was soap (chuckle), just plain old soap.

There was dust. Now most of the miners knew about silicosis. I'm talking about the men underground. Some that became miners who came out of West Texas and the plains country didn't. But those "Finn Fellows" did. There was enough of us up on top in the refinery

who knew about it, having worked in other places. We had men there from the copper mines in Arizona. We had one man from this evaporation deal in California here at Carlsbad. But there was dust. We didn't know what would happen.

So these things were more important at the time than increased wages. Plus hours. We were working seven days a week, eight hours a day, changing shifts every two weeks. This will wear you out, particularly a man with a family. Whether once a month had been better or whether staying on the same shift would have been better, I still don't know. But I know that two weeks' change. . . the only thing about it was that every third week you got a long weekend.

So our major points were. . . we asked for a wage increase, of course. But we wanted safety devices, including dust collectors being put where they ought to be put. There were certain dangers in construction being done in certain parts of the plant that we thought something should be done about. There was one pipe across the door that I bumped my head on a hundred times. I was out there twenty years later, and that pipe is still in that door.

Over and above that was complete animosity of the local citizenry against any union.

Marcello: How do you think this animosity developed? I assume this animosity was there before you arrived at Carlsbad?

White: It was there. You'll find the same thing through West Texas, East Texas. You can find it in the rural areas in Iowa, Nebraska. It was one of those things, I think, that causes us to fear blacks--the unknown. They'd heard about unions and the big bad labor union bosses, but they didn't know anything about it. But because they had heard about it, they were afraid, no contact. We couldn't rent a hall; we couldn't get a building to meet in. We were watched everytime we had a meeting. We finally arrived at the conclusion that the place to meet was right out in the open. So there was a little cartage firm that had a small office building about ten foot square, brick, in a vacant lot behind the main bank in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Now this vacant lot was lighted because sometimes he left equipment in there all night.

Marcello: What kind of a firm was this?

White: A little cartage firm, trucking--a little individually owned outfit. He had about four or five trucks. He let us use his office building to keep our records in. He gave us a key to his office building.

Marcello: That almost seems kind of unusual for a businessman to allow a union to use his facilities.

White: Well, I still don't know why. But he was that kind of a guy. I guess he got tired of the other people kicking us around. Well, anyhow, we had that. This lot was lighted, so we began having our meetings right out in the open. We'd see somebody across the street that appeared to be maybe watching us for something other than just what was going on, and we'd go over and invite them to come to the meeting, sit right in with us. We knocked down a little of the animosity that way. We were finally able to rent an old dance hall.

Marcello: So you think that many of these local people more or less associated unionism with socialism or communism or something worse?

White: Well, I think. . . you know. . . Carlsbad was a tourist area. It's also rather. . . not so much now as it was earlier, but it was a health resort. They changed the name from Loving to Carlsbad because the little spring was out on the Pecos River that had water like Carlsbad, Germany, which was a spa. And it's a quite healthful country if you can stand it when the dust blows. I think it was a conglomerate of people who, in a way, reacted very much the same as Denton people, old-timers reacted, when they wanted to put in one-way streets here. Again, I think it goes back to this thing of fear of the unknown. Well, we tried to be responsible people. These "Finn Fellows" were responsible workers. They'd

go on strike, but they didn't want to strike. But they did want a contract, and they wanted some safety.

Marcello: How strong was this union at the plant?

White: The craftsmen were organized, and they had contracts. That's the machinists. They had a big machine shop there because they had to do their own work.

Marcello: And, of course, they would have been affiliated with the AFL.

White: Right. And the electricians were organized. This brother-in-law of mine who was an electrical engineer for the underground was also a qualified electrician and had belonged to the electricians union up until he came to this country. He was also a big league ball player. But he was a qualified electrician. He served his apprenticeship at Bethlehem Steel. Being as you're from Pennsylvania, you might know where the plant was.

Marcello: I probably would.

White: But I was worried about my affiliation with the union there because of his position, and my sister. . . she wasn't teaching at the time, but she had been a teacher in the public schools and might have to go back some day, you know. So I talked with them before I ever took that officer's job. Bob, the brother-in-law, said, "Well, go ahead. If I can't make it on my qualifications, I don't deserve to be the engineer out there anyhow."

Marcello: Now by this time they legally couldn't fire you for union activities since the Wagner Act and all of this sort of thing had been passed by this time.

White: It just came in. It hadn't been tried too much. There was not much knowledge of it. In fact, we didn't know anything about it in Carlsbad, not locally.

Marcello: How much animosity was there between the union and the company? In other words, did the union leaders simply dislike and detest the people in management? Was there that sort of animosity between the two groups?

White: At my time out there, no. We actually, I believe, had more animosity between non-union workers who didn't want to be union and those who did.

I sat in two contract negotiations out there. In the second time I had to carry the lead. I was the financial secretary, which was the business operation of the local. We'd grown. We had approximately two-thirds of the employees who were outside of these other crafts by that time, which was a pretty good majority to work with.

In the second year we got a contract that our membership insisted on, which was almost a straight seniority, which I didn't believe in because it won't work. But that's what they wanted. It's democracy. This was the demand, and we got almost straight seniority.

It had some qualifications in it, but not too much.

This was one of the things that made me decide to quit there because I didn't want to turn into a rabble-rouser. I don't mean all labor leaders are rabble-rousers. I'd started doing a little organizing. I'd been up to Borger to try to organize those carbon black plants up there. Boy, talk about a rugged town! Borger was rugged in those days.

Marcello: When did you go up to Borger?

White: Oh. . . what year? Somewhere in '36, early in the spring. It was quite rainy. There was chuckholes in the street. There was some old boardwalks still there. You could almost lose a car in some of those chuckholes. It was an oil town.

Marcello: This sounds like an interesting story, and I think we need to get back to this in a minute, but let's finish up here in talking about your experiences in these negotiations at the potash mine.

White: I'm sorry. I digressed.

Marcello: That's okay.

White: I was trying to make a point that I decided, no matter what the details were, that I shouldn't stay there. Also, there was the fact that I couldn't see much beyond for me besides being a . . . possibly if I could make it, a shift foreman there at that time.

Marcello: As a union leader did the company ever try to discriminate

against you here at the potash mine.

White: No, definitely not. In fact, when I quit I told the superintendent on the day shift that I was going to quit as of a certain date. I had a week's vacation coming at that time. We did have a week's vacation for a year's service. Well, the manager, Mr. MacGraw, then called me up to the office and asked me not to quit. I said, "I don't feel that I'm getting anyplace here. I can't see beyond a certain place." He said, "Well, right at the moment I can't promise you anything, but we have a place for you." Well, I'd made up my mind to quit. Besides that, my girlfriend who I was engaged to was in Washington, and she wouldn't come to Carlsbad (chuckle). So, no, there was no definite animosity between the union and the management there. Argue, yes. Grievances, some of them were silly.

Marcello: In other words, it never got to the point of violence, that is, physical violence.

White: Oh, no. In fact, I had dinner in Mr. MacGraw's home two or three times while I was an officer in the union out there.

Marcello: How large was this union in terms of members?

White: There was about 300 employees total, and I'd say sixty of those were skilled. When I say total I'm not talking about office or white collar workers. Sixty of those were in the crafts. We had a good two-thirds of the

balance. That would make . . . oh, we had a membership of around 175 when I left there. The other two mines . . . there was another one there by this time. U.S. Potash the first one down, then Potash Company of America, and then, oh, Mineral Chemical Company. It changed its name. It was the third mine. Those other two weren't organized except for the crafts, so we were fighting the battle all by ourselves.

Marcello: Now during these labor-management disputes here at Carlsbad, were you receiving any assistance or aid from the national organization?

White: Of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers?

Marcello: Yes.

White: Very little until this second negotiation in which I was engaged. Then an international representative came in. I think I told you he was a lawyer by education and a union representative by choice. I suppose he was a socialist. He came in and was there approximately three or four days in the last part of our negotiations. This was the time we worked out this contract where the company gave quite a seniority clause. This was the time when he called for a mediator. I didn't even know there was such a thing. The man that came in--I later worked with him--was Frank Ashe.

Marcello: And this is the man that we were talking about in the last interview with whom you were quite impressed.

White: Quite impressed.

Marcello: In other words, there was no mediator that came in during the first round of negotiations in which you participated.

White: I didn't even know what a mediator was.

Marcello: Incidentally, I gather that first dispute was ironed out rather satisfactorily for everybody involved.

White: Well, no, or we wouldn't have been back the next year. It was ironed out to the best of our ability to determine how far we could go, and we weren't strong enough to strike that first year. We possibly could have pulled a strike, but it wouldn't have lasted too long.

Marcello: Did the strength of the union grow between the first year and the second year?

White: Very much, and not entirely due to me. It was almost entirely due to some few changes we got which benefited a lot of people, and not necessarily money although we got a little money. But the safety conditions were improved. For instance, in this briquetting place there was always a lot of dust. That was my own particular bailwick. In the afternoons when the sun was shining through the windows, you could hardly see through those shafts of sunlight because of the dust

pa-ticles in the air. Now we had face masks. It's awful hard to get an employee to wear a protective device, so we got a dust collector put in there. They worked at it. They did a good job. The management kept their word, so finally we had pretty clear air in there. It pulled all of this dust off of the places where it was occurring. That sort of thing helped develop the strength of the union as far as membership was concerned.

Marcello: Now by this time, between the first round of negotiations and the second round of negotiations, had you become a definite officer in the local union?

White: Oh, yes, I was . . . somewhere around three months after the first negotiations when I was on the bargaining committee . . . somewhere around three months later-- maybe it was four--there was the union election. Well, the man who was financial secretary had taken a job in South America. He recommended that I succeed him. So I became financial secretary and business agent. Now this was an unpaid job. You worked seven days a week. After the National Recovery Act came in, they cut the hours down. What . . . no, that was after another law that cut the hours down, and then, why, you could get a Sunday off.

Marcello: I guess that was the Wages and Hours legislation that

came in around 1938 or something like that, wasn't it?

White: Well, this was earlier than that. I can't remember exactly what affected it. But, anyhow, the company . . . this was a progressive company. They probably saw this coming down the line, so they started changing shifts.

Marcello: Incidentally, how much . . .

White: You know, there's something funny there. They announced that they'd cut this down so we'd have at least one day a week off. So we sat down and figured how many more people they were going to have to hire to do that. We figured every way under the sun. You know, they did that and they laid off three people (laughter). And, it worked alright.

But I had become financial secretary, which at that time was an unpaid job. That thing developed into quite a job when they finally got all of the mines organized there. It was a full-time paid job paid on the basis of the superintendent's salary.

The man also ran the cooperative grocery. He also was the editor of the union paper, which every employee belonged to the union had to buy. So he was making a real good salary. He was a young man by the name of Smotherman. He had two years at Texas Tech. He was a big, blond, nice-looking guy, very presentable, quiet.

This was years later. We'll come to that when it developed to that extent. But at the time I was there you devoted your own time, money, expenses. Of course, I was single. I didn't have a family to look after. All I had to do was make car payments.

Marcello: I have a couple of questions here, also, with regard to some more union activity. What sort of animosity existed? That's a leading question. Let me rephrase it. What sort of relationship existed between the union workers and the non-union workers here at the potash mine?

White: This was more of a problem than getting along with management was. We had particularly one man on the shift on which I worked. Now he was an experienced miner both underground and above ground. He was probably ten years older than I. He weighed about as much as I did but wasn't quite as tall. On the afternoon shift from four o'clock to twelve o'clock or from . . . on the graveyard shift from twelve o'clock to eight o'clock, he was operator over in another section. But he'd leave his helper running his operation. I'd become financial secretary by this time. I finally told him, "Well, Parker, we don't care whether you belong to the union or not. We have a majority. We

have some bargaining strength, and you're not going to hurt us. But I'm going to hurt you if you don't stay away." He said, "How are you going to do that?" I said, "I'm going to tell the superintendent about your running over here every night." I said, "I'm not going to hit you." He believed me. He didn't come over there no more (chuckle). I would have because I believed in putting out a day's work, doing as good a job as I knew how. Well, he was a good worker and knew his job, and he wasn't hurting anything by being away from there for a while. But you just don't go off and leave an operation of that kind for very long, not if you're responsible for it. So I knew that would hurt him.

There were other individuals that weren't quite the man that Parker was that would stand up and face you. You'd hear tales--part of them rumor, part of them fact--of things that they'd repeated to the management. In fact, management would often come check with you. So you always have a nucleus of unsatisfied people in any kind of an organization that might be formed for the purpose of getting something done. I guess if you are not leader enough to let those people talk, they're more likely to talk than the solid, quiet individual. If you let them talk to your detriment, they will

eventually take over and eliminate. . . in other words, I think I'm trying to say that probably most of our good leaders were . . . like Roosevelt, were people who got things done. Maybe sometimes they skirted the edge of the law and so forth, but you got something done which pleased most of the people.

They were a good group of people working in that mine. The nucleus of that union, as I've said before, was these Finns from the North. They were good, solid people. If they were your friend, they were your friend. If they were your enemy, they didn't want anything to do with you.

Marcello: It probably rankled the union members when these non-union members were getting the same benefits as the union members without having to pay dues and all of this sort of thing.

White: That always is true. Yes, that always is true. Also, I think, it rankled some of them because they knew nothing about my background, whether I had ever done this kind of work before or not. I jumped over a lot of people in seniority when I made that first move from the clean-up gang, the bull gang, to an operator. This was the third top operating job in the plant. There

were just two that made a little bit more money than I did. So I think this rankled people, and I don't blame them because some of them . . . as I said, my own helper was probably better qualified to handle the job than I was. He was a boy with two years of college. So he eventually went into a business of his own and became quite well-fixed, not wealthy but well-fixed. You know he had to have something on the ball.

Yes, you have those things. Those things are still true. Another thing that hurts an organization of that kind is the constant changing of officers.

Marcello: A lack of continuity.

White: A lack of continuity. Now where the continuity does exist. . . like in the Teamsters Union with Jimmy Hoffa. Then you become a czar in the public's opinion. If you're kicked out you're no good. If you're voted . . . you might be voted out for most any reason, but if you build a political organization within your own group so that you stay there, then you're a czar. This is what they're saying about George Meany. Those things exist all over the place.

That's one of the troubles that a mediator might have where they've got a succession of one-year contracts or maybe even in our present things where there's a three-year contract. You've got a committee to work

with you. You go in three years later and they've all changed, so you have to do it all over again (chuckle).

Marcello: Was there ever any discrimination by the company in terms of promotion against those people who were active in the union?

White: Not to my knowledge. Certainly there wasn't against me.

Marcello: Yes, I was thinking about your case in particular, and, of course, you mentioned that you did make some rather rapid strides here.

White: No, definitely there wasn't against me. This helper of mine was one of the most active union members. He continued to work there for quite awhile after I left. He rose to a supervisor position. He was still active in the union till he had to get out because of the law which prohibited the foremen from being members of the same union. No, I can say that very truthfully with the resident manager there--Mr. MacGraw and the man that followed him, a fellow by the name of Brown--I don't think there was any discrimination. There was a place of discrimination, though. They only had one Mexican-American employed in the entire setup. He was well-liked, worked underground, but he was the only one. There's a lot of Mexican-American people out there. I don't know why that ever occurred. I asked questions. I never

pursued it. I suppose I could have raised some Cain and got myself kicked out of Carlsbad.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that between the . . .

White: And there wasn't a colored. . . not a black.

Marcello: Were there very many blacks in that area?

White: Not too many, but there were some.

Marcello: How great an issue was this discrimination against Mexican-Americans so far as the union was concerned? In your list of priorities, where did it rank?

White: It was no issue at all, not at that time. We'd sometimes comment about it, but we didn't know why and didn't pursue it. It was just, I think, just one of those things that never quite sunk in. Now down at the U.S. Potash mine they hired quite a number of Mexican-Americans but no blacks.

Marcello: This brings up a couple more questions with regard to union activities in this area. How did you go about organizing the workers in those other mines? You mentioned that by the time you left Carlsbad the other two mines were also organized.

White: We had individuals. This is often the way it occurred, even today. You have individuals who become unhappy, dissatisfied, discriminated against, whatever might be the cause that brings about their feeling that something

ought to be done. They make . . . generally will make a first move. Somebody will say, "Well, why don't you call such-and-such, a union representative who lives in such a town or regional office or someplace?" They get hold of some information. They write a letter, or they go personally. They ask for an organizer to come in. That's what happened with the mines there. The U.S. Potash people were not organized, and they were the first mine there. Again, they weren't a bad company. Eastern financing, again, also was present. But they weren't a bad company. Part of that came about by the lack of immediate, plentiful labor supply. They began to come to us because of the fact that we'd made some gains in seniority and made some gains in safety and so forth. Individuals began to come to us, so we set up a meeting for them. I think at that first meeting we had twenty-three people from the U.S. Potash.

Marcello: In other words, the example of what had been accomplished in your mine convinced or influenced the decision of workers in those other mines to form a union or to join a union.

White: I think very definitely that was . . . I think that's so often the case, that people become dissatisfied with what they have or what they think the other guy has that they don't have. Well, okay, they've got a union. They got

it through this union, so let's form one.

Marcello: How difficult was it to organize the workers in these other mines? In other words, you said awhile ago that U.S. Potash, for example, employed a great many Mexican-American laborers. Now was it more difficult to organize these people than, let's say, Anglos?

White: Yes, but we had a little break there. There was three of us who were active in the union. There was myself and our secretary. . . no, there was four, this helper of mine. I can't remember who the other guy was. But there was a big cotton gin--one of the biggest in the country--down at a little town south of Carlsbad. In fact, that was about all of the town. But the Pecos Valley raised cotton they were very proud of. It was long staple cotton that they compared to that raised in the Nile Valley. I guess they had a good comparison. I don't know much about cotton. In season they had around 180 to 200 employees around that place. The majority were seasonal workers and unhappy. The rest of the time they were doing what they could. They came and asked us to help them. We went down and they were pretty easy to get into a group and get their names signed on a dotted line. Then we went to the management of that cotton gin and asked for recognition of the union. At

first, it was refused. They didn't even want to meet with us after they found out what we were doing. Now these were mostly colored. . . blacks and Mexican-Americans. One of these boys spoke Spanish fairly well--one of the four--so he could talk to the Spanish-American people in their own language so that they could understand what was going on. Boy, did they stick together! We went down one day after we had a meeting with the union people the night before and again asked for recognition and a meeting.

Marcello: Now these people would not have been affiliated with your particular union in any way, shape, or form, would they have?

White: They were for awhile, yes. There was nobody else who would take them in.

Marcello: In other words, these cotton pickers, for want of a better word, and gin workers actually became part of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers.

White: Right, and paid dues to Local 415. I saw the UAW have a garment factory once. Those things happen.

Marcello: In other words, the point you're trying to make is that because of your success and willingness to help these people working in this cotton producing area, word got passed back to the other Mexican-Americans and so on at U.S. Potash.

White: That's right, U.S. Potash. Well, it was a funny thing. After we had this meeting the night before. . . and we had most of those 180 people in this meeting. It was out in the timber on the Pecos River because, again, you couldn't find a meeting place. We got it all made up, and they understood it. We were going to ask. . . at a certain time we'd appear at the office, and they could see that office from all three of those buildings of that cotton gin. They had one part which was still steam operated, so they had a steam whistle that they always blew for noontime and starting time and quitting time. One of our people there at that meeting was the guy that pulled the whistle. We had it made up that we'd ask, and if the company turned us down as far as recognition and a meeting was concerned, well, one of us would come to the door of the office and whistle. This guy'd blow the whistle, and out they'd come. Now they understood that they were just going to come out, not a strike. That's exactly what happened. When the management saw those 180 people come out there when all we had to do was whistle, well, they sat down and we worked out a contract.

Marcello: Now I assume that you were organizing these people at the peak of the cotton picking season. . .

White: . . . that's right.

Marcello: . . . when the company would have been most vulnerable.

White: That's right. We negotiated another contract, then, the second year. I understand that that was the last contract negotiated in that cotton gin. Conditions were improved. The company accepted. . . they still didn't like unions. They still didn't like to have to do anything, but they did improve the conditions. They kept on a certain number of people who they assured of having steady jobs the year around. Then, of course, they had to hire itinerant people during the busy season. There's no contract down there and practically no gin now.

Marcello: Now by this time there had been a substantial amount of New Deal labor legislation passed, including the Wagner Act and a few other pieces of legislation. How did this influence the organizing activities in this area, whether it be among the workers in the potash mines or the workers here at the gin or wherever?

White: Frankly, we knew very little about it. We had no legal assistance. We read the papers. What we read in the papers was about all we knew. There had been no cases processed that were printed where we read them.

Marcello: In other words, this was all local initiative.

White: It had to be because that's pretty isolated country out there even though there were an awful lot of tourists. But that type of industry, the massive type of industry,

those three big potash mines with a lot of product going out, was new. It completely changed the attitude of the town eventually. They became very dependent of the payroll of the potash industry. They've been hurt terribly since the potash industry has gone down. You can see the difference. But at that time it was on the upswing.

Marcello: During all of your organizing activities in this area, was there ever any violence? You mentioned that there certainly was a great deal of animosity or hostility on the part of townspeople towards unions. Did the hostility or animosity ever turn to violence?

White: Not at the time I was there. No, as I say, the "Finn Fellows" were the backbone of the union. They were experienced, although they were quiet. They didn't want violence. What they wanted was good working conditions and peace. They had a way of letting people, even outsiders. . . I'm talking of outsiders outside of the Finn group that were talking radical about any violence or so forth. They had a way of letting them know: "No, we don't do that. We'll work it out."

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that in your second year here at the potash mines you had to back to the bargaining table again.

White: Yes.

Marcello: Again, I would assume that the company had not carried out all of the agreements and what have you that had been reached in that first session.

White: No, that assumption would be wrong. The company. . . this was an honest company. We had some good foremen. We had a real good superintendent--the man directly in charge of the operation. Mr. MacGraw, as I said before many, many times, was a fine person. No, they'd have it carried out. But to go back to the words of Sam Gompers when somebody asked him what organized labor wanted, it was one word: "More." After we got something we wanted more. This time we were after wages. I believe at that time we got this seven cents an hour increase which was a pretty good increase. We still had a depression going on.

Marcello: But this was the major issue in that second round of bargaining.

White: I think so because we had this seniority thing pretty well worked out.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, the company was adamant enough that you did call in a mediator.

White: Yes, in this second negotiation.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the point. I think this is probably a pretty interesting. . . well, in fact, I think it's

important to your career as a labor mediator and conciliator.

White: Well, from my end of it, very much so. These things I'm going to say about Frank Ashe, I learned later. As I say, I worked with him right here in Dallas. Of course, in those days he was quite a lot younger. Frank was one of the early commissioners as I know commissioners. Now this is the old U.S. Conciliation Service. He went to work, I believe, for the director previous to Dr. Steelman. Dr. Steelman was the second director. The first mediators were appointed while George Wilson was Secretary of Labor. I can't . . . Kerwin, Hugh Kerwin, was the first director of the Conciliation Service. I never knew him. He was a fine person from all I've heard and did a good job. They were in the Department of Labor, which had a direct animosity with the Department of Commerce and with industry, thinking they had to be partial to labor. So this had to be overcome so people would get admittance and so that they could do a job of mediation. Frank Ashe, as I said. . . a lot of this I learned later. He did a job. . . this is the first time that I had sat in any kind of negotiations where there were times where you were negotiating and you weren't face-to-face with the adversary. There was the separation process, the carrying of proposals back

and forth, and sticking your neck out and making proposals that the other side hadn't made--feelers. You went on a fishing expedition. I didn't know this was going on. I knew this later on, see. We were separated and he was going back and forth.

Marcello: Who was in on this process? Now was it you and Ashe? Was the national representative from the union here?

White: International representative. . . he was the guy that called in the mediator. He was the only one that knew anything about mediators. He knew Frank Ashe personally from having worked with him before. He guided us. When we were a little irate at being separated, he told us why. When the commissioner had come into our room where we were separated, you could tell he was on a fishing expedition. Even I could tell that, not having any experience at that time with those people. After he had gone back to the other side, the international representative would tell you what was going on. So we accepted it. We said, "Okay, we can't get together with them. Maybe he can. Or maybe he can bring something that we can accept." We knew that we had some fat in our proposal that could be cut out, see. We knew that and the international representative probably knew we had

more fat there than we knew. So I was quite impressed. I think it took us three days after Frank Ashe got there to get a signature on a contract.

Marcello: What was it about Ashe that impressed you?

White: Well, I guess part of it was what I learned later. Frank Ashe was an ordained minister. He's the only man I ever saw in my life who would walk into a bar and sit down and order six beers opened and set them in front of him at the same time. Maybe he wasn't telling you everything, but he was honest in what he was telling you. He wasn't lying to you. He was able to impress the management in the same way. By doing this and building a trust in him, he came back finally, and I can't remember details, but he said, "I believe we can settle this on this basis: "You guys drop this and this and this. We'll talk about these three things. I'll see if we can get management to drop these things." Something like that. Well, he had it in his pocket then, but we didn't know it, see. He had to get us to move. So we moved. We trusted him by that time, went along with his suggestion. It wasn't very long till he came back and said, "Well, you've got an agreement. Let's write it down." It made things a lot easier.

There's another saying that . . . a mine worker representative used this expression once. He said, "Calling in a mediator is kind of like going to the zoo and feeding the lions. If you walk into the cage with that chunk of meat in your hands, you're liable to get mauled. But that mediator can stand outside and jab at you with a stick through the bars, and neither side can touch him."

Marcello: Theoretically, of course, the mediator is to act as a neutral between labor and management.

White: Well, one of the things they hold up is that he is impartial. You can't always be impartial. There are things that are right; there are things that are wrong. One side can be as wrong or right as the other side. You have to tell them if you have the courage and sincere belief that these things are wrong or your knowledge or background lets you know that you're wrong. You have to take partial position in some instances.

Like this thing with that straight seniority, I don't believe in it. They used to refer to railroad seniority. Now some of these boys down there had heard of railroad seniority. They thought that because you've been there five years and you were next in line on the

basis of seniority that the next time a conductor's job came open, you got the conductor's job. It never was true. Well, I knew that, having two uncles working for the railroad, or did work for the railroad, who were both union men. You had the right because of that seniority to prove yourself able to handle a job, which you did on your own time. In other words, you furnished the railroad your own time for a training period, which is alright. It just keeps you away from home a lot.

So I tried to explain this thing, but it was difficult because people wanted that seniority so bad. They wanted the chance to advance. We all do that. So it was hard to convince them that they'd have to prove their worth.

Marcello: Of course, I'm sure they also wanted seniority because they figured that if unemployment did become a fact of life at the potash mines those with the longest amount of time there would be the last ones laid off.

White: Sure, security. This is one of the things probably that people of my generation were affected so much by in those depression days--this thing of security. I know men my age, men in my own high school class, a couple of them, who apparently--I think probably their families

were harder up than mine was during our formative years of high school and college--gambled. I guess you'd call it gambling. Everybody that makes a financial success has to gamble. Both of them became quite wealthy. Neither one of them went as far in school as I did, but they went out and took a chance. I didn't. That way I quit jobs which paid better money to go to some job where I might learn something that I wanted to know. I wanted security. Well, I got security. These other guys also got security, but there was also others that failed. I think that's one of the effects that the depression had.

Like my late marriage. We weren't raised, you know, to get married and sluff it off in a year just because you got mad at the wife or the wife got mad at you. You said your vows, and you meant them. It was an obligation to make it work. So it was a long time before I felt like I could support a wife.

Marcello: How long were you at the potash mines before you moved on?

White: Surprisingly, I was there about nineteen months. That doesn't sound very long.

Marcello: A lot happened during those nineteen months.

White: A lot of things happened.

Marcello: Now where did you . . . and I assume you left the potash mines shortly after this second round of negotiations.

White: Yes, what actually had happened. . . I think I mentioned that I'd become a little dissatisfied. I didn't want to be a rabble-rouser. I couldn't see in the company the kind of position that I wanted, and I kind of wanted to get back among old friends, I guess. But before going to Carlsbad, New Mexico, I had taken three examinations with the Kansas Employment Service. I had been notified once that I could have an appointment with so-and-so. I was happy with what I was doing. I was excited at the time, so I turned that one down.

Then when this second contract was negotiated and I was feeling that maybe I shouldn't stay there, I called the Employment Service in Kansas. They were having a verbal interview in Dodge City, Kansas. The verbal interview dates were set for the dates where my long weekend would come up on the shift change. They said they'd be glad to see me there. So when I got off shift I got in my car. I drove to Dodge City. I hadn't slept. I got off at midnight, drove into Dodge City, had a meeting with these people. I could hardly keep my eyes open.

About two weeks later I got a letter from them offering me a job. Well, this is the place where I took quite a little cut in money. But that time I had the idea I'd like to try to get the experience to get a job as a mediator. I still didn't know much about it, but I had talked to Frank Ashe a little bit. The Employment Service seemed to be an opening in not money but in other things that I wanted to do, so I went to work for the Kansas Employment Service.

Marcello: Now at this point I want to interject something here. When did this experience at Borger come up? Was this prior to your going back to Kansas?

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Was this somewhere between the first round of negotiations and the second round of negotiations at Carlsbad?

White: Yes. As I remember it, it was about three or four months . . . we had organized this thing down at . . . this was accidental down at the cotton gin. We set out at Borger intentionally.

Marcello: How far was Borger from Carlsbad?

White: Oh, good Lord! Across that desert it seemed to me like a thousand miles. It wasn't. It's about, what, three or four hundred miles?

Marcello: I suppose.

White: I think so. It'd be about three or four hundred miles.

We had had some requests. I mean these were diverted from other people down to us. It wasn't too far-fetched from the international. The international would have been willing if there was any interest shown to send in paid people to organize this. Quite a number of people . . . there was three or four carbon black plants there at that time.

Marcello: And they would have come under the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers.

White: Yes.

Marcello: This had nothing at all to do with the oil workers.

White: No, although oil workers and everybody else tried to organize them--half-tried. No, we went up there pretty much on our own due to the information. We had a couple of contacts.

Marcello: What was the situation up there? Was it mainly one of wanting better working conditions, also?

White: Well, have you ever been around a carbon black plant?

Marcello: No, but I can imagine what it must be like.

White: Boy, it's something! Even the best of them were terrible. At that time these were gas carbon black plants. There's two kinds--your gas and your oil. Where they burn the oil the smoke collects, and the carbon out of the smoke

No, you know, I don't think I'd even want to go back to try to organize those carbon black plants the way they were then. I had enough of Borger.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you receive when you got to Borger, let's say, from those who were opposed to the unionization of those carbon black workers?

White: Most of them didn't want anything to do with the union. It was a very small group that wanted it. No encouragement.

Marcello: Any violence?

White: No violence. No, we weren't looking for trouble. We weren't radical in the sense of being rabble-rousers. Politically, we were pretty sound, I guess. It began to seep in at that particular time, but I never formed the words for it until I had left the employment Service and had been with the Federal Mediation Service through World War II. I came to Texas and started work in West Texas, and I finally developed the word for it. You see the same thing, somewhat, in Iowa, Nebraska, throughout our middle west here. First, our people are not shop hands.

Marcello: Now what do you mean when you say they're not shop hands?

White: It's new in this area to be an industrial community even though now most of the dollars in Texas come from industry

and not from agriculture. It used to be the other way around. When I first started working down here, it was pretty much the other way around, although industry was closing in on them. They were not shop hands in the first place, meaning in that sense they were independent. Most of them had come from an agricultural development. Maybe they didn't live directly on the farm, but they came from small towns where workers. . . as a boy they did a lot of farm work in the summertime. Some of them had small plots of land in which they were . . . maybe they had a lease with an oil company but no development. They were still expecting to get rich off an oil lease, which made them more independent.

So I started using this word to satisfy myself that these people have an agrarian mind. They're not shop hands. They are not used to banding together to get a certain thing done. They are not used to accepting daily leadership from union leaders, either elected or otherwise.

So that fit very well in with management. Management wasn't either. They still aren't in West Texas. It's still pretty independent out there. The expectation of getting rich quick on my little ten-acre oil patch is disappearing. The people who are the first generation of those ranchers and farmers and so forth throughout

Texas, they're still pretty independent people in the same kind of thinking. But the third generation, like my sons would be, have changed their mind quite a bit. They're more outspoken, and they're more easily organized into a group for one purpose. So it's changing, I think.

Marcello: This is jumping ahead a little bit, but what you're saying in effect is that we can perhaps see more unionization occurring in Texas as the years go by and as we get away from this agrarian mind, as you call it.

White: I would think so. Well, we're seeing it in a way--still jumping ahead--in the organization of these cattlemen, your milk people.

By the way, I was very happy to see John Connally exonerated for . . . I couldn't see that man . . . I'll tell you a story about him later.

Marcello: Yes, I think we do want to get into to talk about Connally later. Okay, so you leave Carlsbad. I would assume that the experience that you were acquiring at the potash mine with your labor activities and then later on with the Kansas Employment Service was good training for your future career. There were some things that you were learning here that probably would help you later on.

White: Well, definitely the experience both . . . even back of that as county welfare director.

Marcello: Sure.

White: In the matter of administration. Not that it necessarily helped me as a mediator in the future, but I knew something about what the administrators had to put up with. With the Kansas Employment Service. . . in Kansas. . . I don't know how it is set up in other states as such. In Kansas, the Kansas Employment Service is a subsidiary to the Unemployment Compensation Commission. Actually, the director of the Unemployment Compensation Commission was the chief of both organizations, although the employment service had a director, also. Unfortunately, he was a political appointment, our direct boss. . . handsome, young fellow who didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain.

Marcello: You mentioned that he was a political appointment. Did Kansas still have an Republican administration?

White: Yes, but the particular appointment was forthcoming by somebody in the federal . . . it might have been a senator from Kansas. I know it wasn't Senator Carlson, who was a Republican but a pretty square shooter, a darn square shooter.

Marcello: What sort of job were you taking there with the Kansas Employment Commission?

White: Well, I had taken three examinations--junior interviewer, senior interviewer, and field supervisor, which was somewhat of a regional director sort of a guy that had supervision over several city offices. In adverse order, on the examination I ranked one, two, and three in the state--number one on the junior, number two on the senior, and number three on the field advisor. Well, I mentioned I was proferred a job while I was still at Carlsbad, but I wasn't ready to move from there. I hadn't quite made up my mind. So this particular time, the job offer came through as a senior interviewer classification. Senior interviewers were used as managers.

After a couple of weeks of orientation in Topeka, Kansas, where the state office was and about a week in Wichita, Kansas, which was one of the larger offices in Kansas, I was sent down to Baxter Springs, Kansas. A building had been rented, an old store building. I had to draw the plans for an operating office, arrange for the flow of traffic that we might have, gather two employees from National Youth Administration. . . and we had two others who were regular employees. I'm talking about clerical help. Then we had the supervisor of the

unemployment compensation end of the business. Out in the field, the manager of the employment service office was chief of the entire outfit. In Topeka it was the other way around. So we got that office set up, and help came in.

This is in the tri-state mining area. People were making claims for unemployment compensation . . . this was one of the earlier problems which was partly solved by the problem that came up there. People came in. They had worked in Oklahoma, Missouri, and Kansas in the same industry. At that time there was no conversation between the states, no flow of information. Due to help . . . I don't know who originally had the idea. The manager of the Missouri Employment Office in Miami, the three of us got together, and on an informal basis started exchanging information for these applicants that were coming from each state with part of their earnings in different places. How do we work this out?

Marcello: This was an itinerant population, then. They would move from job-to-job in the tri-state area?

White: Not as far as home was concerned, but as far as job was concerned, yes. They might be working in a mine or an ore reduction plant in Missouri. The job would play out,

and they might go to Oklahoma with the same company even. But their earnings were reported in these various states. Then, of course, on top of that you had people who were making application. Say they'd worked in New York, but their home was there. So they came home. They were out of a job. These were easily handled, but not these where there were maybe six or seven different jobs in three different states. So we all wrote the same kind of letters to our chiefs and so forth. I think this was the earliest place where they worked out a reciprocity among the states because of this peculiar setup in that tri-state area.

There was also another situation that arose. Now the compensation man . . . I say he was under the manager who was an Employment Service man. But normally he handled all of the unemployment compensation claims. The Employment Service man was out looking for jobs for people and interviewing and making public contacts and this sort of thing. Well, I had worked in those mines a little, and in coal. I knew a little bit about a miner's thinking. This man we had down there, his background was strictly clerical, strictly lumberyard. His education was in accounting. He had two years of business college. He had no work experience outside of the

lumberyard. So people would come in . . . they'd work, say, six months Eagle Pitcher. You had to ask them why they were unemployed. The law restricted payment to people who had quit or got fired for just cause and that sort of thing at that time. If they had answered that question of "Why are you not employed now" or "Why'd you leave that job?" by saying, "Well, I quit," that was the end of it with him. That was the law as he read it.

But there was always a little something else in the law that if you look for you can find. So he and I got into quite an argument. We almost got so we didn't like each other. I said, "Listen, these people work in these various places. If you inquire a little farther, you'll find that most of them have a small farm. Maybe it's only an acre or an acre and a half. Maybe it's half a section. But they are two things. Primarily, they are miners--miners first. Second, they're farmers. A lot of times this guy quits a job to go harvest his wheat crop. I said, "This is legitimate. Why don't you find out?"

Well, finally we took one of those cases to court. The court ruled that this was a legitimate excuse. So that thing has broadened out to where a person was no longer penalized because he quit to do something else.

Even if you had quit to take care of your mother with cancer in her last days, this guy would have ruled you out. But this is a legitimate cause for quitting a job so you can take care of the ill or something of that kind. Well, anyhow, it was a very interesting time although the Employment Service was not doing anything towards getting jobs.

Marcello: It was handling mainly the unemployment benefits and that sort of thing.

White: Right. That's right.

Marcello: What sort of association was there between the Kansas Employment Service and the federal government, let's say, the Department of Labor?

White: The question can be better answered, I think, by the fact that when World War II . . . the preparations for World War II. . . on January 1, 1942, the Kansas Employment Service and all other state employment services became part of the U.S. Employment Service. In other words, it was a direct sponsorship. The funds for administration and so forth, offices, originally came from the United States Employment Service. Then as funds began to come into the state, why, of course, this was picked up by part of the taxes paid by the people. But still part of it went to the U.S. and filtered back down.

Marcello: At your time, though, it was basically federally sponsored

so far as financing was concerned.

White: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: I would assume this was a good thing since you had all of these unemployment claims. It would seem to me that perhaps the money that would have been somewhat limited, let's say, had it come from the state.

White: Oh, very definitely. Yes, you couldn't . . . particularly in those early days, you couldn't have raised it. People were still thinking of this sort of thing as welfare. They didn't want to put out any more money for welfare. They couldn't think of this as being insurance. Both employers and potential recipients thought that say, too, so it was an educational process. I suppose it was all over the place. I mean, in the United States where they had somewhat the same reactions. We had night meetings. We had sort of town hall meetings in the various towns in the area in which I served. Everybody was welcome to come. A lot of business people came to find out why they were getting taxed.

Marcello: In other words, are you saying that there was a lot of selling that had to be done in this job? There was a lot of public relations groundwork that had to be laid.

White: There was an awful lot of public relations that had to be done because you had criticism.

Marcello: I guess we could call it an educational process, perhaps, that had to be undertaken here.

White: Yes, we could . . . I think knowing what I know, I could have done a better job. But we did a pretty good job. We would have done a much better job if we'd have been able to convince employers that we were qualified and a logical place to come for employees.

I did by accident more than anything else get to talk to the owner of the Yellow Transit Company. I'm sure you've seen their trucks going up and down the road today. Well, this was an individually owned operation and quite large. It still is. It's not individually owned anymore. The old gentleman is dead. I got to talk to him personally, and lo and behold he started sending orders down to the Baxter Springs, Kansas, office for truck drivers because he had a special requirement. They all had to be 5'11" and weigh at least 180 pounds. You had to be 5'11" or over and weigh at least 180 pounds, and they had to have a high school education. They were the best paid truck line running through our part of the country, also. They had their own offices swamped with a lot of people who just wanted a job, of course. We screened them. I think every man we sent

him was hired. He didn't get too many because there weren't many of those truck drivers in those days that left their jobs.

Marcello: You would have to estimate this, but approximately how many unemployment claims would your office be handling in a week's time?

White: Well, we had the office in Baxter Springs, Kansas. We made a field trip to Galena, Kansas, which almost became a ghost town. It was dependent upon this lead and zinc mining. We made a field trip each week to Columbus, Kansas. Now these were for one day. I expect we handled-- there were two of us--up to fifty and sixty claimants on each one of those field trips. Of course, they were coming into the Baxter Springs office constantly. So we handled three or four hundred.

Marcello: Now you were dealing with a relatively large ethnic population in this area. I'm thinking now in terms, again, the area around Frontenac, Kansas. Did dealing with these ethnics create any problems or situations that were perhaps different from those that might be encountered in other sections of Kansas? Maybe ignorance, that is, ignorance of what their rights were and what they were entitled to and this sort of thing.

White: As always, you have the proposition of the first generation being less informed than the second generation. With these first generation ethnics. . . and we had a lot of Czech and Slovak people in there, some Austrians. There were some Italians that had drifted down probably from Frontenac. These people who had experience and had a son or daughter old enough to bring that son or daughter in with them, there was no trouble. Those who had to come by themselves. . . often we had, first, a language problem and, second, understanding of a new thing, which we had a difficult time trying to explain because they couldn't understand us and we couldn't understand them. But if they had a son and daughter that had gone to American schools and so forth, everything was smooth and easy.

That brings up social ideas. It's surprising, the devotedness of some of those children. I remember I couldn't tell the name at all. There was a girl about a senior in high school. Her father had worked in the smelter, Eagle Pitcher smelter, in this little town of Galena. Now she knew when we'd be in Galena. She was going to school. Her mother was dead. Her older brother was gone from home. She saw that her dad got down there

on that school day. She came with him and left school to do it. People at the school understood the situation. But she was a very devoted person, and beautiful. I'll remember her for a long time.

We had also some old-timers to overcome. Baxter Springs at one time was the end of the trail for the Texas cattle drives. It was a town at that time very much in depression, but yet a lot of welfare because of the original ownership of lead and zinc operations and lease land and this sort of thing. So we had quite a contrast with a lot of people out of work, a lot of people willing to work, no jobs, and a lot of wealth. The wealthy wanted to keep it, so they were, well, part of this problem of thinking, "Well, this is just more welfare."

I finally got acquainted. I was still single and had an apartment in Baxter Springs. I got into a poker club. There were married couples and singles and so forth. We played at various people's places of residence. One of the girls who was a spinster by that time under the old standards was the daughter of a very famous character in mining. His mining experience started

there in the lead and zinc area--"Lucky" Baldwin. What his initials were, what his right name was, I don't know yet. But it was "Lucky" Baldwin. That's the first time I ever saw wall-to-wall carpeting, bright blue. We'd play poker over there and have some wonderful meals. She had a cook (chuckle). There was wealth there, lots of it.

But through that connection I had the opportunity to educate a few people about unemployment compensation, that this is not welfare. This is insurance. People are paying for it. So it worked out pretty good that way, except we never did get to be real employment office. We had a lot of public relations contacts.

Marcello: What kind of jobs were you able to provide for these people if and when the opportunity for a job did arise?

White: Most of the calls we got were for domestic help. Most of the people we had coming in were not domestic help. They had no background for it. They . . . some . . . a few did. But again, they didn't want that kind of a job if they could find another one, so sometimes it was hard to get people to go out. Also, some people who had done quite a lot of domestic work around the town knew the employers, and they didn't want to go back to work there either. We had all of those problems that

came up. So under the law, if you had a person come in that had a claim for unemployment compensation and was drawing it, and their interview card showed that they had done domestic work and you had a call for domestic service which seemed to pay a reasonable wage, and you offered to send them out on a job, and if the person said, "No, I don't want to go there. They're not fair. They don't treat you fair. They do this. They do that," then if you reported that they turned down a job, you were supposed to take them off unemployment compensation. So what did you do?

Marcello: What did you do?

White: I tried to make a good judgement. Here's a person that's willing to work. They know what they're saying when they're talking about this employer. Forget about it. If you thought they weren't willing to work, it was kind of like spanking your boy, so you spanked them. Maybe you called them up two weeks later and said, "Come back in and we'll put you back on." Maybe you didn't. You had a little leeway that way because nobody knew that person had come in and turned down a job except you. I think they'll still do that every once in awhile.

Marcello: How long did you remain with the Kansas Employment Service altogether?

White: Well, I wasn't getting anyplace in this Baxter Springs office. I wanted to get someplace so I arranged, fanagled around, and got a transfer to Topeka. . . in the Topeka field office, not in the state office. I was there about a year and a half. Mostly there I was doing public relations work and field interviewing. We called on people on both sides of the river--over in Kansas City, Missouri, as well as Kansas City, Kansas, and the surrounding area. More industry . . . percentage-wise we showed a great deal more placement of people on jobs. We still had all these domestic service calls and so forth. Likewise, you had a lot more people coming in. We had a rush sometimes when everybody in the Employment Service end of it had to go over on the compensation desk and help out over there. I was assistant manager. I became assistant . . . no, not at the Topeka office. I was transferred to Kansas City. This is when she and I got married. I transferred to Kansas City. There I was the assistant manager of the Kansas City, Kansas, office.

Marcello: In other words, by this time you felt financially secure enough to take a wife.

White: Well, she had a better job than I did (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, the both of you felt secure enough to get married then.

White: Yes. She was coming out from Washington as, what they call now, the administrative assistant to the regional director for the Wages and Hours Division, which was setting up a brand new regional office in Kansas City. She had a much better job than I did. We got married and I was still working in Topeka. We lived in Kansas City, and I drove back and forth. That was seventy miles.

Marcello: One way?

White: One way. Then, of course, for a short time I got a room over in Topeka. I'd go over on Monday morning and come back on Friday evening most of the time. This was sort of a handicap. The war effort was building up. Again, we fanagled around, and partly through her conversation at a dance with a man from Washington I got transferred to Kansas City. This is the way I got from Topeka to Kansas City. That was a total of about four and a half years altogether with the State Employment Service and the short time with the U.S. Employment Service.

Marcello: Now let me get this straight. You were with the Kansas Employment Service then you were with the United States Employment Service.

White: The U.S. took over the state as this war effort built us up.

Marcello: I see.

White: We weren't quite in the war yet. But they took over the whole works because. . . I can't remember the details on this sort of thing. There was a matter of changing jobs. . . where there was a ban put on changing jobs if you were declared needed and this particular thing. You had to have an awfully good reason for transferring to some other job. The Employment Service offices were mixed up in that. They had to do a certification of some kind. I can't remember what the details were. If you were working as a first class machinist for some small company out here making washing machines and you wanted a transfer to Remington Arms, that was easy if Remington Arms would take you. But to transfer from Remington Arms to that washing machine company, that was a rough go. You could hardly make it (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, I would assume, then, that business picked up for both the Kansas Employment Service and the United States Employment Service when the preparations for war began to get into full swing. Then I would assume you could be finding jobs for people.

White: And we were doing other things. At that particular time the promise of building, what, a million aircraft within such a period of time. . . Roosevelt made this.

Marcello: I think it was 50,000 a year or something like that, yes.

White: Well, it was an enormous number of airplanes compared to what we had been making. So they began building aircraft plants--North American, Boeing, Lockheed, all the big ones. We were directly involved--nearly all of the country, the employment services were--in staffing those plants. For instance, North American and the plant in Kansas City, Kansas, came in prior to the finish of the job. They came to our office. They said, "We will need so many this, so many that, so many security people and so forth to start with. We want to interview those people at a certain time." This was set up far enough in advance that we could at least get part of them lined up. So we advertised. They didn't advertise because they sent in a skeleton crew. We also did testing. I did a lot of testing for Lockheed in California because they were hiring in our area, also.

Marcello: When you say testing, I assume you're referring to placing men in a job that would be suitable to their skills.

White: As much as possible and as far as you can test that way. They included spatial relation tests. Can you put a round peg in a square hole or vice versa, and how many

in what length of time? How long did it take to answer so many "yes" and "no" questions? An attempt was made not to test a person's exact knowledge but to test his ability to learn is primarily what they were set up to do. It was finally proven to Lockheed that they only showed .2 per cent greater than a direct interview in accuracy. So why spend all the money testing them?

Marcello: When did you finally get your appointment to the United States Mediation and Conciliation Service?

White: Well, in the meantime while I was working for the Employment Service, I took an examination to the Wages and Hours Division. I had made an application to the U.S. Conciliation Service prior to the time I took the examinations for the Wages and Hours Divisions.

Marcello: Were you still being influenced by your association with Mr. Ashe?

White: Oh, yes. I had become a little discouraged that I would ever hear from the Mediation Service, thinking many things. Maybe I didn't have enough experience and so forth and so on. So I took this examination for the Wages and Hours Division, and they came along and offered me a job. My wife was working for them. By that time the U.S. Employment Service was what we were working for, so I was working for the federal government. Well, this

became a matter of transfer. Well, this rule of not transferring also held good in the government service. So fanagling had to be done, but there was more opportunity in the Wages and Hours Division.

So I talked to the boss, my immediate superior. He called Topeka. This stupid director we had over there said, "Well, he can't do that." Our manager at home was an old carpenter by the name of John Wolfe, a Swede. He said, "Well, how can you keep him from doing it?" He said, "Well, you know what the rules are. You can't transfer from one place to another." He said, "A man can accept a job when he's not working, can't he?" He said, "Well, yes, that's true." He said, "Well, Walter just quit." (Chuckle) That's one of the peculiar things that happened to us bureaucrats.

Well, anyhow, I went to work for the Wages and Hours Division. The director's name . . . the gentleman that Beulah was working for was named Walter King. I was up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, with the Wages and Hours Division. I had had my breaking-in period of training. I was up there making inspection. I got back to the hotel. The operator had left a note in my box that said, "Mr. King is trying to call you," and gave me a number for Washington, D.C.

Well, I called this number in Washington, D.C., and asked for Mr. King. Now this is all the name I had, was Mr. King. I asked for Mr. King. A voice came on the phone and said, "This is Ralph King speaking." Well, I didn't know any Ralph King. I said, "I thought this was Walter King calling." He said, "You mean in the Wages and Hours Division?" I said, "Yes." He said, "No, my name's King, too, but we're not related. I'm with the U.S. Conciliation Service. I wanted to find out when you can come to work for us." I said, "Well, as far as I'm concerned right now, but you know the rules. I've got to clear this through Wages and Hours." He said, "We have already done that. Now we don't have the money to pay you right now. You'll stay on their payroll, but you'll be working for us. We'll send you in the mail transportation to Washington. You'll be in here for a week." This is that fast.

Marcello: How long had you worked for the Wages and Hours Division up until this point?

White: Three months.

Marcello: Just long enough to perhaps get accustomed to the routine.

White: I hadn't even got that far yet because I'm not an accountant. That takes a lot of accounting.

Marcello: Incidentally, had you been keeping in touch or following the activities of your man, Mr. Ashe?

White: No, I'd completely lost track of Ashe. At this early time in the . . . and even when I went to work for the U.S. Conciliation Service, we had no regional offices. People were subject to be sent anywhere. You entered the job knowing that. If you couldn't stand it, you didn't. But when I first met him he was working out of Denver. Where he disappeared to, I don't know. I didn't have sense enough to try to trace him down through the Washington office. So I had completely lost track of Frank Ashe. But when I went to Washington from that call that came to me in Cedar Rapids, I inquired and he was in El Paso.

Marcello: Okay, why don't we just cut it off at this point because I think we're opening up a completely new phase of your career at this stage. We'll come back and interview a third time.

White: There's one other thing I would like to add right now. I went into Washington . . . borrowed money to go into there particularly looking for a different job than the interviewer-assistant manager of an employment office. Of course, I went to see what was happening to my application

in the U.S. Conciliation Service. I got in to see Dr. Steelman. He very cordially met me, and I told him what I wanted. He said, "Well, so-in-so down the hall handles that. Just go on in and ask him what's going on. I do not personally handle the hiring."

So I went down the hall to this gentleman. He was one of the so-called zone directors. This was part of his job--to screen applicants wherever they might come from. He gave me quite a song and dance. He asked me if I was a lawyer. I told him, "No," and he said, "Well, I am and we don't like lawyers in this service," (chuckle). It was quite a build-up. He reached down in his right hand desk drawer, the bit drawer that is usually on the bottom of a desk, and he pulled out a stack of folders about that high (gesture). He stacked them up on his desk. He reached down in this drawer, and he pulled out three and laid them down over there. He said, "Now these we're not going to hire, the big stack." He puts them back in his drawer. He said, "These we will hire just as soon as we can get the money." He picked them up and says, "Let's see who's in there." There was a guy by the name of Johnson and a fellow by the name of Smith and Walter White.

Marcello: Now what date was this when you were hired by the U.S. Conciliation Service?

White: I went to work for the U.S. Conciliation on Beulah's birthday--April 26, 1942.

Marcello: In other words, this would have been just a few months after the United States had entered World War II.

White: Right.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: April 21, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 21, 1975, in Denton, Texas. This is the third in a series of interviews with Mr. White concerning his activities with the United States Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Now Mr. White, when we stopped talking the last time, we had just reached the point where you had been appointed to a position with the United States Conciliation Service. This occurred on April 26, 1942. So at this point I want to show my ignorance by asking you to differentiate between a conciliator, a mediator, and an arbitrator. Now you can define them in whichever order you want to, but what is the difference between the three?

Mr. White: According to the present conception of the Mediation and Conciliation Service as it's used in this modern

day, a meaning is almost identical. The organization I went to work for was the old U.S. Conciliation Service in the Department of Labor. The so-called Taft-Hartley Act, the Labor-Management Relations Act, picked us bodily out of the Department of Labor, changed the name to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Marcello: When did this change occur?

White: In 1947. No real physical changes were made in the operation--personnel, anything--with the possible exception that we were more or less barred from entering into grievance procedures unless it was regarded as a last resort prior to a strike. I say that because the first five years of my service was extremely interesting and oftentimes extremely trying because we were partly arbitrators on a quasi basis--not official--and mediators and conciliators the balance of the time. The meaning of mediation and conciliation . . . I became very curious, as your question showed. I made a pretty hard attempt to look up the root word. I can't remember at this time what my research on that showed. One of them comes from the Greek and the other from the Latin, which one I can't remember. At that time, in the early beginning, conciliation was a stronger word.

The mediator was the in-between man, but he seldom ever did anything except carry messages and pacify people and bring them together through argument and discussion and the opening up of new ideas. The conciliator would go a little farther. He'd do those things, but then he'd make recommendations. You can trace this back to the Egyptian hieroglyphics--the talk of commercial mediation--so I'm told by the archeologists and so forth. Now if that clears up the mediation-conciliation words. . .

Marcello: Let me ask you this question then. The mediator and the conciliator come into action when, prior to the signing of a contract between labor and management? In other words, when do they enter a management-labor difference or a management-labor dispute?

White: Well, again I have to differentiate between the old and the new, I mean, the old Conciliation Service and the new Federal Mediation Service. The old setup was purely voluntary. It was a free service, voluntary, with the commissioners of conciliation having no authority. But they were requested to come in by one party. . . one or the other or both. Under the setup, the Taft-Hartley law, the parties to a contract were required to

notify the Federal Mediation Service at least thirty days before the expiration date of a contract if they had a contract. They were strongly urged to call in a mediator prior to any punitive action if it was a first contract. So it became rather a matter of law that we come in after 1947 in most cases. Prior to that it was purely voluntary.

Marcello: In other words, you would come in before the expiration of the contract.

White: Right. This thirty-day notice as now under the law is a good thing. The people know that they have an opportunity to have a third party to look the situation over and sit with them. Most of them welcome it. So you have thirty days. That doesn't mean that you're going to get in on the twenty-ninth day or the twenty-eighth day. But they notify you thirty days ahead of time so that all of the parties will have at least thirty days in which to work out an arrangement to get together if necessary. A lot of times you don't go in until the last day. Of course, it's always hopeful that you don't have to go in at all. So generally that is the route by which a dispute reaches the Mediation Service now, is the notification procedure.

A man who has worked in one territory for awhile, by his own records and the records in the office, he knows when those contracts are going to come open, so he's prepared usually if he's on his job. He knows that the building trades contracts will come open in January, some in July. He knows that the meat cutters contracts will run a certain gamut of a period of time. General Dynamics and Ling Temco Vought and so forth will all come about the same time in the year because of national negotiations which also go on. So between the notification and the mediator's own knowledge of his territory after he's been there awhile, he pretty well knows what's going on.

You develop friendships on both sides. They'll call you up three months ahead of time and say, "Walter, it looks like a bad day. It looks like we're going to have a bad time this year." It might be the labor side that does that. It might be the management.

Marcello: So now what is the arbitrator? I think we've more or less defined the role of the conciliator and the mediator.

White: Well, that's your conciliator and mediator again. He goes in. He has no authority to make anybody do anything. He's purely mediation. He's a go-between. He's

a persuader by whatever techniques and means seem to meet that particular occasion.

The arbitrator is picked by the parties normally with the written stipulation that they will abide by his decision.

Marcello: In other words, he would hear arguments on both sides and then arrive at a decision perhaps on the basis of his own research and his own arguments and whatever information is available to him. His decisions are binding.

White: That's right. Generally, the arbitrator goes in with a stipulation as to what part of the contract is in dispute and what the dispute is about. They will furnish maybe in the beginning pre-hearing briefs. Maybe at the end they'll have post-hearing briefs. Sometimes those are done away with, and all of the argument takes place--the discussion and the adversaries--before the arbitrator himself. The arbitrator will not generally attempt to literally follow the rules of evidence such as would be applied in a court and so forth. He might have an objection from one side to the other as to some statement made by the other side. This is not in the evidence. He very often will say, "Well, I want to hear it. I'll

judge what fits this situation. That's what I'm here for. We're not a court of law." So he has that leeway the court wouldn't have as to hear all the side beliefs of people that might come into effect in making his final decision. But he does make a decision. The mediator doesn't.

Marcello: Okay, now you were appointed to the United States Conciliation Service in April of 1942. Now is this the service that goes all the way back to the organic act passed in 1913 during the Wilson administration? Is this the same organization?

White: That's the same organization.

Marcello: Now when does it become the United States Mediation and Conciliation Service?

White: 1947.

Marcello: 1947, with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act.

White: Right.

Marcello: Okay, I wanted to get that chronology straight for the records, too. Now when you were appointed to the United States Conciliation Service in April, 1942, what sort of an orientation process did you have to go through in order to familiarize yourself with the job that you were about to undertake?

White: Well, in the first palce you were supposed to have some background for this type of work. Generally, that was in the field of labor relations with management or with the union. Other things were taken into consideration, such as a certain amount of experience as received by a college degree. I think if you had five years' experience within the field of management and labor relations. I believe they gave you two years for a college degree. Primarily, you had to still have experience.

Orientation at that time was rather brief in Washington, and beginning on April 26, we had a class of four new mediators in Washington. Primarily, we read reports that had been made by other commissioners and thought to be good by the supervision as to content, briefness, knowledge. You found very little of the techniques in those reports. It's a hard thing to put down in writing. If you tried to put down all the things you did maybe in the three day meeting, you'd have a report that they wouldn't print in the Library of Congress. So this orientation . . . a great deal of that week was taken up by learning the fiscal operation, such as how to make out your travel reports, salary requirements, work hours, which in our case was twenty-four

hours a day for seven days a week--we were on call--and the reading of these reports.

Now also at that time we had no regions. They had what they called zone directors, all in Washington. All of your reports were made to Washington. Primarily, you kept in touch with Washington by telephone and telegraph. You'd make your final report by telegraph. This was a normal requirement because they wanted to know when you was finished there because they had another one waiting. Not only that, but they had to satisfy some congressman at various times in the area. If they got a telegraphic report they could call the congressman the day it was finished or the evening it was finished, whenever it was. This was particularly true in those things which affected the public so much like public transportation, telephone, telegraph. At this time we were in a war. Right at the beginning of the war ordnance plants, construction, and all that sort of stuff were of paramount interest to the Congress. So this was a week, normally, of orientation in Washington.

Marcello: Was this mainly an independent-type of orientation on the part of you four people, or were you being supervised

or guided in this orientation? You mentioned a great deal of it had to do with the reading of reports and this sort of thing.

White: Well, we were being guided. Now the administrative personnel took us through this thing of reporting and the fiscal or money end of it--your travel vouchers and salary requirements, that sort of thing. If they could get time, these zone supervisors would go over certain cases with you. You were lucky if you had two or three of them because you got a difference of opinion there that was broad. We were unlucky. I went in at a very busy time. We had just one day with the zone supervisor who was an experienced mediator. So we had that one day with him. I say that because they were busy. They were on the phone. . . I don't see how those fellows kept their ears on. It was twenty-four hours a day with them a lot of times as it was with the men in the field.

So you had that one week. Then on Friday you were told where you were being sent to break in with the commissioner in the field.

Marcello: Now what determined where you were sent? What criteria were used, in other words?

White: You know, sometimes I've often wondered myself. One thing was that they didn't send a man back to his last town of origin or where he had worked for a considerable time.

Marcello: What was the reason for this?

White: Well, we all make friends; we all make enemies. If we don't make enemies we have people at times with a considerable difference of opinion than what we might have had. You enter into a new situation as the in-between person, and you've got a better opportunity in an open territory that you haven't worked in before to convince these people that you are in-between. You don't change old conceptions too quick. Now some people do. Some people are able to go back and work in their own town. I was almost five years in Kansas and Kansas City with the Employment Service. I knew an awful lot of people because I called on them in a public relations manner. Well, I had also gone to school. I took a couple of courses in labor law during this period in Kansas City at Rockhurst College. I'll mention Father Walsh a little farther down the line. He's quite a man.

Marcello: You hadn't mentioned before that you had taken these courses in labor relations at Rockhurst College. Evidently

you have been very much interested in conciliation, mediation, and labor relations in general ever since your time at Carlsbad, I gather.

White: Oh, very definitely. Frank Ashe made quite an impression on me, not necessarily completely the man, although he was quite a man, but the job he was doing and the way he did it. You could be very happy with that kind of a situation.

I guess I'd already developed some social attitudes. I don't mean in terms of political parties (chuckle). I also took an extension course in personnel management from the University of Kansas. Part of this was with the definite intent of applying for a job with the U.S. Conciliation Service. Father Walsh made his course in labor law extremely interesting because he was also . . . I think he was head of the sociology department as well as a lawyer. . . as well as a priest. So you had kind of a three-prong shot at you when Father Walsh was teaching. Yes, I was definitely interested in mediation at that time.

Marcello: Another question comes to mind here at this point. Would I be correct in assuming that up until this time your attitudes were more sympathetic perhaps towards labor than they were toward management?

White: Oh, I think so. I think so. Although my relationship
. . .

Marcello: Not that you had an antagonistic attitude toward
management. I don't mean to imply that.

White: My own personal relationship with management that I had
worked for had been good. I had seen a lot of things
with people who, I like to think, maybe were not as well-
qualified to do a job either in hard labor, didn't have
the physical stability, or the education that I had back
of me and some of the jobs. I was able to see a little
farther down the road than they. They were unjustly
treated. They were perfectly competent.

Maybe part of that started when I broke in with the
Harvester Company in western Kansas in the credit depart-
ment. In the actual field operation was an old
gentleman by the name of Charlie Tam. He was a wonderful
guy. He was a bachelor and lived with a spinster sister.
He had been with the Harvester Company a long time. They
had a . . . well, it was known as EBA--Employees Benefit
Association. You could or could not join that thing of
your own free will. If you did it took 4 per cent. You
paid 4 per cent of your wages, and the Harvester Company
matched a certain amount to build up a pension fund. I
believe at that time it took fifteen years to become

vested in that pension plan if you joined. If you left even after you were vested, the only thing you got back was the money that you had paid in. You got no interest on whatever that fund had earned or any of the management's fund.

As I say, I had broken in with Charlie Tam. Eighteen months before he was eligible for retirement he was laid off. He was fired and it made me mad because he did a wonderful job for a long time. He was the man who trained most of their traveling collectors, and yet they laid him off. I never could figure out why. Management actually had no other interest in that Employee Benefit Fund except to administer it and also be a party to it through their own contributions to it. I still don't understand why they laid him off. He wasn't the only one that we heard about. It also happened to some salesmen. Charlie was a collector but. . . I think this is where a part of this started, is a beginning insight into things you don't understand that people do.

Yes, I had the social attitude of leaning towards the laboring person, not necessarily unions, but the laboring person. I think this was definitely in my mind. The experience at Carlsbad. . . even though we were working for a good company. . . the wage scale was good

for the times. The work was not unpleasant, not particularly dirty. Those who worked underground were working in good conditions, constant temperatures. Safety wasn't quite what it should be, but yet it was not an unsafe mine as such. Yet, there were people even there who represented good management. I sincerely think they tried to be good management for the personnel.

Some funny things happened. Maybe that's one of the reasons I joined the union. Well, for instance, my own helper. I told you I thought he should have been the operator when I was promoted to operator, not only for seniority but because he'd been there. He knew a lot about it.

So you have to wipe those things out of your mind, though, when you begin to work for the Mediation Service. You're there to be of service of both people, not one or the other. A great number of unions at that time thought that you came in there as their advocate. They sometimes didn't like it very well when you took issue with them that, "No, on this you're wrong. We can't do that for you."

You know, it's a funny thing, and I still believe it. Most of the men that come directly from management and get into mediation, if they have a leaning it's

toward the unions. Very often you find the fellow that's been a strong labor leader and a good advocate of labor will show a little leaning towards management.

Marcello: Why do you think this is so? Is it because they receive views that they've never thought about before, or how do you explain that?

White: Well, I can give you one illustration of one man, and I don't think this would fit many places. This man had worked for General Motors. He was a graduate from college. He went into their personnel office. In their big plants they have personnel men out in the plant, not just an office up here that you've got to go a long ways to get to. There's a representative right there in the plant in a little office. Well, he was out in one of these. I guess he was with them about five years. He started out in that little office, and he ended up in that little office. He finally quit. He went to work for the Army, I think, I don't know exactly, but he was connected with the labor function as far as the Army and the supervision of construction where their own operations were concerned.

Then he came with us. I think he picked up a lot

of things that he was ordered to do with General Motors that went against his grain because he had to do them even though he didn't think they were right. But he had no right to protest. He followed orders. Well, it was the same thing in the Army. So when he got to the mediation service. . . you're out on your own there. When you're in Podunk, Texas, you're the guy that has to make a decision right then a lot of times. So I noticed a little leaning towards labor on his part.

I've seen that happen the other way around, too. We had a man who had been the Carpenter's representative in your old state of Pennsylvania, Chester. I broke him in with the Mediation Service. He told me a lot of times about . . . during this month that he was with me, he told me a lot of times about the things that he had to do because the membership said, "This is what we want," that he didn't think was right and was putting one man out of business or crowding two out of any profit. He knew they had to make a profit in order to hire the men the next time, see. So I think he leaned a little towards management because of these things.

A very good friend of mine. . . and I won't mention his name because he's still living, and I have a high respect for both his moralith and his ability.

He retired a couple of years ago. He made one remark that stuck with me all the time since then. He told me what he planned to do and so forth and that he'd put aside enough money that he and his wife could live comfortably. The children were well on the way to making their own. He said, "I'm going to walk down the street of Dallas one of these days, and if anybody says 'labor' to me I'm going to knock them flat in the gutter." He and I had worked in this thing about the same length of time--around a total, say, of thirty-five years counting experience with local unions and on up to . . . he was an international man at that time. I think you can get burnt out, and he was.

I think I said previously that although you're supposed to be impartial, there's times when you can't be impartial. A very excellent attorney in Dallas representing management who was a speaker at one of our conferences, regional conferences, was asked, "What do you want from a commissioner?" He said, "I want a man who is fair. I want a man who is generally knowledgeable. I want a man who is not so impartial that he's futile." So you can't put it much better than that. You lean one way or the other. Maybe today you lean towards the labor end of it, and maybe tomorrow you lean towards management.

Marcello: I think I want to get these general views before we actually get into talking about specific cases and specific assignments that you have had. At this stage maybe it's a good place to insert my next question. What does it take to become a good mediator or conciliator? It's a delicate art, I would assume. You're dealing with antagonistic parties--parties that have differences. What qualities are necessary, based on your long experience in the field, to be a good mediator or conciliator?

White: Well, first, I think you have to be a person with a pretty strong physical constitution, which fits the next one. Without one you can't have the other. The second one is patience. I think you have to start with these two things. You add to that a general knowledge of the industry. When I say industry I'm . . . you might be a specialist in one industry, but you've got to have some knowledge of usage, terminology, machinery in general--not specific--products, the use of that product, the terminology that's both legal and in the contract, the willingness to . . . well, not a willingness. You've got to be curious. You've got to have an inquiring mind. You've got to keep it open.

The physical end of it, you've got to be able to sit up long hours. You've got to be able to stay with

people. You've got to control your own emotions well enough that you can control a crowd. By crowd I'm not talking about mob situations. I'm talking about maybe ten or twelve or fifteen or twenty men in a room--ten on each side as adversaries.

You acquire then certain techniques and certain things that you look for. If you have these other things that'll allow you to stay in there, you acquire an ability to read between the lines, between the statements. You begin to have a knowledge by the conversation that goes on around the table of where the real power sits on this union side, where the real power sits on the management side. Is the guy sitting there calling the shots, or is it somebody in New York? On the union side is it the chairman of the bargaining committee, who might be the president of the union, or is the real power the guy that is kind of a ward heeler. He doesn't want to be president but he runs the show by the very power of the people that vote with him.

These are side things, usually. But you look for those things, and you look for combinations on that committee that you might put together to get the vote coming to where you think the settlement should be. You look for pressure points. You search for answers as to

what will publicity do. I'm talking about newspaper media publicity. Should we avoid it or should we come out in the open with something?

Marcello: I was going to ask you what sort of arm-twisting techniques you as a mediator or a conciliator developed here to get these two parties together.

White: Well, these are all parts of these things. You might use all of them in one particular case, and you might use very few in the other.

Now there's also been, in my thinking, a noticeable difference between the war years and the peace years, so-called peace years. We had the Korean War going on and so forth going on. In the World War II situation very often we threw our weight around, although we didn't have any weight. If those people were knowledgeable, and we got challenged once in awhile, they could say, "To hell with you. I don't have to do anything you say! I don't have to meet with you even!" But most of the time we got by because it was war years, maybe a little threat for publicity.

Marcello: In other words, you could more or less appeal to their conscience, saying that "It is your patriotic duty to get together and work out some sort of an agreement. Otherwise, you may be hindering the war effort" or something of this nature.

White: Yes, but you could overdo that, too. I worked with a gentleman. He has four good, nice sons still living. So, again, I'm not going to mention his name. One of them's a priest--Father John. This was a big Irishman. Maybe some day somebody will know by Father John and so forth, but I won't have mentioned his name. He had four sons in the Army all at the same time in World War II. I remember two things that he did. One was awfully good, and the other one was disastrous for him for awhile. The first one, we were in a regional conference. We had just formed regions. They'd just been set up. The first region was set up in Chicago. We were in that first regional conference meeting. This is still the old U.S. Conciliation Service.

The boys from Washington came out and made a terrific pitch about buying war bonds. A couple of them kind of rubbed things raw. This gentleman with four sons got up, and he said, "Now listen, you're standing up there preaching to me about what I'm going to do with my money. I work for it. I earn it. You have the right to fire me, but you don't have the right to tell me what to do with my money. Now what's behind that conversation that I'm giving you is that I've got four sons in the Army. Three of

them are overseas, and I know more about buying war bonds, and more of my salary goes to war bonds than some of you guys are drawing, so just shut up about it! We're patriotic. If we weren't, we wouldn't be working twenty-four hours a day." Well, this was one thing.

He was in a plant producing items which went to another plant for final assembly to war machines. He'd spent long hours, consecutive hours, trying to get those people altogether. It still didn't look like he had a settlement, although the major local leadership of the union thought that they should settle. But they asked him to come to the meeting of the union members where it was going to be presented for ratification. Well, he went and he made this speech in a rather belligerent manner about he had four sons in the Army. I don't know the exact words, but it was something like this. "Now you guys are not going to hurt my sons' chances of coming back. You're going to accept this contract." Well, he had about a three-hour strike on his hands. The international representative--this happened to be the Machinists Union--was a pretty strong guy. The local leadership said that . . . I told you that they wanted settlement. They realized this thing. Well, they all got together,

and this strike only lasted about three hours. But there was a period of a couple of years there that they wouldn't let him come back into the negotiation. Somebody else had to go in. After that they got back to where they were, and he was acceptable again. So I say it can work both ways. You can overdo it.

That international representative of the Machinists Union later became their regional director out of Chicago. He was an extremely interesting man. His name was Erik Bjurman. He was Norseman, Norwegian. The funny thing about it was that he was born a United States citizen. His parents had emigrated to this country. Then they decided they liked Norway better, so they went back to Norway when he was about seven years old. He had one year to school in the United States. Then when he grew up he came back to the United States. He spoke English with a Norse accent; he spoke Norwegian with an English accent (chuckle).

Marcello: Are there any other characteristics that you feel are necessary, or are there any other qualities that you feel an effective mediator or conciliator has to have?

White: Probably the greatest thing he's got to develop is trust.

Marcello: How do you do that?

White: Well, there's only one real way that I know how, and that's all of those things which deal with honesty. Maybe we'll get a little into the techniques of mediation pretty soon. This'll come up more in detail. No matter how you got the notification, whether it was by verbal request over telephone, both parties or one party or the other usually contact the union first--usually--because normally they're the asking party. So maybe this first is a telephone conversation. Then you contact management. Maybe again this is by telephone. You get part of the whole story this way.

You may decide that you're going to have to set up a meeting, so you get back in touch with the parties and set up a meeting with them at their convenience, your convenience. It's a geopolitical thing as to when you can get together--timing and so forth that suits their needs and yours.

You may go into the town, or if it's in your town, you may have a meeting with one side or the other separately first. If they're really wanting to get a settlement, they'll tell you quite a few things in this separate meeting. They'll only tell you if they have perfect faith that you will not repeat what

they said to the other party. Now they're not telling you these things to keep it a secret. Now this sounds kind of funny. They're not telling you these things . . . they might even know that this is not the reason. Now they do not tell you these things--you, the mediator--to keep it a secret. They're telling it to you for your use. So they might tell you in this first meeting that the union's asking for fifteen cents an hour. Eventually, we're willing to go to twelve and a half cents, but in order to get there they've got to eliminate certain things which also cost money and are not normal and usual things in our company. Well, you can't go to the union and say, "Okay, you can settle this thing for twelve and a half cents if you drop these things. But twelve and a half cents is the end."

You have to find a way, the time, and words in which you can indicate. . . and as this General Telephone man used to say, "You can 'inkle' but it's got to come from you. I think that maybe down the line, that if you people are willing a little we can go maybe up here, say, ten cents or get close to it." You watch. You feel. You fish to get a reaction. Well, if their reaction is cheerful on ten cents,

then you go a little farther. You find out . . . maybe then they'll tell you the story. "We'll give up so-and-so if they'll go to fifteen cents." Even they've kind of 'inkled,' they've indicated that ten cents didn't sound too bad.

So you work that thing back and forth. You don't give away either party's confidence. You must keep that confidence because in these private sessions is where you learn what they're going to do, really. This is where you learn where the power is. You learn who to talk to and who to talk at and whether you have to talk through this guy to get to that guy that's outside back down there in the plant who is the real power. Maybe you have to indicate this to the management. If it's on that side, you might say, "Well, we know you can't make the final decision. When do you have to call him?" You let them know maybe definitely that you know what goes on in that company. Well, those things, of course, only come by experience with the particular company.

Sometimes you get some real ambitious person. Maybe this is his first or second assignment with management in handling negotiations in some subsidiary plant, and he's trying to be a big shot. You might

have to tell him, "Well, if I can't get an answer from you, I'm going to call so-and-so, or I'll have my boss call so-and-so, or I'll have the national director get in touch with him."

All of these types of things, they're almost beyond recounting. I don't know how you could make a list of the things that you might do. But always you've got to keep in mind that you must make those people trust you. Sure, you have a failure once in awhile. You're human and sometimes the mediator gets a little hotheaded. I got in an awful lot of trouble in Omaha by . . . well, I think I was green. I was bigger than the other guy (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, I think you've just brought up another one of the qualities that would be necessary to be an effective mediator. This is to have an evenness of temper, I suppose we could call it.

White: Well, this is part. I think you have to include in that the patience end of it.

Marcello: I think that just in our conversations that we've had over these three interviews so far I've already come away with the impression that you are a rather level-headed and even-tempered person, and little things don't seem to upset you or anything. Have you always been this way, or is this a result of your experience

as a conciliator and a mediator? Or should I ask your wife if you're always level-headed and even-tempered?

White: (Chuckle) Better ask her. No, generally, I don't fly off the handle too much. I can almost pinpoint the time I found out two things. I was in the fourth grade. I was a pretty good-sized kid. But there was a guy in the fifth grade. He was older than I was, smaller than I was, and he used to whip me. About once a week after school I'd run. How it came about . . . well, it came to my mind, "I can't do that. I can't keep running." I think part of that running away from the fight from this guy came about because I'm not a bully by nature. But I was big enough to be a bully. He was but he was asserting himself because he was smaller than I was, I think. I'm getting into psychology (chuckle).

But one evening going home, why, here he comes. You could tell by the look on his face that we was going to have an argument of some kind. This time I had made up my mind that there was no more running. I just whipped the snot out of him. Right then I gained confidence. I knew I didn't have to be a bully, but I didn't have to run either.

Well, a little bit of that leads to this thing. I think my size and other people my size gives you an initial advantage. But it doesn't maintain it just by size. You've got to maintain that advantage by having some capabilities of some kind to get along with people.

Going back to the Harvester Company days, I went out to see a man by the name of McDonald. He lived out about five or six miles outside of Plainville, Kansas. That's way out in the western wheat country. I knew the story of what had happened a year before. The collector ahead of me had gone out there. Just what remarks were made, I don't know. But this big, young McDonald reached over and pulled him out of the car and smacked him a couple of times and said, "I don't want to see the Harvester Company collector around here anymore. I've told you the truth. I don't have any money. If you want to foreclose, take the tractor and take the hogs or the wheat." So I went out there primed. I was looking for trouble. But he had to be called on. I drove up in the barnyard. I had a little Chevrolet Roadster, 1930 model.

Marcello: Was this your baby blue job?

White: This was the baby blue job. The seats were kind of deep like they are on a lot of open cars now, so there wasn't too much of me sticking up above the side, see. I didn't look as big as I was. Well, I was in the car. The farmer happened to be right out at the barn. He came over to the car, and I told him who I was. Immediately his face began to get red and swell up. I thought, "That guy's going to hit me. He hit the other one. I'm not going to be sitting down when he does it." So I opened the door, and, of course, this pushed him back a little bit when I opened the door. I got out and we became real good friends. It was just this thing of initial size. I was a little bigger than he was. The other guy happened to be smaller.

But, also, that other fellow's experience stood me in good stead because I knew the story. I worked with this guy. We got our money. That year we got a little. We got a continuance of the contract. He kept his machines. He kept farming. So he worked things out. That's not mediation, but in a way it is. But I never had been a very good collector. I couldn't foreclose on people. So this thing of techniques is all over the place.

Marcello: In one of your newspaper clippings you were quoted as saying that another factor that goes into effective mediation and conciliation is a sense of timing. What do you mean by that? You probably need to explain that.

White: Well, part of that showed up when I was talking about the gaining of people's confidence, that you talked in separate meetings no matter how they had come about. But you had some separate meetings. You nearly always will in any type of mediation. You establish this confidence. Maybe you are told, as I illustrated there, that the company had told you, maybe in this first meeting that they'll go to twelve and a half cents. But you can't lay it out on the table because you don't know where the union is going to go. But maybe in your feeling around there and whatever conversations or words you use, you have this thing of maybe ten cents doesn't sound too bad to them.

So you work out . . .and there's always some other things held back. You work out, "When shall I get these two parties' minds together?" They're still separated maybe. "When shall I bring this thing out in the open? Here's the point that we can settle at."

This is a thing of timing. Do you bring it up to the point where the union is actually faced with the proposition of carrying out their threat to strike? Do you put them on the spot? In doing that you point out to the leadership, "You're responsible, not that rank-and-file out there. They're only following you. You're responsible. Are you willing to take these people out for two and a half cents?" Or you can say to the company, whether the man at the table is actually calling the shots or he has to go someplace else to get a decision, "We're that far apart. You're responsible. Do you want to let those people go out for that, stop all of that production, and just lose your market?" It's a matter of . . . when do you do that?

This timing thing comes into a lot of things. Often you're invited to a union meeting to lend support or to help sell, as the terminology is, a package to the rank-and-file who might be pretty worked up. Maybe they've been worked up intentionally by the leadership, but now they want to work them down. So maybe you're invited. Part of the timing comes in in deciding if you want to go. Or do you say, "Go ahead and feel your people out. You have your meeting. If it's still bad then call me and let me know what I have to say."

Marcello: I would assume also that a sense of timing and the building of trust in many cases go hand-in-hand. . .

White: They go hand-in-hand.

Marcello: . . . on the basis of what you just said about whether or not you decide to attend a union meeting or whatever. If you decide to attend and you attend the wrong time, that sense of timing obviously comes into play, and the feeling of trust might be destroyed.

White: Right. I went to a meeting at the wrong time in Omaha. The people weren't ready. The leadership there knew that we'd hit the end of the rope as far as the company. . . there was three companies involved, but they weren't going to go any farther. But they hadn't prepared their people to reach that point. But they wanted me to come to the meeting. The regional director for that union was there. They wanted him to come to the meeting as well as the international representative who had been there the whole time.

All three of us got run out of the room--the mediator, the regional director of the union, and the international representative. It was the wrong time. We were saying the right things at the wrong time. That's in Omaha in the packinghouse district.

There was 1,200 people in that meeting--hot, steamy. Most people had to stand up. There wasn't room for that many people sitting down. They didn't have chairs, and there wasn't room anyhow. It just wasn't a good time to go to a meeting (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, now I think we've kind of talked in a great deal of detail about some of the qualities that go into making a good mediator or conciliator. Since you handled over a thousand cases during your career in this activity, what are some of the techniques that you developed in order to bring together the two parties, that is, labor and management? I think we have talked about the qualities of a good conciliator-mediator, and these kind of overlap, I think, with some of the techniques that you've developed in order to bring the parties together?

White: To try to answer your question on this thing of techniques individually developed and so forth, I almost have to go back to my first three weeks in the Mediation Service. I first had the week of orientation in Washington. Then I was sent to Chicago. At that time the general procedure was to send the new man out where he worked with an experienced commissioner for at least a month. Then that

commissioner he worked with . . . and he was silent . . . he was the secretary. He took notes. He could pass notes to the presiding commissioner, but he didn't open his mouth unless the commissioner asked him to. In other words, you were there as a listening student, auditing.

So I was sent to Chicago to begin breaking in with Commissioner Marchman. At the moment I can't think what his first name was. But I arrived in Chicago. They had an office in the attic of the old Federal Building in Chicago, which is on State Street, I believe. A big old granite building. . . you know how the old ones were built with walls about five feet thick. This was in the attic--wooden floors, poorly furnished. They had a secretary. There was about four or five men in that office, but you seldom ever saw them.

Commissioner Marchman was sick. He had a . . . well, he was one of these people who developed periodically laryngitis. He couldn't talk. I had to call him at home, and he wasn't going to be able to make it. He said, "Can you pick up the trail on the General Electric Motor Company?" I don't believe that's quite the name--Gen. E. Motor Company. They made

small motors that went on electric fans and equipment that size. They had a lot of electric fans and equipment that size. They had a lot of other applications, but that's the nearest size I can think of.

Remember, I had never been a mediator or with a mediator in a mediation conference. Also, there was nobody in the office to ask, and a full-fledged commissioner asked me to pick up his file and go out and hold this meeting. So I went. You know something? We got a settlement that afternoon. It was with the electricians union. I think maybe they felt sorry for me (chuckle). But, of course, I had sat in mediation conferences with Frank Ashe. As little as I remember as to how he acted, I tried to follow suit. We got a settlement.

I got back down to the office in time to call Washington and tell them what had happened. Now they didn't know I was out there by myself. Our zone director was a man by the name of Barneau. He was of French descent. He had been with the State Department. He had also been in the field of our service. He was a skilled mediator and a darn good supervisor. He

didn't believe in this thing of throwing a man to the wolves. But anyhow, I told him we got a settlement, and he said, "Well, that works out fine so far, but don't do that again till you're turned loose."

He said, "There's a panel in Chicago, and they're short a man. You'll report to the Sherman Hotel to Commissioner Spillane," who liked to be called Judge. He had formerly been a district judge, James Spillane. He later became regional director up there. But I reported over there, told him who I was and so forth, and was welcomed nicely. They had, at times, panels of three men--once in awhile two but generally three. One acted as chairman, and the other two filled in on the chairman's request. One acted as secretary.

Well, this case they were sitting on was the Peoria Cordage Company of Peoria, Illinois. They were manufacturers of cordage which was used in the marine industry. Fine old gentleman. . . I guess he was the total owner of the company, a graduate of the University of Illinois, member of the University Club in Chicago and so forth, but a real fine gentleman. They were going broke. This was the steelworkers union. He's one of the biggest men I ever saw. It

took two chairs for him to sit on at this conference table--the man that headed up the steelworker's committee.

I think I learned quite a little, although it didn't seem like it, on the techniques from Jim Spillane. Now he had a judicial delivery. He had been a judge. He had divorced himself from the rules of evidence to the extent that anything could be heard that he thought might be pertinent. He also had this judicial attitude where he could shut it off, a technique which is sometimes hard to arrive at to make somebody stop talking. We sat a period of two days, and we got a settlement. I thought Jim Spillane did a wonderful job. I'm sure that he did. I still think he did a wonderful job in that kind of a situation. So here I had a second idol in the Mediation Service--Frank Ashe and then Jim Spillane. . . actively with him.

The other man on the panel was also a fine person --an old mine worker from John L. Lewis' union. He was a very understanding guy, very patient, intelligent, knowledgeable. He knew a lot about the steelworkers union because in the beginning of the CIO they had been very closely allied. A lot of the mine worker

people became steel workers representatives.

So between those two I think in two days I learned quite a lot. Now in the meeting before with this Gen E. Motor Company when I was there by myself, I had separate meetings. But this was with great trepidation. I didn't know whether I was doing things right or not. We did that with a panel. Jim Spillane said some things that I would not have had the courage to say. But these came back later-- that sometimes you have to walk out on a limb or pull back off the limb or something of that kind.

So I had this little bit of breaking in. It was one day on my own and two days with a panel.

I think this was about on a Friday, the second day of the panel when I had a telephone call from Washington that I was to report to John O'Connor, Commissioner O'Connor, in Omaha, Nebraska. Marchman had called in, and he wouldn't be able to come back to work. So I couldn't finish up my assigned training with him. "Go out and do it with John O'Connor."

I arrived in Omaha on a train. I registered in the same hotel he was staying at on Sunday. I had

dinner with him that evening. He had a meeting set up with all the mechanical bakeries of Nebraska and western Iowa, which took in Sioux City and Council Bluffs and . . .there was one in Shenandoah, Iowa.

One chain was involved which was a local at that time. As I remember, there were about ten chain bakeries involved with this negotiation, all with the teamsters union. There were representatives from the various towns--management and union.

The man that headed up the bakery management was a fellow by the name of Peterson, who had just retired from the Army. He retired because of age. He had gone back in the Army when the war started, and then they just retired him. He was a fine person. The teamsters was headed up by a little short guy by the name of Weinberg. Again, he was a fine person and highly intelligent. Now there were other people on each side that I didn't think were so fine. This came later.

This meeting was set up for the Paxton Hotel in Omaha. I don't think it's operating in town at that time. It was a nice place. It was about three blocks down the street from where we were staying--O'Connor and I. I met John O'Connor in the lobby of the hotel

we were staying in about 9:45. The meeting was set for ten o'clock in this other hotel about three blocks down the street. We walked down the street. We went to the conference room. Most of the other people were there. John O'Connor opened the meeting in about the same way that you'd normally open it-- by a statement and so forth and why we were there.

At 11:30 he just slumped forward on the table. I was sitting there by him. I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know what had happened. I thought the man had a heart attack, but his pulse was beating strong and so forth. Well, the teamsters representative did know what was going on. So he said to me, "Commissioner, get on the line and get another room down the hall. While you're doing that, I'll get one of the other boys, and we'll carry John down to the other room, and we'll put him on the bed down there." So we did this.

Then when we got down in the other room, he told me what was wrong. He said, "O'Connor's got an alcohol problem. He had lost his wife about a year before that. He said, "Apparently, he's been hitting that wine bottle. He got up here in the heat, and he just passed out." So here I sit at about twelve o'clock, still new, with a situation on my hands that I didn't know what I was going to do about it.

But I went back down to the meeting. I suggested we recess till 1:30, and I'd meet them there again at 1:30. I was hoping I could get John back on his feet. We called a doctor and he said, "No, no chance." So he stayed in that hotel room.

I called the boss. I told him Commissioner O'Connor had suddenly become ill. We had this meeting. We had people from all over Nebraska and part of Iowa in there. "What do we do?" He said, "Well, do you think you can handle it?" I said, "Well, I can give it an awful try." He said, "Well, go ahead and keep meeting. You can't bring those people in and then just forget about them, tell them to go home." So we finished up that meeting. I think we got a contract in about three days.

O'Connor. . . we got him back out to his own hotel by this time. He was recovering. They transferred him to Topeka, Kansas, where he had a daughter. They knew of his trouble. When I called the office and said that John O'Connor was sick and what should I do, they said, "Oh, yes, we know." So while this meeting was going on, I had to determine at times what to do. Part of this thinking, of course, reverted back to one little experience I'd had with

Frank Ashe and the two days' experience with Jim Spillane on that panel.

But we had a different situation. They're all different. I had a conglomerate of thinking due to even the physical part of the country that the various people came from. We had a mechanical plant in Hastings, Nebraska, which had a completely different attitude from the one in Shenandoah, Iowa--the management end of it--because of different buying attitudes with different companies. Same thing was true with the union.

You had to depend on the head people. I found this in this case because of the conglomerate committees. The head people would hold their committee together. This is one of the things that show up where you have that kind of situation. You have conglomerate either of union committees--maybe with different unions it's even worse--or competitive companies sitting on the same side and bargaining as a unit. You have a bigger job holding the two sides together than you do getting the two parties together.

So all of these things showed up in this particular meeting, and this is my first big one as far as people and territory, and big to me because it was my

first one, really. I'm sure that I never thought of the word techniques. But I sure did a lot of thinking when I was sitting there at the head of the table and didn't know what to say. "What do I say next? How do I do this? What do I say to this gentleman over here to get him to lead that group one way? What do I say to this gentleman over here to get him to lead that group one way? What do I do to get him to persuade his people that they've got to give?"

Marcello: This brings up an interesting point because I think it goes back to something that you mentioned earlier. It would fit in with technique. I assume that when you go into one of those meetings, one of the first things that you tried to do was to size up who was the spokesman, who was the power, whether it be somebody in this group that was in the room or whether it was, like you pointed out awhile ago, somebody back in some home office several hundred or a couple of thousand miles away.

White: Well, that developed but I didn't have that with me at that particular time.

Marcello: At that time?

White: No. But I began to learn it there because this is . . . oh, maybe in the second day I found out this

Colonel Peterson was a strong man, not just because he had the largest company in that meeting but because he . . . I think partly because he had this military background. He never came back to take over his company until all of his family had gone. He wanted to be a military man. But he had this military training, and he was a colonel. The right kind of a colonel develops certain attitudes of authority. Some of them are terrible, but some of them are really good at it without ever raising their voice. This was one of them. He knew that he had to trust me. He knew it instinctively. This was the first time we had ever met. I was new and he knew it.

Well, on the other side I had Weinberg. It was easily detectable that Weinberg was the head man in that teamsters setup. He was the man with the brains; he was the man with the knowledge; he was the man with experience. He knew my predecessor on the meeting, and he trusted me by choice till he found out I was wrong.

So I had a break by having strong men on both sides, but I never knew it in the beginning. This came. Yes, I personally think that this is one of the things that you have to learn to determine unless you've got an awful easy one--who is in power.

Well, to go on with that particular story, they called me from Washington. I guess when I called in to report we had a settlement, I was told, "Well, you stay there until we can find a replacement to send in there. Then we'll send you someplace else to complete your training." Well, I kept getting assignments. At that time all the assignments came out of Washington. They came by telegraph. I got assignments all over Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota, part of Iowa, one down in Kansas, and I still hadn't heard of anybody coming in to replace me so I could go someplace and get some training. I hadn't been home since I left to go to Washington. . . wife and a baby.

I called one day and asked about who was going to come into Omaha to let me go out and work with somebody. Barneau said, "Well, it's kind of useless now, isn't it? You've been running that end of it out there for a month." He said, "Why don't we just say that you're it." I said, "Well, I would like to word with somebody else." He said, "We don't have them. We've got too much to do. Do you feel you can do it?" I said, "Again, I can give it a helluva try." He said, "Well, you make arrangements. Arrange your

time schedule so you're not tied up next weekend. You go home to Kansas City and tell your wife that you're going to be transferred to Omaha and make arrangements there. We'll keep you on per diem till you can find a place to rent and until you can get your family moved there if you don't take longer than three weeks."

So this is what happened. She had a better job than I did. By that time she was administrative assistant to the regional director of the OPA, Office of Price Administration. I'm sure that it was quite a shock. We had a baby. She had an awfully good housekeeper, baby-sitter and housekeeper, really. It was an awful shock to her to go with me or stay on her job. Well, she went with me. I had rented a house, so we moved in.

I was working out of my home--still green--with a geopolitical situation that. . . I mean as far as a wide territory was concerned and being able to fit meetings in. I was green. I'd get a call from a union representative saying, "White, we need you out here tomorrow." Maybe this was Scottsbluff, Nebraska, clear on the other side of the state. "We're going

to have a strike if you don't get out here." I'd say, "Well, I'm already committed in Fargo, North Dakota. I'm flying up there tomorrow." I'd just say, "Well, go ahead and strike. I'll get there when I can." I finally learned to do that once in awhile. But at that time I didn't know. I had a lot of decisions I had to make. You didn't get much help out of Washington. They didn't have time either.

But anyhow my wife came out there, and she was a trained secretary. She picked up a secretarial load with no pay. The telephone would ring night and day. She typed a lot of my reports, took dictation over the telephone, typed my reports, signed them, sent them in, arranged my itinerary.

I was in Sioux City, Iowa, traveling by train. Of course, gas rationing was on by that time. I had a bad situation in a steel fabricating company in Omaha. They kept calling her at home in Omaha, "When was I getting back?" I had called her that I would finish there, and I would be in on a certain train. She met me at the train. She said, "You have got a meeting tonight as soon as I can get you downtown, and then you've got to get on a train and go to Lincoln."

So she brought a new suitcase full of clothes. This was in the middle of the winter. In Omaha it's not warm in the winter. She took me downtown. She had made arrangements with the people to be there when I got there for the meeting. This was somewhere about seven o'clock. These people knew I had to be in Lincoln the next day, and this was, what, ninety miles or something like that. But still this was by train. On Union Pacific there were quite a number of passenger trains at that time. So I missed one that I could have got on. But we worked out an agreement with the steel fabricating plant. It was doing an important job. Somebody, either from the union or management, took me down and put me on a train about 3:30 in the morning to Lincoln.

I got off there and got to the hotel where the meeting was going to be and got time to get cleaned up and changed clothes and get in the meeting at a set schedule there. This sort of thing went on not just with me but with every commissioner at that time.

I think you remember at least of hearing of the Literary Digest, Harry Truman's . . . well, he was not very happy about the Literary Digest. They printed

an article called "Strike Doctors" that came out about that time. Oh, I was a proud man to be included in that. Not by name, but I was one of them.

Marcello: It was called "Strike Doctors?"

White: Yes. It talked about train hopping, hitchhiking, airplane grabbing--commissioners of the Federal Mediation Service.

Now in this thing of tight schedules and long distances and the pressures of which is most important, this plant producing flour for an air base or this plant producing cam shafts for aircraft, which is the most important? They both are threatening to go on strike. Where do you go? These were decisions that you had to make. You couldn't call the boss and say, "Which one do you want me to go to?" You had to make them. You had to schedule your own, and you had to accept your own responsibilities. So I think that comes into your technique-making.

I developed a technique. . . again, it fit back to this panel that I worked these two days within Chicago. I never heard it there, though. I got so that in these cases where I had a heavy case load, I'd go in and tell these people, "Now listen, I've got seventy-two hours. You either get together, or

I've got to go to another one just as important as yours. Now as far as I'm concerned, unless we have a death in this family, we're going to stay here until we get this thing settled." And it worked. They'd stay with you. Not too often did you have somebody gripe about the statement. After twenty-five or thirty hours they'd begin to gripe, "When are we going home?" This gave you the opportunity, then, for the follow-up technique, "We'll go home when we get this thing settled. Now get to moving."

Marcello: I gather that from what you're saying that more commissioners were needed. There were not enough commissioners. It seems to me that the whole agency was understaffed.

White: At that time, yes, that's right. It was understaffed, and the build-up was pretty slow because they were pretty selective of the people that they hired. They had lots of applications, but they were pretty selective. Again, this thing of experience is some kind of direct labor relations. Contract negotiation experience had to be in their picture.

Only one person that I ever knew personally was hired without any background of labor relations, and

that was a young personable schoolteacher from New Hampshire whom Madame Perkins had met when he was working with the National Youth Administration and was very impressed with his intelligence. His name was Steele. He turned into a very effective commissioner. Luckily, he didn't have the kind of training I did. He did get some training (chuckle). Well, I had more experience than he did. Unfortunately, he died when he was, oh, ten years in the service, I guess. It was quite a loss. He was one of the four that went through my training class.

So this is an area of technique development, this seventy-two-hour business, which I hadn't heard of anybody else using. I know later that other people did use it. How they got the idea or where it came from, I don't know. But it worked and this is partly where I made the statement that during the war years we threw our weight around. Well, this is one of the places where you threw your weight around. You had so much time. You might at that moment be lying like the devil. You might not have another assignment down . . .

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is that you tried to create a sense of urgency by laying on a seventy-

two-hour deadline. People, I suppose, normally worked better, more efficiently, when they have a deadline than perhaps if they had all the time in the world. In other words, they'll stick to something.

White: I think that's true. You can keep their noses to the grindstone that way. Now sometimes that seventy-two hours would run out on you. You never settled them all. There's a statement somewhere around in the background by one of the older commissioners, one of the men before my time, who opened the door--those first ones did--by building an acceptable reputation. He made the remark that "Well, if you stay away from all of them long enough, they'll eventually settle." Sometimes this is workable.

This is a technique that has been worked in a lot of our war contractor plants. I'm talking about plants such as powder plants, shell loading plants, aircraft, where their total business was sales to the government. On one side the unions were having a rather free ride. Maybe their membership cards counted up in the hundreds, but maybe their membership at the meetings was twenty. You knew this. You'd learned it somewhere or been there before or seen others the same way. On the other side there was

management trying to continue contracts with the government and so forth and having to do everything they could and putting on a show. Maybe they were in a worse position for negotiations than they were. They wanted you in there, but you didn't have time to go. So you put them off knowingly, intentionally, but you reserved a date down the line towards the end of the deadline date where if it became necessary you could get in. But you'd call them and say, "How are you doing?" You'd get a story that sometimes sounded bad and sometimes sounded good. Sometimes one side was good, and the other was bad. You'd say, "Okay, you get back in a meeting and keep trying. I'll get over there when I can."

Marcello: I would assume also at times that a mediator would have to be a good judge of character and personality. In other words, some people you could probably persuade through compliments. . . by complimenting them and things of this nature, and in other cases you would have to perhaps at least issue veiled threats perhaps or warnings.

White: Well, again that happened much more during the war years than it does in non-war years, I mean, the threat of some kind of adverse action on your part,

such as publicity or calling their boss or taking them into Washington depending on what kind of a plant. You'd take them into Washington, and they'd be sitting there with all those reporters wondering why they're there. So again this is publicity plus . . . yes, I think I could go on and on with a great number of things that pop up in individual cases.

I had a situation in Omaha, Nebraska, one time that was rather peculiar. Well, there's two that happened when I was there that I think were peculiar. They had a steel fabricating plant that their normal peacetime was the fabrication of structural steel for buildings and iron and so forth. Now this was an individually family-owned plant. They were organized by the steel workers. The chairman of the bargaining committee was the owner's son. He lived at home. I couldn't figure out when I learned that . . . well, here's papa sitting on one side of the table and a guy by the same name sitting on the other side of the table. It came out pretty quick that this was his son. I couldn't figure out how that would work until I got a chance to talk with them individually, separately, privately as individuals. The father explained things, and so did the boy. It was almost the same tale.

They didn't talk about business when they were at home. The kid represented that . . . he wasn't a real young man. He was about twenty-seven at that time, but single. He represented that union well. They trusted each other, too. The dad said, "If you're going to represent that union, you represent them. You're just an employee. When you're at home you're my son." The boy said, "Okay," and that's what they did. So we worked out an agreement. Everything went along fine, but this one threw me at first. I was in a new situation.

I had another one which is a rare happening. I got a call one night about midnight from an attorney in Lincoln who told me that the biggest flour mill in Nebraska was on strike in Beatrice, Nebraska. He asked me if I could get down there. He said he thought it was very necessary because this plant was the total supplier for the Air Force base at Lincoln and the one at Topeka, Kansas, which is a smaller setup but is still an Air Force base. Most of their product went to those two places. They had their own bakeries and everything on the grounds in those days. I left Omaha. . . that call was at about midnight.

It was seventy or eighty miles down there, so I got there about three or four o'clock in the morning. The lawyer had a company man waiting where I could talk to him. When I talked to him I found out there was no union. The people were just out on strike. He couldn't tell me who to talk to. The second thing. . . even at that time of the morning in those days there were still places open in Nebraska. You could go to a bar or a beer tavern. He said, "Besides, I don't know who you would talk to. I think they're all drunk."

Well, I inquired around and finally found a drunk who wasn't too drunk who said, "I think the man you're probably looking for is over in so-and-so's tavern with two other guys drinking beer." Now this by this time was around 4:30 or five o'clock in the morning. I went over there, and here in the back booth were three men. I introduced myself. We talked. There was no union. They didn't know anything about unions, but they had an awful lot of gripes against that company. They had enough beer to be very articulate--all three of them. I made a suggestion that they go home. I wanted to meet with them about

ten o'clock the next morning. In the meantime I would talk to the management and see what we could do to straighten out the troubles. The plant was shut down and the Air Force was hollering for flour. Well, they were as good as their word. They weren't too drunk to remember. They went home.

They met me down at the hotel at ten o'clock in the morning, and I had talked to the management. They had a local lawyer who knew absolutely nothing about labor relations, but he was a pretty honest man. He said, "Why don't you sort of assume the representation for this company." I said, "I can't do that." He said, "Well, you can in talking to the union and come back to us and see what we can do to get this plant back in operation, and what we'll have to do."

Well, we went through that process till I had a contract agreement in mind. I knew from talking to four or five of these people who were out on strike that if these conditions were adjusted they'd go back to work. Part of it was money. I had talked to the company, and I knew that if the people would accept this type of thing that they would sign it. The only thing they asked was that their lawyer look it over

as to see whether they'd be in trouble or not. Now remember that the War Labor Board was in the picture at this time. . . not in the case, but they were in the line someplace.

So I went down to the company's office. I had a company man and a union man. This office wasn't plush like you see nowadays. The company furnished a typewriter, not a secretary. I typed an agreement. The plant representatives looked it over. They both thought it was alright even though there was some poor typing. So they knew that part of the condition that the company had put on was that their lawyer look it over so it wouldn't get them in trouble.

Well, we called the lawyer. He came down and he looked it over. He said, "Well, I would like to see it retyped." One of the plant men said, "It's alright just as it is. We don't mind a few typographical errors." I had made three copies while I was working it up. So we all got together. They signed this agreement. I kept a copy; they kept a copy; the company had a copy. I sent my copy down to our liaison man who took it to the War Labor Board for approval. I called him on the phone and told him it had to go through or they'd have another strike up

there, and then I wouldn't have anybody to talk to. So he sold it to the War Labor Board. That's the first contract and the only contract I ever negotiated without the union and which I wrote the entire thing myself and represented both sides. And I was a mediator.

Marcello: Does this present some special difficulties when you are dealing with a group of workers who are not unionized?

White: Well, you have nobody with any authority to talk to. It's just got to be leadership. Somebody must be strong enough to lead. Somebody must be strong enough to say to the other people involved in his group, "This is okay." So luckily I found that man the first night there in that beer parlor.

Marcello: If we can just draw some things together here on the basis of my original question concerning the techniques that one develops in being a mediator, would it be accurate to say that we can use the present jargon and say it's "different strokes for different folks." In other words, every case is entirely different, and you have to develop a set of techniques for each individual case.

White: That is right.

Marcello: Now you mentioned the case involving Spillane in Chicago; you mentioned the case involving O'Connor. Now you mentioned this case involving these unorganized workers. It seems that in each one you have a certain set of circumstances, and you have to develop techniques for each one.

White: There's no question. You could have two plants with the same union. . . separate plants with separate ownership with the same union across the street from each other. You can certainly assume that the union people in plant A are talking to union people in plant B and likewise the management. Yet, you get into negotiations with them, and you've got an entirely different set of circumstances. We're all human beings.

Marcello: This, I think, leads into my next question. You would certainly have to develop different techniques in different regions of the country even though you may be working with the same company and the same union. The attitudes of company and union officials in Texas, let us say, would probably be different from the attitudes of the same company and the same union in Pennsylvania.

White: We talked just a little bit about that sort of thing previously when I mentioned this thing of finally

arriving at a word of the agrarian mind and shop hands.

Marcello: Pennsylvania would have the shop hands, and Texas would have the agrarian mind.

White: In rural Iowa, Nebraska, all of our central area, you find this type of mind.

Marcello: But I think we're getting into the area of techniques once again.

White: But in using the work shop hands, I use that only as a descriptive thing because of the fact that the development of industry and the hiring of groups of people had been going on so long in our eastern states. You had the early beginnings of organization in the mines--the Molly Maquires, the streets and railways. . . I'm talking about urban transportation in New York.

Marcello: In other words, there was a tradition here.

White: Here was son following father in a mill--in a spinning mill, for instance. The father would become maybe the foreman of the loom room or whatever they call things in . . . that's not what you call them nowadays. The boy started out as a clean-up boy, but he expected to work himself up at least as far as his father had gone. But it was in the same mill. He had the

background, also, of attempts and final organization.

In your western area these people came here in the beginning of free land. At the beginning of the war . . . and this was agriculture. At the beginning of the war, although we had quite a lot of industry, most of the people even in that industry came from those farms. They came from the first and second generation of people who came here for that land, so they were independent, free. They didn't believe in unionism. They weren't congested. They could leave the plant and go out in the country. Sure, in the rural areas of Pennsylvania and so forth they could still do that, but they depended so much on this central area of employment. In the following years we weren't as mobile, so you didn't have much chance to leave even though there was the dust bowl and the Okies had gone west. You know, that brings up a question in my mind. I wonder what happened in the East when the Okies were going west out of the dust bowl. What was happening in the East? They were just on WPA period, weren't they?

Marcello: For the most part, yes.

White: Yes, some type of assistance was necessary because they couldn't move like that. We were talking about this thing of the development of areas.

Marcello: Regional differences.

White: Regional differences. In the beginning of my service with the Mediation Service, although I was raised and had traveled quite a lot in the central section of the United States, I never really began to think about it until I got with the Mediation Service. The intense development of industry during the Second World War--that's the only one I can speak of with knowledge--produced a great deal of movement, also. So although there was an influx into the Southwest and central United States of people who were union people, building trades particularly, still the attitude of independence prevailed. I think it was even more true in management outside of the building trades employers. We were constantly running into people who had never heard of the Mediation Service. We still do. We were constantly running into people who didn't give a damn about the Mediation Service even if they had heard about it. We were faced constantly with a training program, which was somewhat underneath the surface.

A plant had been operating. . . there was a little town in Nebraska that used to be the broomcorn center

of the world. It had the biggest broom factory in the world. You know, that's all operated by the blind now. But this was a factory, and the second generation was running it. Those people working in that plant were even of the second and third generation. It was a rather concentrated area. I think it originally started as a religious sect settlement, and this broomcorn thing developed in the making of brooms. This was in 1943 when I was in that plant. They still paid those people in script--no money. They could trade that script at the company stores. Now these stores had different names. The grocery store might be Jones Brothers. The hardware might be the Walter White Hardware Store and so forth. But if you looked through it with the knowledge of the people, it was all part of that broom factory family. Well, they could trade the script there. They don't have any money. They could cut that script price anytime they wanted to. In that day it was really, as far as I'm concerned, slavery. They never had any money to leave.

But a union organized them. By the way, that little organizer became one of our men later. He didn't have the size to start out with initially, but he had the desire.

Well, anyhow, we had some meetings, and they were rough. This one man, the son of the founder of that broom factory, was sitting on one side of the table. I was on one end, and about three employees had courage enough to come sit at the table with this little representative. We finally worked out an agreement, but the old boy violated it. He kept on giving script, no money. He went through every court in the land, and that was the end of his business. Not right at that time. It didn't happen that quick. But he spent all the money he had--all of his assets--in fighting this one thing. Well, in our country he's got a right to do that.

Marcello: I gather that even as late as the 1940's you would be running into employers who had the 19th century ideas with regard to labor-management relations.

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Especially in the rural areas that you were dealing with. I can imagine that they were really tough to deal with.

White: At that time it came as rather a surprise to me. As an illustration, in a small town southwest of Des Moines, Iowa. . . offhand I can't think of the name. There was a factory which made stump pullers. Now this was

their total production up to the beginning of World War II. That consists of the foundry where the castings were made and so forth and a machine shop where they were machined and an assembly where they were put together. But the stump puller I'm talking about was the original stump puller where they had to hook a team onto this thing that went around and around and round and tightened up the line that you had hooked to the stump. The stump puller was so fastened that the stump came out and not the stump puller. Now this had gradually developed to where they had put one-lung gasoline motors on them. But the original machine that actually pulled the stump looked kind of like the big machine they pull up these heavy anchors on a boat with, that big pulley, you know.

They got into war production, of course, because they had good foundry and they had good people. By somebody making the patterns for him in the beginning . . . they didn't have many good patternmakers. . . making the patterns and so forth, they could make and do a good job of cast parts for differential housings or submarine housings and this sort of thing.

What I'm leading to is, this plant was started

by an old foundryman. His father had been a foundry worker. The son conceived the idea of this stump puller after he became a skilled molder. This was back in the horse and buggy days. So he developed this plant, and it was successful. Of course, when I knew him they were still pulling stumps, but they had the gasoline motor, but there was not as many stumps to pull. They still had a pretty good little plant. That man had belonged. . . the father had belonged to the union, which is one of the older unions in the United States, practically all of his working life until he started that plant. The thing I'm leading to is how often we run into that thing where a self-made man who belonged to a union became management. . . and they're the rough ones. They get really rugged.

It was not my success when I was there the first time. . . the old gentleman was getting pretty old. Before that series of negotiations was over his older son had taken over. So we finally arrived at a settlement. They were making strategic stuff. The son had moved far enough into the modern day and was far enough removed from the hardships his dad had in starting that plant that he was able to accept new ideas. I'll tell you, that old gentleman was a rugged old boy.

Marcello: While we're on the subject of techniques and flexibility, do different ethnic groups present different problems? In other words, suppose in your mediation work you came across a union that is made up predominantly of blacks or one that's made up predominantly of some immigrant group, whether they be Poles or Italians or anything of that nature. Do situations of that type call for different techniques? Now maybe in the rural areas in which you were dealing you didn't run across these ethnic groups too often.

White: Well, yes, you did. For instance, at Keokuk, Iowa . . . I'm going to give a better illustration because it still sticks firmly in my mind. But at Keokuk, Iowa, there was a certain religious sect. I can't tell you the name. I never did find out the name of this religious sect that lived in Keokuk, Iowa. It wasn't Amish, and it wasn't Mennonite. What it was, I don't know, but a lot of the same known beliefs occurred there, such as they didn't join any other organization, their leader was their pastor, so forth and so on. In western Kansas and western Nebraska, you have Mennonite descent. This is changing all the time. You wouldn't find the same conditions in those places that you found when I was working there thirty years ago or thirty-five years ago. But they're there.

But the one I wanted to illustrate particularly was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Now there was a great number of Czechs. Now when I say Czechs I mean the whole Slovakian area of Europe.

Marcello: Central Europeans for the most part.

White: Central Europeans, yes. You probably have heard somewhere along the line that most your Olympic gymnasts originally came from these people because they carried this thing from their old country to this country. In that Czech population around Cedar Rapids they had their . . . oh, what's the Scandinavian name for the club? Anyhow, it was a social gymnastic eating sort of society. Fairly tightly knit. There was a man who was born in Czechoslovakia, educated in Czechoslovakia as an engineer, and he came to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, went to work for a local company there, eventually set up his own company there. When I knew him he was a man probably sixty years old. He had good ideas, good management, I mean, within himself, and he had a very successful company. He had a company which could produce immediately many items for the war effort. So he did. Well, through his own work prior to the war and during the first couple of years of the war, he became very wealthy. He

chartered a plane, and he took a gymnastic team from Cedar Rapids to Europe for gymnastic competition. His people that he took in that plant represented the United States from this one area that one year.

Okay, somebody finally organized it. When I called him he was up in years, nasty. This is one time where I blew the coop over the phone. I'd never met the man. But what he was saying about the United States, pampering those laboring people and so forth and other things that I don't remember the details of, finally got to me. I lost my cool. I can't remember his name. It was a Czech name. I said, "Okay, if that's the way you feel about it, do you want me to report to the War Department that you refused to meet with the representative of the United States government? How about you going back to Czechoslovakia where it is now?"

This shocked him. He didn't want to go, so he set up a meeting for the next day. Now I would have reported him alright for his attitude if he had refused to meet with me at all, not if he refused to agree with me. I would have reported him if he refused to meet. We finally worked out an agreement. Again, I had to keep that pressure on, though, because he couldn't get away from being a self-made immigrant

again. I don't blame him. I could feel his feelings. You would, too, but we were in a war.

Marcello: Now in the midst of one of your newspaper articles you mentioned that there's quite a difference in dealing with small companies and in dealing with big companies. Of the two, that is, big companies and small companies, which ones did you find to be the most difficult to deal with?

White: If you can generalize I would rather deal with the big companies.

Marcello: Why is that?

White: Because of the acceptance and they are organized. They have experienced, sophisticated people. You don't have to prove your worth. When you call them as a mediator you have to keep it going, but first you're accepted as a mediator on that side. Usually, the union dealing with company is the same way. They've got a sophisticated man or a group of people in there. You might even have one like General Motors who, although they are kept in touch with during negotiations, very seldom is the Mediation Service in it although both sides keep in touch. But if they really hit a snag they holler. They're sophisticated and they know that pressures will be put on them. They may be taken into Washington, but even then very seldom

is a mediator with them. They know the pressure will be put on them. They're doing government work as well as private work. Both sides know the score.

We had to constantly keep an educational program going in all the territories that I worked on because you were constantly going into new plants where, as I say, people didn't even hear of the Federal Mediation Service. I had to go through all of this explanation as to what does a mediator do. It used to drive my neighbors nuts in Omaha because I was at home so much. They wondered what I did. When you told them they didn't know. Mrs. White used to have trouble that way, too. They wondered what her husband did (chuckle).

Marcello: So it is tougher then to deal with smaller companies than it is with the larger ones.

White: I think so. You have exceptions to all of those rules, of course. There's one oil company which is a big one that frankly I hated to get an assignment with. They had the nastiest people I ever knew in their labor relations department. They fought every move all the way. Well, maybe this was sympathetic to the union. I don't know. I don't mind a man saying my doffee's no good. I don't mind a man

saying, "No, I'm not going to agree with that union."
If he tells me that in private that's where it will stay. But the man tells me my coffee's good and then he goes out and tells the neighbors, "That man makes the worst coffee I ever saw in my life," you can't get along with them. I had this one oil company that . . . and I'm not the only mediator that had that kind of trouble. Our man out in Oklahoma City had the worst trouble with them out in their panhandle operation.

Marcello: How do you explain the fact that small companies are so much tougher to deal with than most of these larger ones?

White: They're under a greater strain as far as being able to give, and at the same time unions always want more. A smaller company's under greater strain. They're more centrally controlled. You might have an individual in a small company who is sympathetic to his workers and so forth. Not too often do you find that plant organized. Usually, it's disgruntled people, unhappy people, that organize. So something's causing them to be unhappy. Maybe they're wrong. Most of the time they have a little right to be griping about something. These small companies are not able to go out and

borrow the capital that a big company can. They don't have the leadership above or the base to expand to do these things. There's lots of reasons why a smaller company's harder to work with in this atmosphere than a big one. Again, it's a personal thing where with a big company it's impersonal. You're dealing with employees for employees. In a small company you're dealing with owners for employees, which makes a difference. It makes a difference if you're getting your hand in my pocket here in this house representing the White family or whether you're getting your hand in my pocket in Moore Business Forms and I'm representing Moore Business Forms. It's vice versa. A small company's personal.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas Date: April 23, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. This is the fourth in a series of interviews with Mr. White concerning his experiences as a federal mediator and conciliator. The interview is taking place on April 23, 1975, in Denton, Texas.

 Now to begin our fourth session, Mr. White, why don't we try and tie together some of the loose ends from our previous interviews. For example, you mentioned the influence or the effects of whatever pro-labor attitudes you had during your service as a mediator. Obviously, you did have a great deal of experience as a blue collar worker or as a member of the rank-and-file. Why don't you pick up the story here and talk about the effect or the influence that these pro-labor attitudes may possibly have had.

Mr. White: I'd like to do this because this thing not only

influenced me, which I didn't know probably at the time these things were happening, but some of them, I realized, affected my life at home with my wife. Not adversely, but as she was a smalltown groceryman's daughter in a Republican area, a non-union area other than railroads. . . and those unions were removed from our little community where we were both raised. I saw her change in her attitude, so I know that they definitely affected me.

I particularly recall that I mentioned in one of our previous interviews that when I was with the Kansas State Employment Service I was assigned as the employment representative to the labor employment office at Manhattan, Kansas, when they started to rebuild old Camp Funston. Now this is just prior to our actual entrance into the war. Manhattan and Junction City, Kansas, were on each side of old Camp Funston. Neither one of them were big towns. Manhattan was the home of Kansas State Agricultural College. But neither were they a community in a surrounding area where rooms, housing, so forth was available for an influx of workers. The contractors were bringing those workers in. They wanted a thousand a day if they could get them in there.

So along with all of this thing of construction, the thing I want to talk mainly about was the necessity of developing additional communications. At that time we didn't have walkie-talkies. It was the telephone, and telephones had to be operated on the base. Their systems there, although there was a small system existing from World War I, it had to be expanded for the use of the military and the use of the construction people. Also, there was the telegraph.

So this influx of construction workers. . . and by the way, my father worked on this after I'd talked him into getting back in the carpenter trade, so I got actual information from that source. The telephone companies, of course, brought in construction workers. But in addition to that they brought in operators. Likewise the telegraph company, Western Union, did the same thing. The men in many cases were sleeping in shifts. There wasn't enough rooms available. There wasn't enough housing available. But very often three men used one bed in a twenty-four-hour shift. They slept in shifts, and this was costing them about five dollars a day. I can't remember the exact figure after all of these years, but it was somewhere in that area.

Then these operators were brought in by the telegraph companies were primarily women--young, middle aged, a few elderly. But you can't throw men and women--you might now, but not back in that day--in the same bed. I mean in shift operations. There was just no place close that these girls and women could stay.

Yet, in many cases they were offered a job away from their situation maybe 300 miles away into this project area. It sounded like they might have an alternative that they didn't have to accept this assignment. Actually, in many cases the alternative was take it or else.

So I had no direct involvement in that. This was a social thing. We weren't hiring or we weren't interviewing for the telephone company and the telegraph company. But the men that I dealt with, including my father, told me of these things. So I talked to some of the women. I talked to some of the girls just purely out of a sense of interest. Their attitude was right, but it was an economic impossibility for them to comply. So you can very easily imagine--they were getting paid about thirty-five dollars a week--what this sort of situation would do, let alone the fact that it was taking up most of the income. So the oldest profession on earth

came into the picture. Not by all of them. A lot of them left. They just quit. Then to follow that up, later after I was mediator they were constructing a Naval ordnance plant at Hastings, Nebraska.

Marcello: Okay, what you're saying in effect is that the construction activity at Camp Funston and the stories that you heard and have observed were going to have an influence in some of your future activities as a mediator?

White: That's right. I'll explain that a little more after I describe the situation at Hastings, Nebraska. Now Hastings was, and still is, I think, a beautiful small county seat town in Nebraska, about central Nebraska, out on the pretty much high plains country, good farming country. They had a small college there. I think at that time it was partially supported by the town and partially church-oriented. But there was a lot of pride in that town. It was well-oriented. It had to be to have what they had. They had sort of a mall that came off of the main street. As I remember, that run north and south. Now it wasn't a mall as such. There was two streets quite wide apart. In between these two streets there was the distance of a normal city block. Down this center section were a

public library, an excellent museum, an auditorium which was used for local plays, road shows coming in. They had quite a fine arts organization of the local people. Also, there was the high school which used these facilities and the college up at the end. That was a most attractive place. It was very clean and so forth.

There again, it was not a community in which you sent down 5,000 construction workers in two weeks and have housing for them. Some of those men working were driving. . . back in those days we didn't have paved roads all the way, and they were driving as far as 100 miles. Again, there was this thing of sleeping in shifts. Surprisingly, an awful lot of work went on at night. The grading and heavy machinery work went twenty-four hours a day.

Again, the communications thing came in but much more so than it did in Manhattan, Kansas, and Junction City adjacent to Camp Funston. They had to build the whole works. There was two hotels out on the main street. We didn't have motels in those days. The nicer of the two hotels on the main street . . . they kept rooms open for commercial travelers and government

employees because these had been the basic income to that hotel. And they had a good dining room. So often they were in trouble with people because they wouldn't just open it up and just let people stay there week after week after week.

Again, the telephone company and the telegraph company brought in girls, women, from distances. The wage scale was a little higher by this time, but it wasn't too much. Here was the difference. I was directly involved because I was there as a mediator, first in construction then secondly as a mediator on the telegraph end of it because they had a union.

Marcello: How did you get called in there as a mediator?

White: Well, I got into the construction end of it by virtue of a joint request from a contractor and from the management. The contractor called because certain promises had been made by the Navy that they would furnish protective devices to put on the machines when these men were working around the clock and out in the cold. The Navy wasn't furnishing them. So the contractor and the operating engineers union said, "Well, this can't go on." They were not in disagreement. You know, it can get awful cold in the center part of Nebraska not only in the dead of winter but at night in fairly decent spring weather and so forth. So I was called in on that.

This telegraph thing developed while I was there, not because they heard I was there but because it had just gone so long. Now with the two things going on concurrently, I had to work in conjunction with the engineering supervision from the Naval engineering division. In the case of the Army, it would be the Army Engineers. I don't know what they called this engineering section.

We had a bright young commander there, a graduate of the Naval Academy, who in his thinking was completely against being told what to do or having any direct suggestions. That young man had the eye for ladies. He had the most beautiful staff I ever saw in one room (chuckle). That's beside the point. I don't know how that got mixed up (chuckle). With the operating engineers and so forth, it came to a place where I had information out of this young commander's Naval supervising office that the protective gear was on base in the Naval storage. He just wouldn't turn it loose because he didn't believe those unions ought to run the job.

Well, of course, the unions weren't running the job. The contractor had an agreement with the union. If it would have been the kind of an agreement we

have now, those men would have been in heaven. But they did have an agreement with the Navy--the contractor and the union--out of Washington that the Navy would furnish this protective gear, not clothing but windshields and framing for cover for the operator. This was the sort of thing.

Well, I had this direct information--a leak--so it looked like we had got to the place. . . I couldn't give away to this commander where I received this information from. It looked like we'd got to the place of this old, old story about the Missouri farmer who had the reputation of having the best trained, most beautiful mules in the world. The eastern lady wanted a demonstration of his training methods. So he brings this young mule out. He walked over in the corner, and he picked up a two-by-four about four feet long. The first thing he did was hit the mule right between the eyes with the two-by-four. Well, of course, this lady objected to that. "What's this all about?" He said, "Well, lady, this is a mule. First, you have to get his attention."

So this began to look like somebody was going to have to get his attention. I knew the stuff was on the

base. I didn't know why they wouldn't turn it loose. I couldn't tell anybody of where this leak came from. So maybe this shows a little pro-labor leaning. I talked to the international representative there whom I could trust. I can't remember his name. I talked to the contractor. I gave them this information, and I said, "The only thing I know to do is hit this guy between the eyes with a two-by-four." They said, "Well do it." They knew what I was talking about. Well, we had a three-hour strike, and we had protective gear on the machines.

Marcello: In other words, they just walked off the job.

White: They just walked off the job, didn't sit on it. They just walked off. The word got back to the commander through me that these guys have shut her down. I'd been telling him this was going to happen. Now this is the time I told him, "Now I know you've got this gear in such-and-such warehouse and so forth. Get it out or you've got a strike on your hands that I can't do anything about." So it ended up in about three hours. They began to move the protective gear out.

Well, at the same time I was hearing these same stories about the communications . . . the telegraph workers. They came to me. They had a representative

of the telegraph union on the job there. He came to me and told me again these things that were happening. They didn't want to strike. The people didn't want to strike, but something was going to have to be done. Either the government, the Navy, or a local community or something was going to have to assist in furnishing decent housing for their employees until they were staffed and until they could find places of their own. They just couldn't bring in green country girls to operate a telegraph key where the Navy had to be forced to comply. When I say the Navy I mean one person. He was removed rather quickly to another station, and another man was sent in in his position. I talked to him. He passed it on to his superiors. It came back down pretty quick that certain barracks which were completed and which were intended for operating personnel at a later date could be used if somebody could furnish them.

So the community of Hastings says, "Okay, we'll see what we can do about furnishing." By this time the mayor was . . . I had brought him in. The situation worked out good. This also took care of the telephone people. It also helped take care of white collar personnel. They were understanding that nobody can

get this done overnight. They put up with a lot of bad stuff, but it was done.

I wrote a full report on this. I don't think that would be in the archives. I expect they threw it away in about three years. But in both cases . . . and my wife had been in Manhattan, and she got all riled up about the way these women were being treated. Now this was not women's lib as we know it now. It was just human decency.

Marcello: Sort of a bread-and-butter issue.

White: Bread-and-butter, very definitely. Well, then I told her about the recurrence of this very similar situation at Hastings in this small town. She continued to get riled up. She became almost completely pro-union. This was a social thing. It was human rights deal. If she hadn't one child and another one expected, she'd probably have gone out there and helped organize them.

Those two situations involved somewhat the same sort of deals. They definitely influenced my thinking where it took the union, the two-by-four, to bring people around to thinking, "Well, these people are human. They have certain rights. One of them is decency." That's just a brief account.

I began to remember things I had seen while I was

working with the International Harvester Company. Our office in Kansas City was down in the west bottoms in Kansas City. That was where the packing houses were-- Wilson, Cudahy, and the two big ones, Armour and Swift. Well, back in those days you could smell them for miles. You knew they were there. The thing I'm trying to point up . . . at the time these packing houses were built and moved into Kansas City . . . of course, we had had the Chisholm Trail, and trains from Abilene and so forth carried the cattle on to Chicago. Then packing houses moved west to Kansas City, which was a rail center. Not the ones in Chicago, they didn't move west. They just built additional plants out there. They brought in Europeans primarily from Central Europe, the Slovak area, and they primarily staffed those plants with people . . . not all but a great number of the early employees were of this Central European descent.

The packing industry had developed something very much like the shipping trade on the various coasts still has among the longshoremen, the people who load and unload ships. They had a "show up" every morning. Whether you worked or not depended on how many cattle they intended to kill that day, how many hogs, how many people they'd need on the killing floor,

and on through the process. So nobody had a job. He had a daily job.

Both with the Harvester Company and when I was with the Kansas Employment Service, I had called on officials in the packing houses because they had credit with the Harvester Company through machinery purchases. Also, when I was with the Employment Service in a public relations and information role and attempting to sell the Public Employment Service to employers, I had seen that "show up." I had also gotten a little interested in the area where a great majority of these people that were brought here and their descendents lived. I think it's still known as Strawberry Hill. You found a close-knit thing of families and family love there. They were hospitable people and good people.

So all of this entered into my thinking. "Why in the devil do they have to go down there and show up every morning? Why can't these companies plan to have so many, and then if they need extra help, bring them in?" But it wasn't that. Most of the departments from the killing floor through the cutting floor into the cold storage were "show up" with the exception of supervision.

Marcello: Now these were things that you had observed while you were working with International Harvester.

White: And the Kansas Employment Service.

Marcello: This was prior to the time that you were actually a federal mediator.

White: Right. I know this definitely affected my thinking because I knew a lot of those people. A few, I had been to their homes on Strawberry Hill. A friend of mine had been invited to a Czech wedding, which he talked about for years as being the most beautiful thing he had ever been involved in in his life--not wealthy, not flamboyant, not society, but this love among the people for each other and the sincere good wishes that went with this couple, the affection. Too soon maybe they became Americanized.

Those things definitely affected me. I wanted to talk about them because they were so human. I know that later in my service with the old U.S. Conciliation Service we used to do arbitration, a quasis-arbitration. Many of the contracts had written in, in the last step of the grievance procedure, that they shall call in a federal mediator in grievances.

So I think that during the period of time that I was in Omaha, Nebraska, and Des Moines, Iowa, I was in

every packing house up and down the darn Mississippi River and the Missouri River, plus chicken plants and so forth, involved in contract negotiations and grievances. They would save those up. Sometimes you'd go in and sit three or four days. You'd listen to fifteen or twenty grievances that were unresolved. Then you finally might be forced . . . although you tried to work it out as an agreement, you were finally forced to make a recommendation or say, "If I were an arbitrator, this would be my decision." I know that that influenced me a great deal, and I know that some of the Armour people, particularly because I was in so many of their plants, knew that I was influenced by this thing. But the funny part of it was, a lot of those guys had come up through the ranks, and they felt the same way. They really did.

So, okay, I pulled them out of a hole with their boss in Chicago by making a recommendation which might have been their own idea if they'd been able to say it in the first place. Likewise, sometimes it wasn't all in favor of the unions. They got out of line. They wanted things that weren't in the contract. They wanted to gain them through the use of the grievance procedure.

Marcello: Let me ask you this at this stage. Did you ever detect in any of the 1,000 plus cases in which you were involved that one party or the other tried to use you?

White: Oh, definitely! Very definitely! I can come to that quite a lot stronger if you prefer. We can think about it when I get back down here in Texas.

Marcello: Okay. We'll just defer to that question a little bit later on.

White: Let me answer a little of it now. Offhand, I can't remember the date when the War Labor Board became effective, but it was soon after I went to work with the Federal Mediation Service. Before a company or a union dispute could go before the War Labor Board in the form of a dispute, it had to be certified. Again, I get into this certification business. It had to be certified by a mediator. So then it was very detectable that often the union was wanting to get by this mediation meeting without making an agreement because they thought they'd get more out of the War Labor Board.

For instance, one of the big things that constantly occurred during that period was . . . of course, the union wanted union security. They wanted a closed shop if they could pull it off, a lot of them. Should I distinguish between a closed shop, a union shop, and so forth?

Marcello: I think most of us probably know the difference between a closed shop and an open shop. But why don't you just give us your definition of the two, anyhow?

White: Well, these are factual. In the closed shop, you had to be a member of the union before you went to work. The union shop usually was set up so that you became a member within its specified time within the contract after you went to work--thirty days, sixty days, some as long as ninety days. But at that period, you had to then become a member of the union. That's a union shop. The maintenance of membership provided that if . . . it was different from the union shop. It provided that a man did not have to belong to the union, but he did have to pay the union dues to support the expense of negotiations and so forth within a plant where there was a contract with the union and the company. Then we had an agency shop which was stronger than the maintenance of membership. It required. . . now wait a minute. I would mislead people. I've got maintenance of membership and agency shops a little mixed. The maintenance of membership provided that those who were members must maintain their membership, but you did not have to join the union. The agency shop, which

was not very prevalent and was not too well-liked by either side at that time, provided that you didn't have to belong to the union, but if there was a union contract you had to pay dues to the union for the support of the various things that a union has to spend money for.

Well, the War Labor Board, through the national office and the regional offices as cases came to them, provided generally where the thing was in dispute a maintenance of membership provision by their authority under the law. Though working in areas which were non-union, this is one instance where primarily the unions wanted to go to the War Labor Board because a voluntary acceptance of this thing was rather obnoxious to management.

So this was a use of the mediator which was . . . you had to do it, but it was not always liked by the mediator. I don't think I'd be bragging, but I had fewer cases go to the War Labor Board than a lot of other people did because I kept telling them, "Well, we can settle it just as well here because the War Labor Board will do so-and-so if you go there." So we got by in pretty good shape with not going to the War Labor

Board. However, I wasn't as free of this thing as that would probably sound. I had cases that I don't think should have gone to the board that did go because of stubbornness and so forth.

Marcello: You've mentioned the War Labor Board from time to time. Of course, this was an agency that was set up during the war, I assume, to handle the labor problems and so on that might arise and to keep the labor management relations more or less going smoothly. What was the connection between the Federal Mediation Service of which you were a member and this War Labor Board?

White: Well, as far as the government was concerned . . . of course, the War Labor Board was, as you said, set up to take care of disputes. The original thought was to cover those things which were war-oriented industry. Then it spread because nearly everything that was done was war-oriented--food plants, all types of food processing from the time the wheat left the farmer's field until it came to the house in the form of cereal or oatmeal or bread or flour, whatever it might be. So of necessity it spread. Likewise, the War Labor Board grew. They had to. They established regional offices.

Now our connection here was that we had liaison people in the War Labor Board in Washington--mediators,

administrative people, and so forth. They would funnel information very often down to the mediator in the field through the regional offices which was pertinent to a particular case that he was working on at that time. I'd say it was our people who would funnel that down. The War Labor Board people knew it and probably gave them the information with the intent that it would be talked about. Then in the regional offices . . . we didn't have a regional office in all the areas, towns, that the War Labor Board had regional offices. But we also had a liaison. Some of the men worked directly in the War Labor Board office with his own office and maybe a secretary. Others stayed in our office but were assigned directly to liaison.

If I had a case which I couldn't settle--I couldn't bring the parties to an agreement--and I thought it should be certified to the War Labor Board, I wrote the report, made the recommendation, and it went to our liaison man. He in turn took it to the War Labor Board people usually by hand. If they wanted to ask questions, he had probably already talked to us on the phone and got more information than you can often put in a report. So there was a close relationship.

Marcello: Was there an amicable relationship? Was there a great

deal of cooperation or was there rivalry between the agencies?

White: As far as I know, there was a great deal of cooperation, but there was rivalry and there was animosity at times that developed, particularly where you had the situation like we did, that is, those of us who were then in the Des Moines office. Of course, I had to face it alone when I was in Omaha by myself.

But more cases developed after I transferred to Des Moines, Iowa. We worked in an area which was on one side covered by the War Labor Board region out of Chicago, and the rest of it was covered by the War Labor Board region out at Kansas City. Occasionally, we'd have a particularly difficult case of war contract jobs--Army, Navy, Air Corps, or so forth oriented contracts--like the air base in Rapid City, South Dakota, or a little graphite plant of some kind up in Belle Fouche, South Dakota, which didn't amount to anything, but they were the only ones in the world producing this particular kind of an abrasive. So those hit Denver. Now there wasn't always real cooperation between the two War Labor Boards that we were directly involved with--the one in Chicago and the one in Kansas City. I had two Armour creameries.

Now when I say creamery I use their terminology often because it wasn't a creamery always in the sense that they handled milk and made butter and so forth. They were probably also a chicken plant, an egg processing plant, and the whole works. Produce came in from the local area all in there. They cracked eggs. They made butter. They made ice cream and so forth. They were just called a creamery. Primarily, the thing we'd get involved in was these egg cracking operations in the chicken plants.

We had one on the Iowa side in the southeast corner of Iowa which went to Chicago. It was a dispute. It was one of the early ones in this area. I think there'd been a couple of other cases somewhere in the East. I had one in Iowa but just across the line, which was in the Kansas City War Labor Board area. It ended in dispute. Now they were both with the packing house workers--CIO packing house workers. It went to Kansas City. We got two completely different decisions on exactly the same argument. It took mediation to bring those two directors together so that we finally . . . now this was a corresponding area where some of the employees in one plant knew employees in the other plant. It wasn't a matter of isolation. They were

together with the same representative. So we had some illustrations of that sort of thing.

Marcello: Were there ever overlapping jurisdictions between the War Labor Board and the Mediation Service? In other words, at times were there disputes between the two agencies as to who had jurisdiction in this particular case, or were the lines pretty well defined?

White: Again, personally, I don't remember that because we were the first line of defense, if you can put it that way, for the government. We were the first entrant. Now we did have some War Labor Board people who tried to conciliate. Generally, they were pretty quickly reprimanded. I'm sure that we had some commissioners other than myself who tried to quote the War Labor Board and settle the thing that way. But this was still mediation. We were still doing a job . . . other things . . . we weren't lying. We were factual. We had the case. The situation looked similar. He said, "Okay, you go to the board, and this is what you're going to get. Let's settle it here."

I had a funny case in Des Moines. There was a guy by the name of George Heaps. He was a real honorable guy. He had set up an office. He had formerly represented the mine owners--I'm talking about coal mines--in what

was District Thirteen of the United Mine Workers of John L. Lewis. George had set up a labor relations consulting office. He continued to handle mine--coal mine--disputes, local disputes. By this time they were negotiating nationally for the overall contract. He also had quite a business representing local firms in Iowa.

Well, George was also an alternate member of the War Labor Board in our region. I can't remember what union came in. I believe it was machinists. But the international representative was also an alternate member of the War Labor Board, an alternate being a guy who, if they had to have a full hearing and one of the regular members was sick and couldn't make it, the alternate went in.

Well, I had these two guys in the same meeting. I sat there in that hotel room till about three o'clock in the morning and listened to them explaining what the War Labor Board would do. But there was no agreement. I think I pulled a pretty slick one there. I made my little speech after I got tired of listening to all this of what the War Labor Board would do. "Okay, you people are alternate members. You do sit on the board. You do make decisions. You are equally

important as the regular members of the War Labor Board. We have the two of you here, so let's convene the War Labor Board here in this hotel tonight, one on each side. The rest of the people here, we will sit quietly. But I will be the moderator, and you gentlemen decide what the War Labor Board's going to do. Then let's write this down and have a contract here. We don't have to go through all of the expense."

And you know they bought it. They looked kind of sheepish, and they sat down and said, "Well, yes, you're right." We had a contract worked out pretty quick. George is dead now. His young assistant took over. Whether that little consulting firm is still in existence, I don't know. They did a lot of good. Of course, particularly up and down the Mississippi River on the Iowa side and in the larger cities we had a large number of unions, firms who were used to dealing with unions, and so forth. This primarily was where George Heaps operated.

Marcello: During World War II what were the major grievances that arose during the situations that you were involved in? In other words, generally speaking, what were the major grievances that you ran across during this period when you were called in as a mediator?

White: We were talking about grievances, and not contract negotiations.

Marcello: Maybe I need to make myself more clear. Why would you be called in? In other words, in general what was it that either labor or management could not agree to and therefore found it necessary to call you in? In broad terms what were the major areas of differences or grievances that the parties had?

White: Well, at the risk of being a little verbose, we were operating under one sentence in the organic law which set up the Department of Labor in 1913. That briefly was that the Secretary of Labor had the authority to appoint commissioners of conciliation for the purpose of intervening in labor disputes when he felt it was necessary, or words to that effect. So we grew from that one sentence. So there was no prohibition in that one sentence of what the director might think was pertinent to the welfare of the community or the country-- no prohibition as long as it was a labor dispute. So then you differentiate in your question of contract negotiations and what followed as disputes coming within the scope of the contract that was already in effect-- the grievance.

The thing of money was always there. Now we had . . . due to the wage-hour law, the law itself created obstruction to contracts. Things had to be changed,

and there was argument as to how, when, and what you did. For instance, the wage-hour . . . at that particular time I worked at it . . . I've worked under it a little. Briefly, it provided something like this: eight hours was a normal working day, and for working over eight hours you got time and half. In this there was mention of some shift work. This is the area where the confusion arose with our war period, war production, everything expanding. Many plants were working shifts that had never had any experience in working shifts. They set up three shifts . . . what comes in a working day? You staff a shift at 3:30 in the afternoon, you end up, what, at 11:30 for an eight-hour shift? What if you started at 4:30? Then you end up after twelve o'clock. You end at 12:30 Is this all the same day, this eight hours? I mean this is the actual thing that occurred.

These decisions had to be made. Many times you could work out an agreement under which people would work, but it very often followed that this question would be submitted the Wages and Hours Division, or it could go to the courts. So you had blocks which were actually caused by law itself.

Security, union security, was nearly always in the

question even where a plant had a closed shop. Maybe they were in an area which then state-wise prohibited a closed shop as Iowa, or even a union shop as Iowa, which has--I don't know whether they still have it or not--a very similar law to the one that applies to Texas. These were always of a question.

Many times things were entered very seriously on the part of a union committee as one of their demands or requests which arose strictly from the personal experience of one or two individuals in a plant. Because of the one or two they wanted to change the entire operation. Well, these were nearly always fought by management. They would say we could take care of this in another way. "You've got a grievance procedure, so bring it that way. We're not going to put it in a contract."

Management nearly always had a lawyer either at the table or in the background. I'll make this comment. That wasn't a great help no matter how fair-minded the lawyer might be. His was a legal attitude until he had years of experience in labor law and labor negotiations. Also, if they had an international representative of experience sitting on that union side, he was probably more versed in labor law than the lawyer was. So you

could get into some pretty technical arguments and discussions. These were the blocks.

Too often, maybe at that time, one side or the other was trying to change a contract to their advantage due to the pressure of the war--something they already had or maybe something they wanted that somebody else had which didn't fit in their place at all.

I had a situation where the unions were looking for people to represent them, too, as they were growing and needed staff. A union in this case had picked up a man from the Swift union, packing house workers, in an organization which did somewhat allied organizing that the packing house workers might do. This was United Farm Equipment Workers, which was CIO, and I don't think it exists any longer at all. This man was good in the Swift plant. But they had organized a plant in a different operation, which happened to be the manufacture of creamery machinery and which took highly skilled machanics, welders, stainless steel welders. These things all had to meet health department requirements and inspection and pressure inspections and so forth in some state or the other, wherever they went to. He tried to install that Swift packing house contract verbatim into this place where they manufactured creamery machinery.

So you run into the thing of--it very often happened--having to educate the parties on both sides. Maybe it was just one side at a time, and maybe it was both sides at a time that had to be educated in contract negotiations. Even where they were willing to sign a contract you had to . . . well, you had to tie them together. You had to exert leadership by sitting at the head of that table to get those people to come together. We had other times where maybe the meetings were a breeze. Even though there were some serious problems you knew through virtue of having been there before or been with these people in some other negotiations or having descriptions from a fellow commissioner that occasional intervention was all that was necessary with these people, or an occasional injection of an idea where they had hit a little snag. But here were, again, sophisticated and experienced negotiators with the intent to work out a contract. So you sit there. Maybe you got a little tired of sitting. Maybe you'd open your mouth three or four times a day. You didn't even have time to read the newspaper in these kind of meetings. Always money was in the picture, always security of some kind. Beyond that, these things would run the gamut all over the place.

Marcello: Obviously, during the war years, too, housing or working conditions in general would have probably been an issue, would they not? You've sighted those examples at the beginning of the lecture at Hastings and at Camp Funston.

White: Well, as a contract item, not too often though. You would run into them in areas where you had a concentration, maybe, of some coal mines. This goes back to the song "Sixteen Tons" or "I Owe My Soul to the Company Store." In brick plants you'd often find this situation where you had housing built. They were out away from areas where there was housing built. They were out away from areas where housing was available--company-owned houses. Not too often was there the company-owned store, but they had them occasionally. In these places you run into this type of contract discussions about housing and so forth. Otherwise, it was just primarily gripes because without the thing of isolation there was very little that management could do other than loan people money to make their housing better or bring pressure to bear on somebody to provide housing.

Now it's a funny thing that you brought that up. Through the years I saw plants built where no provision was made in thinking as they hired employees--and they knew they would have to bring in employees--of where those people were going to live. So I made a speech

many years later down in Dallas to the Industrial Engineers Society. This was my theme. Here are these people, these industrial engineers who do the planning. He knows how a plant ought to be built. He's able to do it. He knows how an assembly line has to be set up. He knows how a flow plan for a chemical plant has to work. But they completely left out the human element. They never considered where these people are going to live. They did not think one month down the line from the time that plant opened that here's some guy that they'd like to keep, but he can't find housing so he goes off where he can, a family situation again. Sure, many wives and mothers have put up with an awful lot of loneliness. But they didn't like it. Some of them didn't put up with it either. So this brought about an unhappy employee and he goes away.

That's a very small illustration of some of those things. I still think we're faced with that same sort of condition. We have all of the skills in the world, all the skills that weren't even dreamed of twenty years ago, to establish an efficient production of some kind. But we leave out where the people are going to live, their recreation, their family togetherness. We

leave that out of the picture. We build that plant, and then we expect people to fit it.

Marcello: Now during your career you handled over 1,000 cases according to the articles that I've read. How do you decide which cases warrant your attention? In other words, I would assume that on any given day there may be three or four or five cases that might come up. How do you decide which one receives priority?

White: Well, during the war years, you had a little different basis for establishing whether you went to this plant or that one. That was maybe on your own judgement, but it also included your own knowledge of the plant. Maybe you communicated with both of the parties and found out as much as you could about them before you made your decision, and then you made it on the basis of, well, "Where is the greatest threat, and what will happen if Plant A loses production due to a strike or Plant B? What happens to the total effort? Which is worse?" This you can start with. Then, again, very often by knowing the union and the union representatives you knew that a threat conveyed to you in your first contact that a strike would occur if they didn't have an agreement at a certain time was window dressing. Where you knew those things, you gambled. This time

he didn't mean it either. He was doing the usual thing to stir things up. That's not the proper word. Preparation for tough negotiations would be a better setup. You might get the same type of reaction from management when you made the first. . . that, "Okay, if we haven't got a contract we go back to running it ourselves. As of a certain date the contract's out the window." Now they did that a lot, management did. So these were negotiating procedures as much as anything else.

Of course, you always had the individual that didn't want a union in the first place. Or maybe the membership had changed their minds and they didn't actually want to continue with a contract. Maybe they were looking for a way out, these individuals of the community area that didn't want a contract. Management didn't want a contract, so they were looking way out. Maybe they'd rather take a strike and get rid of the union. But generally these were negotiating items that . . . the threat of a strike or management's threat of shutting down the plant or to continuing to work with an open shop completely.

With the old CIO, Congress of Industrial Organizations, I was never able to determine whether this was

a national policy set down by the national office and which went all through their affiliated unions or whether it was something just spread by word of mouth. But invariably, after the Taft-Hartley Act came in where the requirement was for a notification to the other party sixty days in advance of the termination date of the contract and thirty days prior to the termination date to the Federal Mediation Service, this side, the industrial side of organized labor, would invariably put in a strike threat in that first notice. Invariably, it just made people mad. It didn't work because in the first place they didn't know whether they'd have to strike. They hadn't even contacted management. This was often true. Management would be thoroughly surprised that they'd get this notification, particularly the thirty-day one that went to the Mediation Service, that said, "If we don't have a contract at the expiration date, we will shut the plant down." Management hadn't even been contacted for a meeting. What would you do? You'd get mad, too. There you were going to be clubbed and you hadn't even met the man. So you knew those things--to get back to this question--would happen. You got this threat in the mail that this union's going to shut this plant down. Maybe you'd dealt with the guy before in that contract

negotiation before. But you knew the general habit that this was occurring. Sure, you went ahead and contacted him, but you didn't get excited about it.

I didn't do this, but I remember . . . we had a man that weighed about 260 pounds. He was a great big guy. He was with the farm equipment workers. By the way, he was a friend--I don't know what the background was--of Henry Wallace, who was Secretary of Agriculture and so forth. His name was Charlie Hobby. He had a lot of social ideas. He was a hard worker. He was continuing his education. He was going to college all the time he was organizing. Usually, he was always able to keep his appointments. He kept them. How he managed that college work, I don't know. He got in it. Charlie had . . . this big man had been assigned to this case. This threat was there as usual. So the commissioner was pretty well tied up, and he didn't make an early contact. He had some very important assignments which were direct production for the war effort. So he didn't make the contact, so Hobby called him. He said, "Listen, Mike, we're going to shut the plant down." Mike says, "Well, sometimes you boys will do that, and then you just take the consequences." He hung up the phone. There was no strike.

You had to learn to take those sort of bluffs. How you learned it was by experience and information from other people. It was the same way that you knew recurring items in a contract, and you might have a file going back for ten years. Recurring items were of no consequence in their demands because they'd given them up year after year. They were in there for window dressing, so you tried to dodge them, stay away from them.

Marcello: In determining priority what role did the size of a particular plant play? In other words, suppose you had five cases that cropped up at one time. You had to decide in what order that you were going to address yourself to those five cases. Now did you say, "This plant's the biggest, so therefore that'll be my first priority. This plant's the second biggest, so that'll be my second priority." Did the size of a plant play a role in determining priorities?

White: Oh, definitely not as far as I was concerned, and I don't think so with any of the commissioners at that time. Sure, we had our pride, and we had a great deal of pride in the U.S. Conciliation Service. We were proud to be working for it because it was such an honest organization. But we were not looking for publicity, notoriety or whatever a newspaper watching the negotiations on a large plant.

Marcello: Well, the point also is that. . . I think what you're getting to is that the size of a plant didn't necessarily mean that that was the most important case that you were facing.

White: Oh, no, definitely not. You might have an aircraft plant which was a large and a direct contribution. I saw a B-25 leave that North American plant in Kansas City. I stood there and watched them where they . . . there was no curving around. They took off one after the other. These B-25's were refueled on the East Coast, West Coast, and went directly into the war effort. They weren't tested out. They came off that assembly line, they were started up, a pilot tried all of the controls, and if they seemed alright he was on his way. He might be the guy that was flying it directly into the war. That sort of a case might, in your own mind, take direct priority over an Armour packing plant. Food is also important as well as arsenals, but there was more food plants than there were aircraft companies.

Sometimes due to their contacts in Washington, we would be told, "Drop everything. Get on so-and-so." This is at the time of the assignment. They knew things that maybe we wouldn't know of attitude or pressure from the chief or staff or maybe even the President himself.

After the 1947 act which picked us bodily out of the Department of Labor and made an independent agency, we were actually working directly under the President's office. He appointed . . . no longer did the Secretary of Labor appoint our director. He appointed him. This is still true. So in that manner you're part of the operational office of the President of the United States. So sometimes you knew the pressure was coming from up there. Maybe we didn't know why, but it was there. And I can say that, as far as the few that I had, I had no reason to believe it was any political thing in it. I think all of our presidents were pretty honest that way. I think I mentioned this barbershop at Los Alamos.

Marcello: Is this the one that's mentioned in the newspaper article that I have before me, where there was this barbershop in a one-road defense project town?

White: That is exactly the place.

Marcello: Well, again, we are citing now an example of a small plant that was very vital . . . not a plant, but this barbershop was very vital so far as defense production was concerned in this town. You might pick up the story from here.

White: It was vital for only one reason. People could go for a long period of time without a haircut, but this was a closed city, Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Marcello: What do you mean when you say it was a closed city?

White: Even the school children of the families, of the men who worked there. Primarily it started out as a scientific community. There was a school there. They weren't taken out to the public schools because they didn't want people they didn't know running in and out of that place. It was based on the matter of whether you got into Los Alamos during this period or not to know, not that you had full clearance, a full investigation, and number-one priority. You still had to prove your need to know to get past that guard.

Marcello: Your need to know. I don't understand what you mean.

White: Well, the barbershop was there to keep from running on and off the reservation, that they could have all of these services provided there. That didn't deny that they needed a vacation and so forth where they were allowed off but not a constant movement back and forth from outside the reservation to inside.

Marcello: Was this done mainly in the name of secrecy and security?

White: This was a nuclear area where the first atomic bomb was developed--not where it was put together but where it was developed. All the knowledge was concentrated there. Yes, it was very secretive. There was a lot of people in New Mexico that didn't even know Los Alamos was anything more than a mesa. People wondered what they built that

road west out of Santa Fe for.

So people could have gone a long time without a haircut. But you don't keep happy people when they get irritated about not having a haircut if they want a haircut.

Marcello: Before we go any further let's go back and develop a little bit of background information on this particular case. Again, to tie things together, we are talking about an example of where a small plant, in this case a one-man barbershop . . .

White: No, there's four chairs.

Marcello: Okay, four chairs. Anyway, this is a case where a barbershop was involved in some sort of a dispute which might result in a work stoppage at this defense-oriented plant--a very vital plant. Okay, how did the dispute arise, and what was the importance of it?

White: Well, the operation of this barbershop was by concession. In other words, one man was given a concession that he would operate the barbershop in this closed area.

Marcello: Was this inside the reservation?

White: Right. It was not too far removed from some of the scientific laboratories. You could walk very easily to two or three of them from this barbershop. He had the concession with certain provisions made that he'd provide

enough barbers to take care of the whole community. They wouldn't have to go get a haircut anywhere else. In return for that he was guaranteed a certain amount of income. Now people paid for their haircuts alright, but if he didn't make the amount that he was supposed to make, the government would make it up. Well, that set a ceiling. So you could pay a barber so much, and he had a need for so many barbers. Well, the barbers didn't like to be confined there either after they'd been . . . I mean although you were free it was a confining existence. Even though you might go deer hunting on the back of the reservation, if you're rugged enough to do it with permission, you're still confined. So although there was housing provided and the barbers . . . if they were married and had a family, they could have brought their families. I believe there was one man that didn't.

All of these things are of a little confining nature, and they did want to save money and so forth. They began to put the pressure on the concessionaire, who was a barber, to increase primarily wages, which would have forced him to increase the cost of a haircut, shave, which in turn would force him to go to the head people, the controlling government people, of this very closed operation at this time, and he did. He ran into a snag. They

had an agreement for this guarantee of so much income to run for a certain length of time, so here he was up against a deadline.

Even the manager, the concessionaire, was a union barber. But he was also the manager, so he was negotiating with these three barbers. Of course, they were all there in the same shop together. This negotiating went on kind of constantly, I guess, when they didn't have other people in there. They wouldn't . . . the three men wouldn't give up their request for additional wages and fringes of some kind.

The government people in charge of the plant were not labor people. They were scientists. They either kind of sluffed this responsibility off, or they said, "Well, no, we've got an agreement. Talk to us after this runs out."

So eventually somebody said, "Let's call in a mediator and see if we can't get something done." Well, that article you have shows another man there, Ted Morrow. Well, Ted Morrow was quite a guy. He was the regional director at that time.

I did a lot of sort of boring work. I was kept on the road quite a lot--a lot of stuff in New Mexico, some in Oklahoma, quite a lot in Louisiana--sometimes as a

panel chairman, sometimes as a trouble-shooter when another commissioner by saying the wrong thing. . . we all do it. I had to have people come in and take over for me, too. I was used quite a lot in that respect at that particular time.

Well, I had been one other time up at Los Alamos on an assignment with the machinists union. This worked out very quickly. I guess I was only on the reservation one day during that period. Somebody got the idea, "Well, let's call in a mediator." Well, the mediator was able to hear the story from the barbers in the barbershop, including the concessionaire who was a barber. We heard his troubles, also. His problem, as far as doing anything for these guys financially was concerned, was being able to get to the management, the government people, the scientists. Although I never got an agreement I was able to make the proposition to the union people, "Now just cool it. When I get out of this joint and I get back in Santa Fe, I'll get on the phone. Our people in Washington will make contact with the people that they have to make contact with. I think we can get this thing thrown out so you can get a little more money because I think you should have it. It doesn't look like it's enough."

So this is what happened. It did. It worked out

that way. I called our regional director, this guy Morrow. He called Washington. Washington talked to somebody. I don't know yet who. I was still in Santa Fe, see. The next day I got a telephone call that said, "We are sending a telegram to so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so that they are authorized to make a greater guarantee to the barbershop concession."

Marcello: Well, how could a strike at the barbershop affect the work at this defense plant?

White: Well, all of your mechanics up there and so forth--carpenters, machinists, electricians, telegraph workers and so forth--they were all union. If the barbers had started walking up and down the streets as pickets, most of those guys would have come out.

Marcello: In other words, those workers would have joined the picket lines with the barbers.

White: They would have just refused to cross the picket line.

Marcello: Even though they belonged to different unions.

White: Even though they belonged to different unions. But they had quite a lot of power. Also, they knew that because it, again, was a closed thing. It was quite a job getting all of the clearance and investigation made necessary to clear people into that type of an installation which was so secretive.

Well, that brings up another thing. I wasn't the only one. We have another man who just celebrated his fiftieth wedding anniversary, Danny Edwards, Daniel Edwards, who was also a member of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers. Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers got a bad reputation as communist-controlled. Danny and I had an awful time getting clearance. I think I was the last one in this region to be cleared. It was primarily because of my former affiliation or membership in the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Union. I got word that they investigated me clear back to before I ever worked for the government. Later I talked to Danny Edwards, and he said he had the same thing. So it was hard getting into that kind of a place, although by this time I had full security clearance by the time I was assigned up there. But it was still . . . you got in there not because you had priority clearance. "What are you needing to know?" There's a great deal of difference. That top priority just doesn't get you in everywhere.

Marcello: Were there ever any instances during the war years where you were actually called in by a governor or some other public official?

White: Yes, that happens. You would find it happening. This is not only during war years. It might happen now. I

don't believe it would be quite as prevalent because certain of those things have been worked out.

Oil pipelines--for instance, Cities Service has lines and connecting lines maybe through some other company's line for a ways from deep South Texas to Chicago, Illinois, up through Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Kansas City, Missouri, across Missouri. The governor of Kansas called out people into that negotiation. This was the first year that they had negotiated the entire contract with the company from the locals representing people in South Texas clear through to Chicago. It was a real threat. Now I understood at the time that the governors of the states that would be affected talked by phone, and Governor Arn, who was a young attorney. . . as far as I'm concerned he was one of the best governors Kansas ever had. He was a Democrat, which is unusual (chuckle).

Marcello: You mean unusual in the sense that Kansas had a Democratic governor.

White: Yes. But he was bright, and I understand he was given the authority by the other governors to do everything he could with their support to attempt to avert any stoppage of this pipeline. Well, that went up into Minnesota, too. I think they had a line that went to Minneapolis at that time, a gas line.

Governor Arn finally ended up in Wichita, Kansas. We had three men on a panel sitting with . . . not sitting with us when we were sitting, but in the hotel. We arranged for him to have a meeting with us. Then we arranged for him to have a meeting separately with the two negotiating parties. What he said to them, I don't know, but he sure made an impression. We went ahead and got an agreement after Arn talked.

Now I happen to know his commissioner of public utilities or whatever they call them up there. I had worked with him some years before. So I talked to him, oh, a couple or three years later, and I understand that he had all of the backing from these governors. Now this is an indirect thing two years later. But he had all of the backing from these other governors to tell management, "You get together on some kind of a contract or we're going to put the heat on you to restrictions in our utilities commission." He told the union, "Now you get together with these people in some manner or other, or we will do everything we can to get a law passed which restricts the devil out of interstate unions."

Marcello: Do you recall the year when this particular case came up? It was during the war years?

White: It was right at the end of the war. It must have been about '46 or '47. When did that war end, '47?

Marcello: No, World War II ended in 1945.

White: Well, then this was afterwards. This was '46 or '47, so it was a little after that.

I'm sure that other commissioners had probably more of that than we would have had out in this open area. In the background very often you would find city officials. This was in the area of public transportation, for instance. The San Antonio Transit Company had a union and a contract for over forty-two years, and they'd never had a strike. I was the first federal mediator ever on the property. An international representative of the Amalgamated was the first international representative of that union that had ever been on that property. San Antonio was the type of situation. . . now it was privately owned, more or less, by a man in Dallas. I can't tell you his name anymore. The local people down there--I'm talking about local union people--had no idea how the Federal Mediation Service worked or that they were even around. The international representative was very knowledgeable. We got the word through him. No, now back up. The word went to Washington to the then mayor of San Antonio who was Jack White. We talked about the WPA project on the San Antonio River, river theater and so forth, that WPA built. Jack White was given very much

the praise of . . . although he was not trained that way and had no background in it, he had visions of what could be done with that little river and the river theater and the rebuilding of old San Antonio. He had a long experience in public life. He started out as a bellhop in the Gunter Hotel. He first sent the word to Washington in this particular case. We had that happen very often, where the mayors were fearful for public transportation, and they'd call for us. I would imagine that if we had another war going on that maybe the total population being more knowledgeable of . . . and better communication and so forth that we might have a lot more of governors' intervention than we used to. I would think so.

Marcello: During the war years while you were a mediator were there ever very many threats of violence, or was there a potential there for violence in any of the cases that you got involved in? By that time had the period of labor violence more or less subsided? You know, for example, when the Wagner Act came in in 1935, and when labor began to organize, there was a great deal of violence during that period. Now by the war years . . . by the time the war years had come had the violence more or less subsided, or were you involved in cases where there was a potential for violence?

White: Oh, yes, there was numerous times where the potential was there. Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Waterloo, Iowa, are industrial towns. They're also closely allied agriculturally--for agricultural machinery, for processing of agricultural products. For instance, the largest cereal plant in the world was--I suppose it still is--Quaker Oats in Cedar Rapids.

In Cedar Rapids was the plant which is now owned by Caterpillar. I can always remember that name because it kind of stuck with me for some reason or other before I was ever there--LaPlant-Choate. I guess this was the two men who started the plant originally. Now they were builders of heavy industrial machinery, primarily dirt-moving machinery such as shovels, graders. They did a lot of work for Caterpillar Tractor, who now owns them. This plant had been originally started in what was apparently part of, maybe a no longer used part of, railroad yards. Some of the railroad buildings had been converted.

Negotiations were carried on . . . now this union was an early local of the steel workers union. It got that way due to the fact that the machinists were a craft union, and they wouldn't take in the ordinary worker. So they sort of disintegrated as a machinists union and ended

up as an industrial union with all of the employees eligible and became part of the steel workers. They, as I say, did work for Caterpillar and so forth. Having this facility and the location, the skilled people and so forth, they were subcontractors to a lot of assemblers who put together tanks, landing craft, all of this sort of thing--direct suppliers to these places while they continued to build stuff for Caterpillar, which was building blades and bulldozers and tanks and so forth. They had quite an aggressive union.

I'm leading up to a thing of maybe violence. I was in negotiations in this plant. The superintendent generally conducted the negotiations with the union. This was conducted in one of the, I think, original yardmasters of the railroad yard offices. It was a square building with a second story which was glass all around. Now there was a stairway up the outside to this second floor, and there was also a stairway up the inside. Well, the superintendent's office was downstairs. If he wanted to go upstairs he could see almost the whole operation. Although he couldn't see in the doors, he could see what generally was going on. They could even almost stick their head out the door and holler for the foreman to come tell them something. I'm exaggerating

that a little bit, but it was close . . . with all of this glass enclosure up there. Well, that's where we conducted negotiations.

The first year ended up with a contract. The thing I remember was as we finally got that contract signed--and the war was on--the superintendent of this plant made the comment, "Well, I'll be glad when these boys get back that are in the Army. Then we won't have so damn many radicals around here." I said, "Well, I don't know. I wouldn't guess that way if I were you. When you get those boys back you're going to find that they missed an awful lot, and they're going to want an awful lot when they get back. The young man that's now in Germany or wherever he might be in the Army had been elected president. I don't know him, but he's twenty-seven years old, and he has a family. I don't believe you'll find him the same individual that he was when he left here when he comes back and continues to be president."

Well, lo and behold, this guy got wounded, shot up. He was in the next negotiations. He was no longer the same, nice, easygoing guy. He'd been hurt. His family had been hurt. He couldn't do the same kind of work. He was handicapped by the impairment of one arm, although the company furnished him employment he could do. He was

intelligent but he wasn't mentally the same guy. His attitude was different. So we were having a rugged time in negotiations. We're still in this building with all of the glass enclosures up on the second floor.

Marcello: And this is during the war?

White: This is during the war. I think we were getting within about two days of . . . maybe it was the last day before the expiration date that would occur the next day for the present contract. It was along about three o'clock in the afternoon. It was just about the time you'd have a shift change so that the employees were coming in.

Lo and behold, I heard a lot of shouting and so forth. Out of the buildings came the employees who were working and then came the employees who were reporting to work. They all ganged up around this building. There was a walkway around this upstairs. Well, of course, we knew something had happened, but we didn't know exactly what. We knew the employees was down there in that yard.

They were mad. This wasn't something . . . sure, it was pre-arranged, but it wasn't something that might be just put on for show. These people came out of there mad. Their cost of living . . . everything had gone haywire . . . plus the leadership of this young man whose attitude towards life had changed due to his particular involvement in the war.

They came out of there mad, and it took me and the international representative a good hour talking to those people out on that platform. . . that they had a contract. This was the international representative enforcing what he could. They had a contract until such-and-such a time within a day or so. Up until that time they owed this company their employment. This was the international representative talking. I was standing out there doing the best I could without making promises to say, "Get back to work. We can't negotiate with 300 people. I'm not trying to bar you from negotiations. We just can't talk that way. Let this committee and your international representative and the management have the time to see if we don't work out an agreement."

It took quite a lot of persuasion. Actually, you could feel the . . . you could just feel this thing coming from these people. What do they call it now, the vibes? You can feel those vibrations. There's no question but what they were mad. There was no question but what it wouldn't have taken much to set off a spark. If it had been, it would have been pretty bad because . . . I'm not talking about myself. It'd have been bad for everybody because there's an awful lot of weapons around there--all kinds of iron and steel.

Well, they did go back to work. By this time, of course, the other people had . . . the shift had changed. The new ones coming were taking over, and the others could go home. This had a little to do--that these guys that were headed home wanted to go home. So I'm telling you, we worked from there on. We got an agreement. We got it four or five hours before the deadline actually occurred. The people kept their promise. They stayed in. There was no more disturbance out there. But there for a good hour there was real difficulty.

Then, again, I think I mentioned it a little bit that in Omaha these plants . . . there were four. There was Swift, Armour, Wilson, and Cudahy, with Swift and Armour being the big ones. But anyhow these four plants were there. Of course, Omaha is still a hot processing center. This is primarily the work. They killed some beef, but primarily they were hog processing. Packing house workers had every plant organized. Although they didn't negotiate together, they negotiated at the same time when the contracts expired. They had a universal date--August 19, whenever the year came around.

We never arrived at a contract by August 19; they went out on strike. This thing ran quite a little while. Those packing houses were down. We had meetings, and we had periods of meetings. Nobody could think of anything to do about it.

Again, this was a situation where you could feel the vibrations. I don't know just how it came about. Apparently, some strong people in the rank-and-file of the union had asked that their international representative, that the regional director for the packing house workers, and myself come into their meeting. This was a meeting of the employees of all of the packing houses-- not just one.

So we went out there. By this time we had pretty much of a chill in the air in the evenings. It was kind of cold. This building, right near the packing houses, was not designed to hold 1,200 people. But there was 1,200 people in there--wet, human smell, all of this. They had a little platform. Here we were, the three of us up there on the platform.

Well, to make a long story short, we weren't getting across to the people why we didn't have a contract, that there was another side over there that was saying, "No." We weren't trying to keep them out on strike by not having meetings every day. We just didn't have any new ideas to talk about. They themselves were going to have to give some. Now all of the union people on the platform were saying the same thing, not just me.

Well, they kept getting madder and madder. Again, these vibrations were showing up. Again, we had to play

some mob psychology. It could have happened, and I was scared. The regional director was scared because he in a way was in the same position I was at that time, more so than the other two union men. He was trying to bring peace, and to most of these people he was a stranger.

So you know what happened? They ran all four of us out. They told us to leave. Just what happened in the rest of that meeting, I don't know. But there was an awfully good restaurant across the street. It probably was the best place to eat in Omaha. Part of it hung over the stockyards. We were over there waiting. We didn't know whether anybody'd contact us or not. They'd run us out, but we were waiting.

Pretty soon the people began coming out of that meeting hall. They sent three men over to the restaurant looking for us, thinking we might be there, and we were. These men were authorized to tell us to set up another meeting and come back with the best offer that the company would make. The time had come to make an agreement, and the people felt that way. So this thing worked out by arriving at a contract through no original effort of anything except the action of the people themselves. Whether it was somebody smart or just one of those things that happened, they were left in the position

where they had to carry their own responsibility and make their own decisions. And they made one. They made the right one.

Marcello: I would assume that as a mediator it would also be important in your job to try and work out face-saving devices for both parties concerned.

White: Oh, definitely you had to save somebody's face nearly all the time. These are kind of hard to pinpoint as you go through. There was times when somebody had to save the commissioner's face, too. Maybe he had gone out on a limb.

That part of it is more easily illustrated by using the national director. One of our directors had got mixed up in what is known as the nonferrous metals negotiations, the copper mines, silver, and so forth, primarily copper--Anaconda, Phelps-Dodge, International Minerals, all of these people that have these kind of mines. So many of these at that time. . . well, it's happened since. It's now steel workers. Well, it was that time I'm talking about Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers--my old union. All of them are negotiating, and nearly all of them are on strike. A few individual places . . . the contract had not run out yet.

Our national director, who was a very knowledgable

man at this time . . . in this connection I won't mention his name. I hope to bring him in later. He goes out there to sit in negotiations personally. Now this was either in Salt Lake City or Idaho Falls or somewhere out in the mining area. Lo and behold, he comes with a public recommendation which hit all of the papers. He missed it by just about a mile. The strike went on. Neither side accepted his recommendation. It was finally settled and agreed to by the union for less money than he had recommended. The management gave some health things which the union hadn't even asked for. So this is a case where a very knowledgeable man missed the boat. But his prestige. . . it was a matter of . . . again, the human error comes in. We all guess wrong sometimes.

Marcello: Okay, at this stage let's just go back and get involved in a little bit of chronology here. In April of 1942 you joined the United States Mediation and Conciliation Service.

White: United States Conciliation Service.

Marcello: That's right. It didn't become . . . Mediation didn't come in until after Taft Hartley.

White: Right.

Marcello: Okay, so it was the United States Conciliation Service.

Now where was your first assignment after you had gone through that orientation period?

White: Well, I think I mentioned that a little previously. First, I was assigned to break in in Chicago with an individual commissioner.

Marcello: Right.

White: But it didn't work out due to his illness. Then I was sent out to Omaha to break in with another individual commissioner. This didn't work out due to his illness. The case we were in when he got sick, I had to finish . . .

Marcello: Yes, we mentioned those two cases. That's correct.

White: . . . after clearing with Washington with my superior. Nobody came in to relieve me.

Marcello: Were you more or less a trainee at this time?

White: I was very definitely in the period of being a trainee, yes.

Marcello: You were not a commissioner yet.

White: I had the title, but I didn't have the experience.

Marcello: Oh, I see. As soon as you went through your orientation period, you were automatically . . . you were a commissioner. You had this title.

White: Yes, I had the credentials which said, "Commissioner." But I had sat in my first meeting--due to the illness

of the commissioner with whom I was supposed to break in--all by myself in an area in which I had little experience. That was electricity, electrical motors--this Pioneer Gen-E Company. In the second situation that I ended up being by myself was in the bakeries which I did have some knowledge of. In between that I had one day on a panel with two very knowledgeable commissioners, which was a great help to me. That was my training. From there on I was on my own. But I didn't know this for about a month. I just knew I was there. I was on my own then, and I was handling the cases.

Marcello: But by this time you knew that you were going to be assigned to this midwestern area.

White: Oh, yes. Yes, I knew I'd work out here somewhere.

Marcello: Now was the Conciliation Service divided into regions as such, or exactly how was it divided up?

White: Not at that time.

Marcello: Did you have a home base or a home office?

White: Yes, in a way it was regionalized, but it was regionalized only on paper. I believe we had at that time in Washington five zone directors. These handled individually . . . for instance, a person who was in

charge of the mountain states and California handled that whole region. All of the commissioners reported to him.

Marcello: He would have been one of the zone directors.

White: He would have been one of the zone directors. One handled the South. There was two in the heavily populated Northeast. Then . . . well, there was five, I'm sure. I think our first region was set up along about 1943 or '44, where a regional director was installed in the region in which he directed. The first one was in Chicago.

Marcello: In other words, as a commissioner you would be responsible to one of these zone directors.

White: Right. He was your immediate supervisor. The man who came to take the first regional office in Chicago was a man by the name of MacDonald.

Marcello: Now is this where your zone office was located? Did you work out of Chicago?

White: Not when it was a zone.

Marcello: I see.

White: When it was first set up as a regional office in the region, physically in the region, in Chicago, I worked out of Chicago. Previous to that we had all worked out of labor relations for Reynolds Metals. He was a good one. He was a good director.

Marcello: So when you first entered, then, you were working out of Washington. It was later on when the zones were set up.

White: Yes, we made all of our reports to Washington, and most of the reports were made by telegraph. You got an assignment. Sometimes it was by telephone, most of the time by telegraph, to contact so-and-so, such-and-such, such-and-such a company. This might be the total information that you had.

Marcello: Now at this time would you be living someplace in the field? Where would you establish your headquarters or home or whatever?

White: Well, I was right at this beginning . . . of course, when I left Kansas City where we were living . . . when I went to work for the Conciliation Service . . . the moment I left there I was on daily per diem for the Washington training period. When I went to Chicago to break in, I was still on per diem. When I went to Omaha I was still on per diem. I believe at that time they had four commissioners located in Chicago with the office they had in the attic of that old federal building up there. It was pretty rugged. The men there were not on per diem unless they were out of their field station, which is the way most of the

things applied. As big as Chicago was, those guys were very seldom on per diem. When I was sent to Omaha I was still on per diem. I stayed there while they were making up their minds about where to send me and doing the work on per diem.

Marcello: In other words, during this period you were living out of a suitcase more or less.

White: I was living out of a suitcase and doing my own laundry half the time, doing my own clerical work. I could use a typewriter. I carried one with me. I often would leave meetings, and I'd go to the hotel and make whatever reports you had to make.

Then they finally decided that "Okay, you're going to stay there in Omaha." So they gave me three weeks, I believe it was, to remain on per diem and gave me two days off to go home and tell my wife--we had a baby--that I was being headquartered in Omaha.

Marcello: Now this would still be sometime in 1942?

White: Yes, this was apparently, if I remember, around June of '42.

Marcello: So you had been in the service for about two months or something like that.

White: Yes, and thank heaven my wife went along with me. Of course, I was proud to be with the Mediation Service.

Most of the men were. It had a good reputation. Then I was kept on per diem up there for about three weeks. I was given these two days to go home, go back up, find a place to live, and move my family there. At the end of this three weeks I was no longer on per diem in Omaha.

Now I covered specifically three states--Nebraska, North and South Dakota. Although there wasn't too much in either of the Dakotas, they involved long trips, and a lot of times you were away from home and on per diem. But you couldn't help that.

It was quite a thing. If I hadn't had the help at home with the wife trained as a secretary and experience in government, I just wouldn't have been able to get my things done. In fact there were times when I didn't get a travel voucher in for three months. I borrowed money at the bank in order to keep on traveling. I couldn't get any money out of the government. After you turned your travel voucher in, maybe you never got it back for three months, so you were six months in debt. There were a lot of good things that went on.

There's just one other thing along this kind of a line that I think our modern people should know. Part of this is still true. A commissioner of the Federal Mediation Service as presently constituted is not under

civil service by virtue of being a government employee probably for the reason that even to this day they have not devised an examination which can prove the capabilities of what you might do in the future. That's one thing, although now they have all of the privileges and the rights of civil service with the exception of the grievance procedure which is set up in writing in the service itself. But there is a provision where you can make a final appeal to the Civil Service Commission if certain conditions prevail. The veteran of some army of another . . . some years . . . there's an easier road down that line than for the non-veteran if he wants to go the grievance procedure.

Now when I began to work I knew this, but I didn't know that we had no vacation privileges. We had no sick leave. We contributed nothing to an annuity. We were exempt. Even the exempt jobs which are filled politically now by presidential appointment or by virtue of his authority by secretaries of the various divisions, they have these things to start with. We didn't. I was with the service three years before I was entitled to a vacation.

Marcello: Having to do all of this traveling and not having any of these benefits you just described, like you mentioned

earlier you had to have dedicated men in that Conciliation Service.

White: And looking back, you have to thank those guys that went ahead of me for opening a lot of doors to labor management because this had to be done to get the trust in the beginning, to get the first door open. Some of them that I know must have been some awfully good men.

Marcello: Before I turned the tape over you had mentioned that it was quite obvious that your predecessors had been very dedicated men and that they in many ways had eased the path or had paved the way for you. What evidence did you find to substantiate this statement that you made? In other words, how were you able to detect that they must have been dedicated and that they had paved the way for you?

White: Well, first, it was known even by me that in the beginning the old U.S. Conciliation Service, being a part of the Department of Labor, would naturally be suspect as being pro-labor because its opposite, the Commerce Department, was supposed to do good things for commerce, business. Likewise, it was expected that the Department of Labor would do good things for labor. But by doing good things for labor you also saved management a lot of grief. You saved the government a lot of grief, the community and so

forth, if you made a success out of your assignment. So this was known by those men who preceded me because there was an awful lot of places after I went to work where they had never heard of the U.S. Conciliation Service. So we had to do the same job of opening up and building trust and so forth. But these other men who preceded me, a great majority of them came from the ranks of labor because these were the people who had the experience. These were the people who, in a matter of speaking, had to change some of their thinking because they were now in a peacemaker's role and not the farmer with the two-by-four to hit management over the head in order to get their attention.

They had to be dedicated. It was done in some funny ways. I ran on to one. We had a little short guy. He was about 5'4" who had been a mine worker. He had done an awful lot of work underground before he became an officer of the union. He worked himself up until he was the mine workers' head representative in Canada before he went to work for us. Now I just give that background. I only mentioned his size because of what I've said previously that the big guys had the initial advantage. But this can be done away with, too, by what you say.

This is a true story. I can't remember the man's

name again. It's awful to get "sixty-ninish" and forgetful. Packing house negotiations had started in Kansas City. This was separate negotiations with the four majors that were there. Armour was the lead off company that year. This was the old Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union, not the Packing House Workers which is CIO. They reached a deadlock. They voluntarily called for a mediator. Now mediators had been there before, so this part of the door was opened. They called for a mediator, but it was the first time they'd seen this particular commissioner. I got this directly from one of the representatives of the union in a period of a couple of years after this happened. This commissioner walks into the conference room. They had a long conference table set up in the Armour office, private room with places where they could break up--management and union--for separate meetings. At this long conference table here's management on one side and laid his briefcase down on the desk, slapped his hand down on the table, and he said, "I want every one of you to know I'm the best goddamn union man in this country," and he stopped. Both sides, as I understand it, kind of sat back, shocked. Here was this little person who was supposed to be a mediator starting out that way. So after they kind of got their

breath back he said, "I'll tell you that for only this reason. First, before I leave here you'll find out I worked an awful long time for the mine workers. Second is I don't want anybody kidding me on the union side. I know more about it than they do. That also applies to management. I've met with more management than you guys will ever meet." This is the way he started out his meeting. Well, it worked. They called for him back all the time. When they had a grievance they wanted him.

Marcello: How much paperwork and administrative work is involved in handling one of these cases?

White: Are you talking about now or then?

Marcello: Then, that is, when you first got started with the United States Conciliation Service.

White: Well, the Conciliation Service probably had less paperwork than any other organization in the United States. They were not a bureaucratic organization. The first director Hugh Kerwin, who I never did know--I never met--must have been quite a man. I went to work for the second director of the service, John Steelman. He probably took over the directorship somewhere maybe in '37 or '38, along in this area. So from 1913 to that period of time . . . Hugh Kerwin was there a long time. I got assignments--this was part of the paperwork I'm

talking about--maybe by telephone, which I made notes of the names and so forth, or maybe by telegraph, which I kept in my file. This was the Washington end of it. They had a copy of the telegram they sent, or they had notes on the telephone conversation. This was the beginning of your file on that particular case.

If the situation required travel you set up a meeting by telephone--set the date, time, place. You got there some way or other. You notified Washington by telegram, "Proceeding to official station" or "Proceeding to another town or another meeting."

Then when you got time you wrote a one-page report from which answered details as to name of company, location, name of union, local number so forth, location, participants in the meeting. This was on the front page. On the back you put in any details that you wanted to. This was our total paperwork. We could keep a copy of the file if we wanted to, or we didn't have to if we didn't want to. The greatest chore for that traveling mediator was making up his "swindle sheet."

Marcello: You're referring to your per diem allowance, your travel voucher (chuckle).

White: Your travel voucher. Sometimes you were caught on the road at the time the thing should go in. I fortunately could use a typewriter. I carried one with me, portable.

But even then you'd get caught where you didn't have time to make that thing out. That's the reason I kept year books all through the years. I regret I've thrown them away. But to make out that travel voucher at some future time . . . some men who couldn't use the typewriter would make them out in pencil and send them into Washington. Everything went to Washington. They'd make them up there and send them back for a signature. Sometimes they came back all "horsed" up because they couldn't read his writing or whatever. You'd get three months behind and six months getting your money. You'd be in debt to the banker as long as he'd trust you.

But the paperwork was minimum and it still is as far as a government agency is concerned. I think now they make about three copies, where we had a more or less preliminary report which was telegraphic and this final report which was hopefully brief. They now have a preliminary report which must be filled with what you know about it in the beginning, whether the meetings are set, and this sort of thing. There are intermediate reports after each meeting, plus the final report which should cover the whole thing, plus your administrative "swindle sheet." Then you have to make a telephone report. We never used to. Of course, in my case in the early

beginning it was all over my own phone. So I sent copies of my telephone bill, and they'd send me a check for what was listed on the Conciliation Service billing.

Marcello: I was going to ask you about this because I gather that from what you've said that there was no base of operations in Omaha other than where you lived.

White: That's right.

Marcello: Your private residence. In other words, there was no office of the United States Conciliation Service in Omaha, Nebraska, when you were there in 1942 and so on.

White: It was all in my home. You did have the privilege, if you could find some other department office who had a stenographer or secretary with time, of asking for their assistance in making out your paperwork. But I had a secretary at home.

Marcello: You're referring to your wife, of course.

White: Yes. I didn't realize it at the time. Sometimes after that I realized how much help that her experience in the very handling of telephone calls . . . how valuable it was to us.

The requirement of government for paperwork in order to prove what you had done or what you had said or what you thought you said or so forth was not part of our requirement. All they wanted to know kn Washington really

was, "Did you get the job done?" Did you get a settlement, was an agreement reached, was trouble averted for a while--this sort of thing. They did send a few of those reports to the Archives. They still do. So copies have increased for that reason a little bit. Also, the fact that there's regional offices . . . you make your report to the regional office. So that's one copy. You keep a report of your own if you want to--you don't have to--which is two copies. The regional office keeps a copy. They send a copy to Washington. In Washington a few of those are screened out and sent to the Archives. But I believe all they have to make now is three copies. For a lot of organizations it's four or five, maybe more.

Marcello: How many years were you in this midwestern region altogether?

White: Well, I said the first region, experimental in that sense, was set up in Chicago. Iowa at that time was in that region. This apparently worked out alright according to the powers that be. They began setting up other regions. One was established in Kansas City with a regional office there. The man who was assigned as a regional director there had been an assistant in Chicago, but he didn't like it. He was in Kansas City for awhile, but he didn't

like it because he was born and raised in St. Louis. So he finagled and really made not too great a difference. The regional office was moved to St. Louis and still is there. That region took over Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, North and South Dakota.

Marcello: In other words, that's quite a large region.

White: Yes. Now this was at that time. Later this was broken down again to a regional office setup in Dallas.

Marcello: This is where you eventually moved.

White: Yes. One was set up in Seattle, one in San Francisco, one in Atlanta, one in New York City. I can't remember exactly where . . . there's one in Boston. I can't remember where . . . there was another one up in the New England states. It got to where we had ten regional offices. These were later . . . after the war . . . oh, four or five years after the war--I was in Texas by this time--these ten regions were cut to seven. Again, this area of Texas and Oklahoma went into the St. Louis region. Louisiana, which we had handled, and Arkansas remained in St. Louis. Louisiana went to the Atlanta region which remained intact. So there was a reduction. Seattle became part of the San Francisco region. It's still quite

a large territorial setup. There's a lot of long distances to travel out there, a lot of mountain areas where there isn't any industry. Most of your heavy industry is up and down the coast or in the big cities such as Albuquerque, Denver, Butte, and places like that.

Marcello: How long did you operate out of Omaha, Nebraska, during this initial period?

White: We were only there about two years in Omaha. I was transferred, then, to Des Moines, Iowa.

Marcello: This would have been somewhere around 1944 and 1945, then, that you were transferred to Des Moines.

White: About 1944. I had bucked in Omaha . . . this was partly due to this lack of training. I had bucked the situation in Omaha, and I'd probably do the same thing again under the circumstances. A bunch of small unions had attempted to organize the biggest department store in Omaha. They had attempted to organize the Brandeis department store. This was quite a store. It had a little bit of everything in it. Now this is of the Brandeis family which Brandeis University is named after--Judge Brandeis. Wasn't he a Supreme Court Justice?

Marcello: Yes, he sure was.

White: I think he was a son of the founder of this Brandeis store originally. Well, there was an AFL representative in

Omaha by the name of Ozanic. Joe Ozanic was the son of the chief opponent of John L. Lewis in the consolidation of the mine workers. He pulled a group of Illinois out and became the Progressive Mine Workers. Other than in the little area in Southern Illinois, which was a pretty heavy coal mining area and a little galena, lead, and zinc, they had no particular force except in that one little area. When they felt obligated in the AFL to some individual, they tried to give a job. This was the way Joe Ozanic, who was the son of the Ozanic who pulled the Progressive Mine Workers out of the mine workers union . . . out of John L. Lewis's, got the job as representative. Now whether Joe worked hard or whether he didn't, I don't know. But I didn't think he was very bright.

At that time we actually had no reason to get into such a thing as the organization of a department store. He kept bugging me and some of the other smaller unions such as the bartenders and . . . probably the largest one was the clerks and . . . well, the Retail Clerks Union. He kept bugging me to have a meeting. Well, I had talked to the management, and they weren't going to talk about the sense of moving toward a contract. But they were not refusing at any time to talk to me.

After a period of time I finally persuaded the management to meet with the union and me in their administrative offices of the store. Oh, we met there and there was about eight or nine representatives of the union plus Joe Ozanic. He laid a piece of paper down on the store manager's desk which said in effect, "We recognize these unions as being the collective bargaining agents for our employees," with a list of the unions. He said, "Sign it." The old boy looked at it, and he said, "I wouldn't sign that if I was crazy. What does it mean?" The guy says, "This means that you're signing a contract with us." Well, words led back and forth. The store manager said, "No, Mr. Ozanic, you're mistaken. We might eventually negotiate a contract but not in this manner. I want to know what you're talking about."

Well, I felt that was a reasonable request. So I said, "I also think that you ought to let the company know what would be negotiable items," or something to that effect. Well, Ozanic then got mad at me and accused me of double-crossing him. I had worked to set up this meeting so they could have a face-to-face meeting. The room we were in was about, oh, say twenty-by-twenty. Ozanic got mad at me. He was mad at the management. He was putting on a big show. He got up and he said, "Okay, I'm walking out! We're going to have a contract!"

I jumped over in front of the door and I said, "Listen, I called this meeting. You're not walking out until I say you're going to go." This was a terrible mistake. I should have let him go out, but I was green. I hadn't had much breaking in, and I didn't know too much about some of these smaller unions. I knew they didn't have any membership, and some of them out of the store. But, also, I wanted to ask another question. Well, I . . . just by pure physical force. I stood in the door and said, "You're not leaving here till I say you can leave."

So he sat down, and I said, "Now it's come to this point, and I want to know something." I said, "There's a procedure that you can ask for. If the company will agree you can go through the National Labor Relations Board and get an election. But you have to ask for it because they're not constituted by law to come in unless it's a joint request. Or you have another out. The Mediation Service occasionally conducts elections and certifies the results. It doesn't have the force of law that the NLRB would have, but it stands up. I can conduct that election, or we'll bring in another commissioner to conduct the election. Do you want to go through an election procedure?" He said, "Hell, no!" I said, "Okay, you can leave."

Well, they sent in . . . he went down and got seventeen signatures on a telegram to get me out of Omaha. Well, the boss, this man MacDonald, came in. He made a little investigation before I ever knew he was in town. Then he came and talked to me. He said, "Walter, the only thing I have to say is that you shouldn't have gotten into this situation, but I understand how you did. So now I want you to go meet with me and Joe Ozanic."

So we went down to . . . Ozanic was staying at the Elk's Club, which had a hotel setup plus the club rooms. We went down there, and we met Ozanic down in the lobby. What little conversation went on, I don't remember, but I'll always remember these words that MacDonald said. He said, "Now Mr. Ozanic, I've investigated what went on. I've talked to the manager of the Brandeis store. I've talked to you as you know. I've talked to other people who were there. I have not talked to the commissioner about his side of the story. I only have it from you and the store manager and the other people who were there. I want to tell you this. I might kick him around, but by God you're not going to!"

So there were seventeen signatures. Some of these guys came around later and apologized for doing that. It didn't affect my acceptance except in those unions

that didn't have any strength anyhow. I didn't get any calls from them, not with the typographical union, which was on the telegraph wanting me to get moved out of there and so forth.

I continued to work there, I guess, about a year and three or four months, and then I had a call, then, on the telephone from my regional director. This was still the Chicago region. He said, "Walter, are you tied up with the purchase of a home or anything?" I said, "No." He said, "Are you committed in any way to Omaha?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, we have a situation in Des Moines. As you know we have three commissioners over there. Sometimes we have two guys at each other's throat, but over there we've got three. Now I've already moved one of them out." He said, "I think you can go over there and don't do like you did in the Brandeis situation and open your mouth too quick. Just sit quiet and work with both of them. Don't take sides, and I think we can straighten that situation out so these two and you can get along alright."

Marcello: In other words, you were supposed to be mediating between mediators.

White: I was mediating between mediators. So this was, of course, a call to my home. My wife was right there. I turned and talked to her. She didn't particularly like this

idea of moving, but we didn't know anybody in Omaha anyhow. That's where she ought to talk to you. So we transferred to Des Moines. By that time we had another son. We transferred to Des Moines. The situation there was exactly as he described it, I mean, the regional director in his conversation with me. But I also think part of the thing was that he was thinking back to his Brandeis situation in which I had developed a lack of fellowship with some of the people.

Marcello: Does the word get around? In other words, if there is a mediator who perhaps isn't doing his job or who has lost the confidence of certain parties concerned, does the word get around among the other unions and among management and so on that maybe this guy isn't doing too good a job?

White: Yes. Sometimes those things come about by the fact that maybe the guy did too good a job. Maybe he was right, but he stepped on some guy's toes and knocked his glory down in front of his own people. This is what happened primarily when I physically prevented Ozanic from leaving. I knocked him down in front of his own people. Although nobody laid a hand . . . I knocked his prestige down.

Marcello: He lost face, in other words.

White: He lost face.

Marcello: And you were responsible for this to a certain extent.

White: No question about it. I could have done that a different way, but I didn't know it at that time. I had no breaking in in this sort of a situation. If I had had the opportunity to work with an older commissioner, as most people did for a month or six weeks, I would have run onto a lot of things in just field conversation among the two of you that would have helped a great deal.

Marcello: In summing this particular interview . . .

White: But I'm not crying about it. I had some experience that they who broke in with other people didn't have.

Marcello: In summing up this interview that we're doing today, then, would it be safe to say that this period at Omaha was your on-the-job training period?

White: With supervision 1,800 miles away.

Marcello: Yes.

White: Yes.

Marcello: To be more accurate we might say that it was your independent on-the-job training period without any supervision really from anybody, considering the distances involved between where you were and the home office back in Chicago.

White: With me it was an experimental training period (chuckle).

Marcello: And you moved on to Des Moines, then, sometime in 1944.

White: Yes. It had to have been '44 because we were . . . it could have been '45. I can't even remember the time of year because this was not a situation . . . they gave me an assignment or two over in Des Moines in order to look for a place . . .

Marcello: Okay, I might interject here that your wife had informed us that it was in 1944 when you moved to Des Moines. Like you say, there were two possible reasons why you were transferred to Des Moines. First of all, it could have been this rather nasty situation with Ozanic, and also you may have been sent to Des Moines in order to straighten out these differences that had developed between these mediators that were already in Des Moines.

White: I think both things were involved. This thing that I was sent there because of friction in the office, I believe, holds true because apparently I must have been doing a commendable job in Omaha because they kept sending men for me to break in. They didn't send them intentionally to mediators who were not busy or who were dodging their work or who wasn't getting the job. In that period while we were in Omaha I was seldom ever without a trainee breaking in.

Marcello: You would have to estimate this, of course, but how many cases do you think you sat in on while you were in Omaha?

White: This is awfully hard to estimate. We talked a little about 1,000 cases during my time. Well, that was up to a certain time. I worked probably fifteen years after that article that you read was printed. So just in a general way back in those days we differentiated in case assignments between active cases and inactive cases. Active cases were those in which you directly intervened by personally being there some way or other. Inactive cases, those . . . you might have had something to do with the negotiation, but maybe it was by telephone or a separate meeting one time, something like that, with the parties. We had rather informal thinking that a commissioner in the general situation should handle at least 125 cases a year, both active and inactive, with about fifty of those being active cases, which are time consuming. A man traveling as much territory as I did had difficulty in reaching that sort of a situation. An assignment in Lead, South Dakota, or Deadwood, South Dakota, those are hard places to get to. A little assignment which was little as far as people were concerned was Belle Fouche, South Dakota. There was transportation in and out of that town three times a week. We were riding public transportation because of gasoline rationing and so forth most of the time. I hitchhiked out of that town after we reached an agreement.

I packed my bags and started out down the road.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting point. You mentioned gasoline rationing. I gather then that your job was not considered important enough that you had unlimited supplies of gasoline.

White: Well, that assumption would be a little bit wrong. We were advised to ride public transportation when we could. About the time that I went to work for the service was when we were first allowed as a general thing to ride aircraft. Most of the time it was train or bus or your car. In those days a two-car family was just the rich people, and not even all of those. They couldn't see any use for two cars. We had one car. I had a wife and a child, later two children.

If I took the car on a long trip they were isolated because you didn't know when you started for Lincoln, Nebraska, out of Omaha, a distance of about seventy-five or ninety miles or somewhere in that area, that you were going to Lincoln and come back because they might hit you in that meeting with a telegram, "Proceed to Scotts-bluff, such-and-such a plant. Union threatening strike strategic to the war effort." So you notified whoever you had to notify--your wife or your girlfriend--that you were proceeding. I started out on one of those, and

I was gone seven weeks. They just kept hitting me every place I'd finish to proceed someplace else. I was gone seven weeks.

So when gas rationing came in we had a number one priority. Yes, I had gas stamps for a month's supply that I never used, and there were other times when I'd run short. But those reasons for not using it was primarily because we only had one car. If I could make it by public transportation and fit the thing in, we did it.

Marcello: Okay, so you were transferred then to Des Moines, Iowa, in 1944 as your wife advised us (chuckle). We'll just cut off the interview at this point. In our fifth interview we'll pick up the story here.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: May 12, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 12, 1975, in Denton, Texas. This is the fifth in a series of interviews with Mr. White concerning his experiences as a labor mediator and conciliator.

Now Mr. White, the last time that we stopped, we had been up to the point where you had been assigned to the Des Moines office. Just for the sake of chronology, how long did you work out of the Des Moines office? Do you recall offhand?

Mr. White: I went over there in '43, and I left Des Moines in '49.

Dr. Marcello: You had approximately six years then.

Mr. White: That's right, six years.

Dr. Marcello: When you moved over to Des Moines did you find any situations that were peculiar to labor-management relations there that you don't find when you were in Omaha? Was the labor-management climate any different in this area?

White: Well, yes, if you can do like we do in Texas and divide the state. Along the Mississippi River union organization was rather prevalent prior to the war, prior to any help from the War Labor Board--I'm talking about World War II--particularly with the machinists, the carpenters, and the molders as industrial-type of union setups and then in the building trades. In Des Moines itself it was typical, as I see typicalness, of a capital, state capital, and a university town. Now we've all heard of . . . I speak of a university town. We've all heard of Drake University. There were two other small schools in Des Moines. So we had the state capital and two universities, two schools. The other two were pretty much privately supported. I don't remember the background of one of them at all. It was liberal arts . . . a small liberal arts college now defunct. The other one was the Des Moines University. It was primarily backed by a man who I met once. I can remember what he looked like; I can't tell you his name. He was an engineering genius. It later, because of the one-man backing, became financially in difficulties, and the City of Des Moines took it over. What it is now, I don't know. I'm sure that there must still be a small school there.

But due to this thing of state capital and the universities, Des Moines was not as labor-oriented as

some of the river towns like Davenport, Fort Madison, Burlington, Keokuk, Dubuque. These towns all had industry for years and years. The same thing was true on the other side of the river, also, since we were not actually too far from Chicago. So they were much more labor union-oriented.

As you moved westward in Iowa, you ran into the same sort of thing that we have in West Texas. You had rural, small towns. The people were engaged in agri-business rather than industrial business although nearly every little town had the manufacturing plant. But I ran into the same thing there that I had run into in some of the mining areas that I had worked briefly in. People first were farmers and second were industrial workers. If they got out of a job at the industry in which they worked, small plant that was seasonal--and there was a lot of canning plants, a lot of chicken plants, a lot of egg breaking plants--they went back to the farm. So they were not, as I previously tried to define my thinking, they were not shop hand-oriented. If you slipped over on the Missouri River, starting probably with Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which is just up the river from Sioux City, the towns down the Missouri River were more union-oriented. Omaha had . . . at the time I was there they were about

the same-sized towns--Omaha and Des Moines. Omaha had a greater proportion of unions than Des Moines. Does that answer this type of a question?

Marcello: I think it does. Now what were you covering when you were assigned to the Des Moines office? I assume from what you have just mentioned that more than Iowa was involved.

White: At this time we were still the old U.S. Conciliation Service in the Department of Labor. We received each year at the beginning of the year travel authority which gave to each commissioner the authority to travel in specified areas. It also gave him free access to government travel requests. He didn't have to ask anybody. He didn't have to have anybody else sign it as in most organizations. He signed for both organization and the traveler. Those travel authorizations covered the United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. I had to get no additional authority if I had an assignment in Hawaii. I didn't have but those were covered mostly with men on the West Coast. So was Alaska. But if I had received an assignment I had the authority to go there already. Primarily, we worked out of Des Moines, State of Iowa. We would get over into southern Minnesota. We'd occasionally get over into eastern Nebraska, although there was a man or two--there

was two at this time--in Omaha. We got down into north central Missouri, up and down the Mississippi River. We might work on both sides of the river because sometimes an industry had a plant on the Iowa side and also one on the Illinois side. That generally was the territory. At that time, also, you might receive special assignments as I did in Salt Lake City or Portland, Oregon. These were just single, one-shot assignments.

Marcello: How would you get one of these special assignments, or why would you get one of these special assignments?

White: Oh, on the Portland, Oregon, situation prior to the take-over of the Grayhound Company of this bus line which was named Interstate Bus Company . . . they ran from Chicago to Portland, Oregon. They had a division in Chicago, one in Omaha, one in Portland, Oregon. There were two local unions of the amalgamated bus drivers involved. In Portland they ran from Portland to Salt Lake City--this unit of the union. The Omaha division ran from Chicago to Salt Lake City. I had the assignment for the eastern section of Interstate. The war was on, remember. Transportation was needed. Gasoline was rationed. The whole works was tight.

I happened to be fortunate enough to gain the confidence of both parties. We worked out an agreement.

There was very definitely a threat of strike on the western division. Both the parties asked if could I be assigned to the western division which was right at the point of strike. Well, that was money wasted. We went on strike, anyhow. It was a rather strange circumstance. We were meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, for the western division. The man who had originally been assigned to that was ten or fifteen years older chronologically than I. They never took a man off the assignment when they put on another person. But the incoming commissioner was there because of some reason. In this particular case the reason I was there was because we had settled in this eastern division, and I was given a great deal of credit by both parties for holding them together until they did settle.

Well, the man who was originally assigned to the western division was assigned with me, but I was in charge. Due to his age, pride in his job, and feeling let down that a younger man chronologically was in charge, I guess he felt frustrated and put down or whatever it might be. He got drunk. He talked to the union. While he was drunk he personally gave me the devil for trying to cut the ground out from his feet. I had nothing to do with being assigned out there. Well, he brought up the

proposition, "I'm older than you are. I'm older in the service than you are." Well, I had to admit he was older in chronological age, but I said, "Look, I started to work such-and-such time. When did you go to work?" "Well, so-and-so." I'd been there quite a little while longer than he had. Well, anyhow, he got drunk. He talked to the union. He popped off around Salt Lake City, and I don't think anybody could have settled it after that. Not that I don't object to admitting to a failure, but I think he set the union's mind. So we had a little strike that lasted, oh, a week and a half.

After he sobered on that trip and the president of that Interstate Lines took care of him on the train going back to Portland . . . nobody reported him. He joined AA, Alcoholics Anonymous, and became quite a worker in that organization and turned into just one nice guy to work with. But he sure wasn't this time. That's an unusual sort of a thing that can happen. I could understand his feelings. I had an assignment, too.

Marcello: So from time to time then, you would be working outside the Des Moines area on these special assignments. Let me ask you another general question, and this may be an unfair one, and you may not know the answer to it. But

I'll ask it anyhow. Did you notice that the war years gave an added impetus to the whole union movement?

White: Oh, I think definitely so. I think I spoke a little about that with the establishment of the War Labor Board and the Taft-Hartley Act. Although 14-B was there, that is the section which allows a state to pass laws which provide for lesser requirement for membership than the federal law. It also guaranteed the right to organize and the right to strike, so these two things coming very close together . . . all this is part of the new social program of Roosevelt's administration.

It definitely gave impetus to the union movement. First, there was a definite requirement for a steady work force in many, many plants. This was assisted by the fact that they had a union and union benefits. Many of the older unions, of course, as you know, had their own pension programs. They weren't much, but they were a pension program. Their dues bought certain privileges such as the union newspaper which gave them some insight into management that they didn't have before. Many of these were good publications, educations. The machinists for years . . . and they were one of the very earliest of the unions still remaining to carry on an educational program almost from the beginning.

Then the War Labor Board . . . after a union attempting to get a contract in a plant had gone through organization process, National Labor Relations Board, won an election, sat down and negotiated, gone through mediation, they went to the War Labor Board. They could almost be assured--and I say this, I hope, in all fairness to everybody--they could almost be assured if they had shown a majority membership in their--I don't mean by one but a pretty good majority membership--in their election they could almost be assured of a maintenance of membership clause in the contract awarded by the War Labor Board if it went that far. So this maintenance of membership by the management was regarded as a club handed to the unions by the War Labor Board. It was regarded by the unions as a method of maintaining control. When I say maintaining control, I do not mean the labor boss type of thing. Sure, we have them. We have them today. The majority of the labor union leaders are not that type. It did assure money to operate with. You don't get an organization going and keep it going without a financial background. So this is very definitely an incentive. The war lasted long enough that this . . . this relationship lasted long enough that many of those contracts are still in existence. They go back a long ways.

The industrial unions probably gained more than the craft unions. The craft unions . . . in the beginning where they stuck strictly with a craft, qualified journeymen, apprenticeship program and so forth, they had a skill that they could withdraw from a plant and shut it down without anybody else's help. The industrial union couldn't. The craft unions were not interested in taking in the industrial unions-- industrial workers, the laborers. The machinists experimented in some plants. The molders had a little different setup. Of course, the United Mine Workers were an industrial union. They became that way because of the fact that John L. Lewis realized a long time ago that he had to have all the people in that mine, not just the driller, not just a powderman. He had to have them all.

Things went through a great deal of change. This was the later part of the sitdown strike, also. The major sitdown strikes in auto and so forth had occurred prior to the beginning of the war. Everybody rallied around after they had the things primarily in Detroit that were publicized. The war was on so the sitdown didn't occur. They either pulled them out, or they tried to negotiate a contract.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about some of the specific or outstanding cases that you ran across while you were assigned to the Des Moines office. In our pre-interview conference you were talking about some of those. Let's begin by talking about that one very unique situation involving an attorney, David Swarr, and his publication, the Open Shopper.

White: Well, David Swarr, if people gave me the right history, started out as an attorney representing management as a corporate attorney. Through this he was pulled into some labor contracts. What I say now I repeat what I remember of what I was told a long time ago in Omaha. He first got into labor negotiations due to a streetcar strike in Omaha. The story . . . as I heard it, this happened before my time of being there.

This was quite a vicious strike. It had been a long drawn organizational attempt, and a long drawn attempt at negotiation that finally broke down and the strike occurred. People rode streetcars in those days. It was a decided method of transportation, so it hurt the city of Omaha. All of those things get into the public offices, such as the mayor's office, in a city. They also become involved with newspapers because not only are their people affected but everybody else.

They can make a great story out of it, properly, I guess.

Well, anyhow, this became quite a bitter strike, and Swarr, the attorney, became involved in labor relations. But the accusation was made, and it finally went to court . . . in this strike the union was blowing up the tracks in the city streets. When it got to court, the union was able to prove by pictures that they had taken that night--how they did it, I don't know--which definitely showed management personnel out blowing up their own tracks. Now David Swarr was not involved in that. Only as an attorney was he fighting the battle for them. But this is where he became involved in labor relations. Due to the election there were some other corporations that asked him to assist in their labor relations. At the time I knew him he was primarily doing labor relations in his law office. Now there was two other partners but Swarr was doing most of it.

Marcello: At the time that you met him or had your first contact with him, he was in Des Moines?

White: No, he was in Omaha.

Marcello: Oh, he was in Omaha?

White: Yes, this is where the streetcar strike was.

Marcello: Yes.

White: Swarr was an honest man and a very sound lawyer. In his thinking he evolved a situation that unions had certain rights, but they did not have the right to force anybody to belong to a union. Management, more than anything else, had no right to enter into an agreement which would force an individual to belong to a union in any manner.

I guess the more he thought about it the more he thought that other people ought to take a look at the situation, so he started writing a newsletter which became a little pamphlet later and was known as The Open Shopper. About the time I went to Omaha was about the time his last newsletter, The Open Shopper, came out. After that he didn't write anymore that I know of. It was quite a well-known little pamphlet among labor attorneys and management back in those days. I'd like to have a full copy of those. It'd be worth quite a lot, and I don't mean just financially. The background of a lot of these situations, Swarr thought of them way ahead of arguments that are going on now.

I became directly involved with him, if you'll let me stay in Omaha a little bit, because again I think this is an interesting thing. There was a firm there by the name of Jerpe Commission Company, the

forerunner of C. A. Swanson and Son. It is now Swanson Frozen Foods. I think it's one of the best. C. A. Swanson came to this country as a Swedish immigrant boy. He was seventeen years old. He couldn't speak English. He started to work as . . . started making a living with a pushcart in New York where they sold vegetables and produce and so forth, and he pushed them down the street. I think maybe in some areas they still do.

How he migrated west, I don't know, but he went to work for Jerpe. There was actually a man by that name, Jerpe. In the early days this was strictly what the term commission means. He bought and sold produce. Then he started building and eviscerating plant there where they butchered chickens. Along with that he also had a creamery.

How Swanson got into partnership, again, I don't know. But he became . . . after he started to work for Jerpe he worked his way up, and eventually Jerpe died and Swanson became the total owner. It was the largest plant of its kind in the world at that time.

Well, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workers of America started to organize. This was part of the thing we were talking about just a few minutes ago of the impetus given to unions. There were a great

number of women that worked in that plant. Now in an industrial union the Amalgamated Meat Cutters would take women in, but they were just beginning to organize the plants. They had failed in the packing houses. One reason was because they didn't take women. They stayed with the skilled crafts.

So here they organized the whole plant. They became pretty much a majority, went to the National Labor Relations Board voting processes and so forth and were certified. They sat down to negotiate. The negotiations were headed on their part by the international representative who had done a great deal of the organizing--a great big guy about six foot six by the name of Cecil Henniger. I believe he graduated from Southern Illinois University, which had some other name at that time--small school in Carbondale. We weren't getting too far--they weren't--in getting down the line to a contract because, as I pointed out before, the self-made man is real hard to deal with.

When they first started organizing, why, Swanson's had hired David Swarr as their attorney. He did a pretty good job, but he didn't keep them from winning the vote because, as I said, he was an honest man. He didn't pull underhanded tricks. They sat down to

negotiate and money, union security, which is the union shop . . . whatever guarantee of membership might be worked out, work assignments, seniority, seemed to be the major items in dispute when I went into the situation. In this case I came in on the request of the union and the company's attorney, David Swarr. His principals didn't know that he had joined in asking for a commissioner to come in.

Marcello: You're referring to Swanson?

White: Yes, as the one that didn't know.

Marcello: Yes.

White: Actually, the old Mr. Swanson had not been in there in negotiations at this time. His son had been. We met in the Paxton Hotel up about the seventh or eighth floor. You could look right out the window and see this loading dock for Swanson and Son. When I came into the picture Mr. Swanson himself came in and also their corporate attorney who was also a Swedish immigrant, but a young one, by the name of George Swenson. After many long hours and a lot of days we ended up at the place where we had a strike.

Marcello: What sort of a man was old man Swanson?

White: Well, let me kind of go around the mulberry bush a little.

Marcello: Okay.

White: When the strike started Jack Lloyd, who later became president of the Amalgamated and was sort of regional director for the butcher workmen, came into the picture. He came from Ogden, Utah.

Marcello: How did he get involved in the case?

White: Well, he was Henniger's boss.

Marcello: I see.

White: He came into the picture to see if he couldn't assist in negotiations. Now he did not want to strike, but this strike occurred rather spontaneously on the urging of some other people, I think. I happened to be standing in the window of the conference room looking out at the loading dock when these people started pouring out of the door. I just turned around, and I said, "You might as well adjourn. The strike's on. It's on." This upset people to no end.

Well, anyhow the strike was on when the AFL had their national convention in Omaha. It's a terrible thing, but I can't remember George Meany's predecessor's name. He was there. Well, they wanted to keep everything peaceful. But these striking Swanson workers really put on a show coming down in that parade. I'm not talking about violence, but they were solid.

Marcello: What year was this, incidentally?

White; It had to be in '43. This was my first experience with women on a picket line. Well, anyhow, Jack Lloyd, sort of the regional director, came into the picture. To get at what kind of a man Mr. Swanson was, when he came into the negotiations . . . we arrived in the conference room at the Paxton Hotel, and there was four bottles of whiskey sitting down in the middle of the conference table furnished by Swanson. Nobody touched them. Whether he thought he could get everybody drunk and they'd go away or not, I don't know (chuckle). But he was a very proud man. He was proud of his background.

Jack Lloyd made an awful mistake. He could . . . I don't know how to put it. He could do a terrific job of talking. He was a master of innuendo. But he made one statement during his opening speech coming in there. When I say coming in there, I mean coming into the negotiations personally. Mr. Swanson was sitting down across the table from him. He got into his argument, slammed his fist down on the table, and said, "Now is the time when we're going to find out who's king around here. Now I want you to remember that." The strike was on. We still made very little progress.

I had by this time learned that sometimes you could do more by talking to one individual on each side than trying to talk to the whole committee. You do

that separately. Don't let anybody know that you're doing it so you don't put the guy on the spot. They can give you ideas that you can bring out. Well, I'd been talking a little to Dave Swarr, the attorney. He thought he could do certain things, but he couldn't on the representation question--security, union shop, and so forth. I had been talking to Jack Lloyd. He thought that if we could do something to move the company he could move the union committee. Well, those . . . there were a couple of women on that . . . they didn't know anything except they wanted more money and they wanted it now.

As a result of these separate talks and a suggestion made by Dave Swarr to me, which I was able to turn and say was my own, Lloyd called for Pat Gorman, who was then secretary and treasurer of the international . . .this was the first time I'd ever met him. He was a lawyer by trade.

Marcello: This is the International Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union?

White: Yes, Pat Gorman. He was a lawyer by education and trade. He went into the labor movement by virtue of representing unions. He became so interested that he quit the law practice to represent the amalgamated as

a lawyer and then became secretary-treasurer. He came in there. I believe he was probably the smoothest negotiator I ever saw. He knew how to pacify people. He knew how to smooth over ruffled spirits.

After a couple of days of talks with Pat Gorman being there and Dave Swarr on the other side following a line of pacification but not giving up his points, we finally arrived at a contract, an agreement. It was written out in contract form, complete and ready for everybody's signatures. It had been reviewed by both of the parties. I called a meeting for the signing of the contract--the union down this side and the company down this side and I was at the head of the table. We got through the preliminaries. I passed a copy of the contract down to . . . three or four copies of the contract down to the union for their signatures. They all signed it--committee and the international representatives. They sent it back up to me. I passed it down to the company. The first one in that line was Mr. C. A. Swanson, Sr. He picked up the pen and started to write. He looked up. He looked Jack Lloyd in the eye, and he pointed his finger at him and he said, "That man said he was going to find out who was king around here! We don't have kings in this country! I won't sign the contract!"

So we went two more days. The contract was all signed by the union and ready to sign by the company, but he wouldn't sign it. But again, Swarr and myself and his own attorney, Swenson, persuaded that . . . he agreed to it so he should sign it.

Marcello: From what you've said I gather that you had a great deal of respect for the ability of both Swarr, who was representing management, and Gorman, who was representing labor in this particular case.

White: Oh, definitely. Everybody who knew Pat Gorman respected him. All of the management did because, again, he was an honest man. Dave Swarr was an honest man, but most of these unions didn't believe it.

It was a funny thing that happened here after this contract was signed. Why, sure, management with their line supervision being used to doing things a certain way would look at the contract and maybe make a promotion out of line or something and a grievance would occur. They didn't know how to handle grievances in the company, so I was often called back in there. We handled grievances in those days. It was getting so that it was occupying nearly all of my time. The big man, Henninger, was still there, what they called, servicing that contract. He'd come to me. I made a

suggestion to him one day. I said, "Cecil, you're not going to believe me, but I want you to go home and think about it." I said, "Dave Swarr's an honest man. You won't agree with that in the first place, but think about it. In the second place, when Dave Swarr signs a contract he expects his company to live up to that contract--to the letter of that contract. Thirdly, if you're right, go to Dave Swarr when you hit bottom down at the plant. Go to Dave Swarr. Tell him what your problem is. If he thinks you're right he'll straighten it out. If he thinks you're not right, you've got a helluva fight on your hands. So you just might as well get that quick." Well, he didn't believe me.

But I think I was somewhere out in western Nebraska and gone for two or three weeks . . . or up in North Dakota. I came back and Henninger got hold of me. He said, "Commissioner, I finally did what you suggested about going to Dave Swarr with some of these grievances. I tried to go with only those where I knew we were 100 per cent right but the company was bucking over. He has straightened every one of them out and everything's fine. The only thing is I've put Dave Swarr in spot. The company doesn't want to talk to him any more."

So I don't know what happened but . . . oh, it was not too many years after I left Omaha that Swarr finally

took himself completely out of the labor relations. I think he had a little heart attack and said, "It's not for me."

Marcello: In the course of your work do you reach the point where you develop a close relationship with certain individuals on both the side of labor and management? In other words, are you apt to run into the same people time and time again? I would assume perhaps this would be more true with labor than with management in these various negotiations.

White: It's definitely true on both sides. I think you're probably right. It's more often that you meet the labor individual more often than you will management. However, there's one exception to that in my experience. We have a man in Dallas now by the name of Charles Handy. I first met Charlie in Fairfield, Iowa. It's quite a little industrial town. He was representing two companies and later represented a third one there. I have had negotiations with Charles Handy representing management all the way from Fairfield, Iowa, Dubuque, to West Texas and Oklahoma. Now he's an attorney by education. He is an attorney if he needs to go to court and so forth.

There's a funny thing about his background. If I'm not mistaken he was an orphan, raised in a convent

somewhere in the East--Philadelphia or somewhere. He went to work in some type of a business which was organized by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Later-- I don't know how long a period--he worked in a plant which was organized by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters. In both cases he rose in the union ranks. How the thing came about, I don't know. But these two unions were involved in him continuing his education. They sent him to law school with the stipulation that he'd represent them for a certain period of years when he got his law degree, which he did due to a contract. Then he asked to leave because he'd met a girl he wanted to marry. There was no argument about it except that he did not represent any management in any plant organized by either the Amalgamated Meat Cutters or the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. He agreed to that.

The girl he wanted to marry was a McCormick of Dallas, the Murray Gin Company people--cotton gin. So he became the personnel director at Murray Gin, not the guy who handled assignments and hired people and so forth, but the labor relations man and the director of the personnel department. He established policy. Well, he went to work for Murray only on the stipulation that he could continue his outside consulting. He's pretty

much of an expert--quiet, knows the law, and so forth. But here's a guy I met all over the country. Union-wise, yes. This fellow Henninger, I ran into him over here at Tyler when they were trying to organize a chicken industry down there.

Marcello: Another chicken industry in Tyler?

White: Yes. This was a butchering plant. But anyhow, he made a funny remark. He said he was going to leave. I asked him why. He said, "I don't understand these people down here. They said to me, 'Yessir, Mr. Henninger, yessir, Mr. Henninger, we sure do need a union.' They'll sign the card. They'll give me five dollars initiation fee, and they never come to a meeting." He said, "I don't want to represent people that I don't see." So he did leave. He left. He went to Denver.

Marcello: My next question that I'm leading up to is this. Can familiarity be an asset or a liability, that is, in these labor-management negotiations?

White: Both. I can only answer that in this way. I think the same thing can occur in your teaching experience. By familiarity with a certain personality you can do wonders for that student. When you were a student, there were certain professors as you went through your

college who were people but yet they had something that got across to you. There was also others that you didn't like. There were students . . . I'm not asking questions (chuckle). There were students that you'd rather you didn't have in your class. You couldn't put your finger on exactly why.

But we had the same thing. There were a great deal of opportunity in social contracts after meetings, before meetings, in the evening over a drink, where you could get deep inside the personality of an individual. You could pick up this thing and build the trust that you needed, and likewise, your trust in him and his trust in you. This occurs on both sides of the fence. Sometimes it's particularly of value where the representative of a company comes out of a big personnel office, big labor relations office. He has no real authority. He does the negotiating, but he takes orders of what he can do and not do. Well, if he trusts the commissioner, if that can be established through personal contacts . . . he's out on the road, too, you see. Then he could help establish that trust so that when he calls New York for final orders on a final question, he can say, "Well, the commissioner recommends this," and they'll go along. Likewise, it's the same way where

a union policy has been established, as with the oil workers.

I had that happen in a plant which now belongs to somebody else--the Sinclair plant in Corpus Christi. The national policy . . . we already had pretty much national negotiation, although it was carried on company-to-company. The Sinclair plant in Corpus Christi . . . we worked out an agreement down there prior to anybody else working out any kind of an agreement. It was lower than the national policy, but it was a little more than they had offered anywhere else. So they said, "Okay, go ahead and sign the contract." This was from their Denver head office of the union. They only did that because I recommended that this be done, and I happened to know the president because I had worked with him when he was just a committeeman. I'd know him for years. I talked to him personally. I said, "This is the best we're going to do. This is Sinclair. This is their first plant to make a reasonable offer. You ought to take it. You've got a pattern, then, to shoot at." So we had some strikes in the oil industry because the others didn't want to meet that pattern, but they did set the pattern. That happens quite often, that your relationship with the individual is worthwhile.

Marcello: I was going to say. . . from what you've mentioned, I think you're saying that more often than not familiarity does result in a certain amount of rapport that might not otherwise exist, and thus becomes an asset in the bargaining.

White: Oh, yes. Well, you get to the place to where you can say things to people that you'd otherwise be careful about saying. Yes, you can develop that same thing with the news media. I always tried, when I went into a new town, different town, if they had a labor reporter, to make contact with that labor reporter. I'd call him, have a visit with him over a cup of coffee, or buy him lunch and tell him what our problem was and say that, "I want to trust you. This is private business although the government is now in it. I'll pull straight with you if you'll pull straight with me. I'll tell you the story, but you don't print it till I tell you you can." It's surprising how many times that works out well because a newspaper can blow your settlement. Like this . . . well, I haven't gotten to that yet. That's what I wanted to talk about--Hinky Dinky.

Marcello: Okay. Now let's just draw some things together here before we go on to talk about Hinky Dinky. We were

talking about the problems involving the Jerpe Commission Company and Mr. Swanson. What were the unique things in that case as you see it? Let's just try and draw these things together here.

White: Well, it was unique to me in one way. This is the first time that I had ever dealt where there were women on the picket line.

Marcello: What special problems did that create?

White: Why, it's . . . they're tougher than men. Believe it or not, when they go out on strike they mean it. I think there's . . . maybe it's not as true now as it probably was at that time that, sure, a certain number of those women who were working were single, heads of families, and so forth, sole support, maybe, of children. They were widowed by one way or another. But a majority of them had husbands who were also working, and they were more independent than the man. They could say, "I'm going to stay out for six weeks! The old man's still working!" So they did that. Also, I think I first really learned there that women knew as many or more cuss words than men do. Some of them were real vicious. If you talk to them personally they're pretty nice people, but not on a picket line. I think this strike. . . now this is hindsight, which is always a

little brighter. I think this strike had a lot to do with . . . this particular company had a lot to do with their eventually selling out to Purina?

Marcello: I'm not sure if it's Purina or not.

White: It's not Quaker Oats. It's a large conglomerate now that they sold out to. There were two sons. One of them was very much like his father. He became very bitter about this strike. They were involved in the management, of course. They were young men. The other one was named C.A. Swanson. No, no, this is a funny thing. This one was named Walter Clark Swanson, which happens to be my name, Walter Clark White. My wife met his wife, and they became very good friends. I think this thing of this strike caused the eventual sell out of Swanson. They were able to stand on their own feet. They could have stood an awful lot of pressure from any company. But the two sons were not interested, one, because he was bitter about the thing. The younger one, Walter Clark, was more of a salesman. He got into the real estate business both from sales and promotion before Swanson ever sold out. He was quite successful in Omaha. I think that was more his thing than trying to run the chicken operation. I think bitterness involved in a strike caused some of this movement of the family.

The relationship that can develop between the union committee that is trying to do a job and the people in the plant, I think, was rather unique here because these committeemen really had the backing of the people in their department. I think one other reason was that they were sincere in everything they were trying to do. They certainly didn't know it all, but they were sincere about what they were trying to do, and the people believed them. So when they said, "Strike," they struck.

Marcello: You mentioned committeemen. I gather that there were no women on this committee.

White: Yes, there were two women. There were two women, and they spoke up. They had their say.

Marcello: How did you have to alter your own tactics and procedures in the negotiations since there were these two women on the committee? I assume this is the first time that you had run into that.

White: This was the first time I had had women on the committee.

Marcello: What special problems did this create?

White: Well, at first . . . you left out all of those words that you might have used under certain circumstances, but as I say, you found out eventually that they knew as many or more than you did. So you weren't quite as

reticent about speaking your mind in a rather blunt fashion. They did.

I tried always to . . . well, I couldn't have done anything else. I was raised to think that women were ladies, were entitled to a certain amount of respect. As long as they respect themselves, I'm going to respect them. But you get over a little bit of that after rough sessions.

The only thing I could say about these two . . . and I'll remember them a long time. I can even remember what one of them looked like. Other than the rough language they used occasionally, they were ladies. They showed a respect for Mr. Swanson. They never got dirty with him. It wasn't fear of the boss because they were out on strike. They weren't afraid of the boss now.

Actually, as I sit here and talk I don't think you can answer that kind of a question until you have sat with the people in each committee group, whether they're men or women. You have to get a little insight to the people, I think, that probably applies to nearly every organization that you work with. I sat on the grand jury here awhile back in a mixed group. We felt each other out for a day or so. After that things went along pretty smoothly because we knew about what the other

guy was thinking on everything that came up.

Marcello: Was there anything else unique about that Jerpe case that you think we need to talk about? If there are no other unique features about that Jerpe case, I do have another general question. When a strike occurred during these war years, generally speaking, what was the public reaction to it?

White: In this particular situation the public reaction there was against it very much.

Marcello: That is, against labor and against the strike?

White: Right. It was very much so because this was food. Food's something you've got to have on the table. You and I can realize that if we can't get it there's other people that can't get it. So it's affecting a lot of people as compared to the transmission casing for Pershing tank, which you might see and not know what it is. You don't know where it's going. You don't know what it's going to end up as or what it'll do. But food you do. This was a food situation.

I think one thing that helped hold down opinion somewhat was the fact that the AFL national meeting was there. It wasn't too good that it was there during the strike because it held back our negotiations somewhat. But it was good in the fact that there were so

many there that the business people were profiting from the many representatives of the unions who were there spending money. But underneath you could detect this feeling that . . . well, I had a lot of calls, "When are you going to get those people back to work?"

Marcello: Do both sides in a situation like this try to appeal to patriotism in one way or another? I would assume that management in particular would use the patriotic appeal during a wartime situation. Maybe even you as a negotiator would use this.

White: Oh, yes, we did. Not only in this, in everything else. I think this is one of the things that made Mr. Swanson so obdurate about signing a contract. He was a patriotic man. He loved this country. It had been awfully good to him. It had given him an opportunity that he would have never had at home. He knew it. So even though I might say, as I did at that time, that he was just being bullheaded, I never criticized his attitude towards this country, I had sincere feeling that he was just as sincere about his love for this country. . . much more than a native born.

That contrasts a little bit to when I mentioned about Czech immigrant who hired an airplane to take our gymnastic team to Europe and so forth and then objected

so much to the union that he was giving the whole works the dickens. I referred the fact that I said that if he didn't like it he could go back to where he came from. Hitler would let him do that--get on Hitler's side. This calmed him down right quick.

Swanson was not that kind of a man. Well, actually, the other guy wasn't either. He was just overcome with the heat of the argument of the time. No, patriotism was an awfully good item at times. Now it could be overdone. A little later, if we get over to Iowa, I'll give you a good illustration.

Marcello: What seemed to be some of the other issues that concerned labor during the war years? Was it the usual things? Pay? Security? Working conditions?

White: Almost the same thing that we have today. I wouldn't put them quite in that order. I wouldn't even put them quite in that order yet. With the employee down in the plant, maybe it was pay, but I even doubt it there. Security, which may mean union security, or it may mean seniority, his right to his job, his right to a fair hearing with pay coming in that case in the secondary place. With the union, the leadership and those with the long experience, I think pay probably drops down in the third position with union security first because

this is the tool by which they live. This is the tool which assures them of income in order to carry on their business. With that comes the necessity for doing something for the employees, which is security, although, again, with the employee it might come in fringe benefits.

This will vary all over the place because of a person's individual experience. You have people who have had a serious illness, and the union-negotiated insurance had kept them from going deeply in debt or alleviated that debt to an extent. Maybe that person's first thing is, "Don't lose that insurance." Maybe we've got a guy up here that got fired and got put back to work through the grievance procedure. "Don't do anything to that grievance procedure." It'll vary according to your own effect. We're all affected by wages, money income, a direct income.

You don't see much fight about those fringes which are required by law, such as unemployment compensation and social security deductions. In fact, very often it's urged by the unions that we increase our own contribution to insurance benefits or the company increase theirs. They'd rather have it that way because this is non-taxable. It's beneficial to us, but it doesn't cost you anything because you can take it off as paid

out but it doesn't cost us tax money. This sort of thing . . . all of these things come into the picture.

Marcello: During the war years did the problem of time and half pay for overtime become a very prominent issue?

White: And a tough one, yes. The law hadn't been definitely defined. We're talking about wages-hours, public contracts. You had this thing of when does a day start. Are all days and all weeks in all companies the same? Are they divided into even eight-hour shifts if you have three shifts. This becomes, then, the beginning of what became known as "portal-to-portal" pay.

Many unions and management tried to answer these questions in their own way in their own contracts, both realizing that there was a problem. Sometimes they couldn't be resolved. Sometimes they agreed to go through the procedures set up by the Wages and Hours Division in public contracts for a final decision by the administrator, which might be a lead case or a landmark case that other people could use.

I had one of those in the war plant in . . . I say a war plant. It was an old furnace building plant till the war started. Then they were in the war business. I don't know how many hours we spent discussing this

very thing. When did a shift begin? When does a day begin? If so, when you're held over, when does overtime begin? If a day starts at 12:01 a.m. and I'm working on a shift which ends at 11:30 but I'm held over for two hours, do I get time and half for thirty minutes or do I get time and half for two additional hours because an hour and a half of that fell in the next day? Yes, very definitely, they were tough. I don't mean people were tough. It was a tough question--people trying to resolve it.

Marcello: In other words, in this whole business with overtime and the eight-hour day you were actually setting a lot of precedents.

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: You were actually pioneering in this area.

White: With the cooperation of the Wages and Hours Division, the War Labor Board, the courts. But we were right on the firing line. We had the thing first where there was a contract involved.

Marcello: I gather that the Wages and Hours Division would come in quite a bit here when the whole issue of overtime pay and that sort of thing came up.

White: Well, it required overtime over eight hours in any one day. So you had a conflict of statement which was open

to interpretation. Does a day begin when a guy gets up to go to work, seven o'clock in the morning, we'll say, or does it begin at 12:01 a.m.? Does a day begin when he starts to work at eight o'clock, or does the day begin when he checks in at 7:30? Does he have an eight-hour shift, or does he have an eight-and-a-half-hour shift? He checked in and he checked out. The time clock shows it. He might be a quarter of a mile from the check-in gate.

All of these things came into the picture. There was agreements; there was non-agreements; there was back pay awarded. In every place there was back pay awarded, why, every other union tried to use that one, at least in their initial argument. The "portal-to-portal" thing seemed to have stuck in most people's minds that it happened only in mines because it was so much spoken of that the portal was underground where you started down the drift to reach the face on which you were working, or when you hit that face where you worked. It didn't start up there at the check-in gate. But the union said it did start up there at the check-in gate, that you were then on the employer's property. You were checked in. You were under his command, and the day began then. Well, the employer says it don't. All

of these things came into picture. As I say, the word "portal" was used because it's so prevalent in the mines. But this portal also applied to manufacturing plants. Where is your portal--at your work place or at the gate? Does your portal start when you hit the campus, or does it start when your pupils come in the classroom door? This is not a good question in your case because you're liable to work twenty-four hours a day anyhow to try and keep up. It could get that picayunish. It wasn't picayunish to the people who were involved with the half-hour from the gate to the work place.

I had a personal experience that never came to anything other than wonderment in my mind when I worked in the potash mine. When does my workday begin? We were twenty-three miles from town. Does it begin when my ride picks me up? Does it begin when we hit the parking lot? Does it begin when I hit the gate, or does it begin when I take over from the previous shift? It never went any farther in my mind. Mine began when I took over. So a lot of other people were worrying about it much more than I.

You raised quite a question there. I worked a short time for the Wages and Hours Division. The time I worked for the Wages and Hours never showed up this thing of this conflict that you be paid for all hours

over eight in any one day. It is a conflict. What is a day?

Marcello: And I would assume that there were a lot of exceptions and a lot of individual cases where this question had to be resolved.

White: Well, you can dream up one real easy yourself. When they went to a five-day week, inherent in this question of any one day is any one week. Does it begin 12:01 a.m. Monday, or does it begin at some other particular hour during any of those days? Is it resolved on the basis of what the company's financial week is? Is it resolved on when they end the payroll? The argument comes up there, "Well, we don't care when you end the payroll. I want to live a normal life. Other people are off Sunday and Saturday. We get paid on Friday. My wife wants me to go shopping with her. So my day begins on Monday, and it ends on Friday the last minute I work for you. All the rest of that time is time and half."

There was lots of them, and there still is questions rising on individual cases. Most of the big ones are pretty well resolved that they know where their day begins and where their financial structure sets up a day. The unions are no longer objecting to the fact that the company starts their week at any particular

time as long as they understand that there's no overlap here. It's these five days that they're looking at.

Marcello: We're still trying to wrap up some of your experiences while you were back at the Omaha office before moving on to Des Moines. In our case, in addition to the case involving the Jerpe Commission Company that you feel is rather unique, is one which involved the Hinky Dinky grocery stores. Now, again, this is a case that took place back in Omaha. Isn't that correct?

White: That's right.

Marcello: And then at this point I'll let you narrate that particular case.

White: Well, this was, I'd say, in early '43. Chain stores were known, of course, and had been for some time, but they weren't quite as prevalent or as many of them as there is now. These Hinky Dinky stores were primarily in Omaha and Council Bluffs, Iowa, which is right across the river. Where they got the name, I have no idea. The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen had a closed shop contract with the Hinky Dinky company for all of their stores for the meat cutters. Now I use the word meat cutters specifically because that didn't include any common labor. These were craftsmen. They

were supposed to know how to take a side of beef and cut it up into its proper components, wrap it, and sell it to the individual. You could still buy meat in the chain stores this way like you would in a little family neighborhood meat market.

At that time the people could see there was going to be a change there when pre-packaged meats would be put in the counter for the consumer to make a selection from and buy that package. It had some start, not much. There was no definite feeling whether this would be done at the packing house or at the ultimate consumer outlet--the local store.

The meat cutters union in their constitution prohibited women from being a member of the union. By that very clause they prohibited the use of women in any section of the meat department. World War II was on. The question came up in negotiations for a new contract of the use of women in the meat department.

Marcello: Did management bring up the question?

White: Management brought up the question.

Marcello: And was this due to a manpower shortage?

White: This was due to a manpower shortage. The union always tried to include in their contracts, particularly in the retail stores, this portion of their constitution

prohibiting women membership. Well, we didn't have any prohibition by any law against the discrimination about the sex, age, color, or anything at that time. However, management was desperately in need of manpower. So this thing went to a strike over this one question.

Marcello: The union wouldn't budge.

White: The union wouldn't budge, and they had telegrams from their international that they were not to budge.

Marcello: Why was it that the unions did not want to include women? Was it a matter of job protection or what?

White: It was originally job protection. How far that went back, I don't know. But it was many, many years before my time of being directly interested in union contracts. So it had to be originally for job protection. Now they had quite an apprenticeship program to which each union member contributed a certain amount of money--management did, too, in their contract--for the training of journeyman workers. Then in the stores everybody was supposed to be a journeyman meat cutter or an apprentice--man. The war was on. Manpower was being drained off to better jobs, better paying jobs. Even some journeymen meat cutters were going to better paying jobs in other industries. The union was still trying to protect their men's situation. Management was trying desperately to man their stations.

Well, the strike was affecting a lot of people, of course, because they could no longer get meat. They could get meat in other stores, but Hinky Dinky was the prominent . . . the prevalent price-setter and everything. So in that area it was affecting the whole community and a lot of pressure was on. Well, eventually an agreement was reached. I think the strike was about three weeks. Eventually, an agreement was reached by this method of going through a mediator and separate talks and eventually coming up with the idea that you kind of knew beforehand that if you brought it out on the table both parties would be under some pressure to accept it. Maybe you had agreement to one party that they would do it, or maybe it was their original suggestion.

In this case, if I remember right, it was management's suggestion that they would be willing to . . . they weren't going to give up the use of women, but they would be willing to protect the union by not putting it in the contract, that they would live up to their word if they could use women behind the counters, out of sight, for the little trimming, the very little use of knives, packaging primarily, and placing those packages attractively in their display counters.

I made an open recommendation. When I say open I mean at the conference table where both parties were there. I'd already talked to both sides and had a feeling it could be accepted if it was done this way. It was accepted. The union prayed--I use that word intentionally--that this word not get out until they got the contract approved by the rank-and-file at their vote.

I was called on the telephone by a reporter from the Omaha Herald. The union was called, the business agent. The management was called, the president of the company. None of us gave any information to the reporter of the company. None of us gave any information to the reporter as to the contract other than that a tentative agreement had been reached--no details. But somebody leaked. He got the story wrong, but he got it in the paper that the union was accepting women as meat cutters. Well, this blew the contract out of the water.

The union jumped on me; the management jumped on me. I convinced both of them that I didn't give anything away. But I was the only one that would have any notes on it. They'd refer to those notes through me at some later time if a discussion arose about it.

Those notes were initialed by both parties.

But I convinced both sides that I had nothing to do with the leak. It must have come from somewhere else. Well, the president of the company and I went to the publisher of the Omaha paper, told him our story. He understood the situation. He printed a retraction of this reporter's story over his own name. This satisfied everybody.

They got the contract approved in a membership meeting with this women thing still over here on the side, although key people in the union had been told that this would happen, look for it and say nothing. I think when this went into effect, this was the first time a craft union had accepted women, not in a contract, not as members, but to work with them on a job which normally they had claimed through their life as being men's jobs. I think it was the first one. I'm not too sure about that. But it was a breakthrough. The international union didn't take it all even though it was on the side. But the parties were certainly proven right that packaging was taking place. There was going to be more of it in packing houses. The packing houses themselves began to do this and ship the packaged product. The big stores had their own packaging department. Now it's out in the open, and the women

are doing it. But it took a period of time for this acceptance. This goes back to the old craft conception of a union. First, you're a skilled man and then you're eligible to be a union man. Women weren't skilled (chuckle). I guess that was the thinking. I don't really know the thinking. Maybe this was part of the beginning of women's lib.

Marcello: Okay, I guess now this takes us back up to Des Moines, Iowa, again. Is that correct?

White: Let's get back out of these things that I thought were . . . at least to me they were training. They were different. Some of them, I think this one particularly, is historical. So now we're back over to Des Moines.

Marcello: How would you compare or contrast the Des Moines office so far as its operations were concerned with the Omaha office? How did the two offices compare administratively or the way in which they were run?

White: Well, during my period in Omaha, the majority of the time I was there by myself. I worked out of my home. My wife's secretarial services were free to the government and me. I wrote my own reports. I did all of the clerical work that I couldn't get my wife to do.

In Omaha there was three of us. We had a suite of offices. In comparison to what they have now I use

that word in a derogatory manner. We had four large rooms--the three men--in the old federal building in Des Moines. I think the walls at the ground line were five feet thick, solid limestone. They were still about three feet thick on the fourth floor. We were on the third floor. The reason we had four rooms was because they didn't think of any other way to divide the things up--just these four big rooms. The three commissioners' desks were in one room. The secretary's desk was across the little hall in another room. We had the other two rooms as conference rooms. They were very sparsely furnished. In two of those rooms there were big vaults, I mean, the kind the banks used. So they became useful to lock our files up. Although nobody wanted our files, we locked them up there.

In Omaha, I had to make my own judgements, my own travel plans--the whole works--my own travel arrangements, aircraft, railroad tickets, whether I went by automobile or some other way. Over in Des Moines we had a secretary that . . . if I needed to go to Keokuk, Iowa, and I could get there on the train, I'd say, "Dorothy, get me a ticket for such-and-such time to Keokuk. I need to get there for a meeting at ten o'clock in the morning on Wednesday." This was done.

I came back from a trip, and I dictated my reports. I turned my longhand notes on my travel charges over to the secretary, and they were done. In both cases we still worked out of what we now had as a regional office in St. Louis. There had been other regions set up after the original one in Chicago. So although from Omaha I could call the regional director for advice or consultation--I could still do that in Des Moines--I had two other men there, also, who I could talk with. Maybe they knew the individuals involved in a particular situation or the company, or had had experience somewhere else with some of these people. So it made a much easier working condition, although we all still got lots of calls at home and late at night.

The total difference as it affected me, I think, was that the experience in the single office kind of made a "lone wolf" out of me. I might have made more mistakes for so long before I was in an office populated with other commissioners and had no one to talk to. On the other hand, I might not. But I think it kind of made a "lone wolf" out of me. I learned to . . . well, I had to depend on my own judgement.

Otherwise, there was very little difference in administration. The fact that I had a secretary available

meant that I could get my travel voucher out quicker. But that didn't mean I got the money from Washington any quicker. But it was in a place where I could say, "I sent this in on a certain date, and I haven't heard from it yet," where before I was usually late myself getting it in.

Marcello: Now in this office in Des Moines were the three of you equals, or was there a man who headed this office?

White: No, everybody was equal. A commissioner was a commissioner. There was no head commissioner. As to certain privileges . . . say, it became necessary for a move to be made, a transfer to reduce the force in that particular office, a man had to go someplace else. Seniority was pretty well observed. The senior commissioner there . . . if he wanted to stay he could stay. If he wanted to move he could move providing that everything else was equal, that other regions would accept him or whoever was to be transferred. But there was no head man, and there still isn't, in the Federal Mediation Service. There's still no head man in the Dallas office, no head man in the Kansas City office or the Houston office. Occasionally some guy gets to thinking he's the head man, and then he's usually in trouble with the other commissioners. When you accept an assignment after

you become a commissioner and you're no longer a trainee. . . when you become a commissioner and you accept an assignment, that is yours. It's up to you to work it.

Marcello: In a three-man office such as the one that existed in Des Moines during that period when you transferred there, how was it determined which of the three of you would be assigned to a particular case? Was it simply a matter of trying to equalize the caseload? In some cases I'm sure that perhaps one of you were specifically wanted in a particular case.

White: Well, you raised two questions--one of them rather broad and the other one narrow enough. Let me answer the narrow one if I can. Yes, each commissioner at times had requests for him. These were discouraged by our own staff, the administrative and executive staff of the Conciliation Service. They were also discouraged by the commissioner due to the fact that nine times out of ten the guy was tied up someplace else. He couldn't get there just when these other people. . . where there might be another commissioner free to go in. Everybody was expected to work any case that came his way.

To try and answer the second question, the broader part of it, there was an attempt to equalize the caseload. All of our people in our regional office who

made assignments had had experience in the field. They knew a little of what constituted a caseload in various times and various areas and various times of the year. There was also the consideration that you spoke of of individual knowledge. Now it seems to me-- and I think it's right--that in the majority I got packing house cases. I got most of those. There was a lot of them in Iowa and up and down the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. I got most of the millwork houses, which were, again, up and down the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. By millwork I mean they manufactured window frames, doors, chests, cabinets, all of this sort of stuff. Why I got into that packing house business, I don't know. When I say packing houses I'm talking about chicken plants and egg processing, pork, beef. The thing that I think that started it was referring back to Omaha to that Jerpe Commission, C.A. Swanson and Son.

But as a whole I enjoyed it. This was an area where we spoke of rapport being established. Armour and Company had a young man who had risen through the ranks. He'd started out as a packing house worker and got into their personnel department. Oh, he was at that time about third in command in their Chicago office.

He got an awful lot of the Armour plants of various kinds out in the Iowa area, so I met him every place. We had quite a friendship going--not at the conference table but afterwards.

Millwork . . . I'd never worked in a millwork plant, but I knew what most of their machines were. So I think that was one reason that I got millwork assignments, although we had one man that was a carpenter by trade originally. There was one deal in Fort Madison, an individually-owned millwork house. We had a strike right in the dead winter in Iowa. The strike was for a union shop. It eventually ended up . . . the company signed a contract for a union shop. A year later they sold the plant. They wouldn't take it. It was family-owned, and they had one of those old ideas, you know, that "We run the plant of else." So they kept the thing going, but then they sold out. I think that was the last individually-owned major millwork house on the Mississippi.

We had one man who had been a streetcar operator at one time in his life. Up there he got most of those streetcar cases. At that time we had quite a lot of them because they were the urban mode of transportation. Even the smaller towns had streetcars, maybe just one

line but they had a streetcar. Most of them were organized. He got most of those, thank heaven. They could get a little difficult at times.

The older commissioner at that time, who happened to be the biggest one of us and weighed around 260, about six-foot-four, he was quite a little older than I. His caseload was usually a little less than the two of us. This we didn't object to. We were the youngest, so we carried the biggest load. This used to be the kind of cooperation among commissioners in the field offices. I hope it still is. Whether it actually is or not, I don't know.

Marcello: What were some of the more outstanding cases that you ran across here in the Des Moines office?

White: Well, outstanding means to me not bigness but people, problems. We had two that come to my mind very easily in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Now this was quite an industrial town and quite an industrial area. Up the river some distance was Waterloo, Iowa, which is also an industrial town and not quite as large as Cedar Rapids was at that time . . . probably had more industry per population than Cedar Rapids. Cedar Rapids was where the interesting case developed.

The Iowa Steel Company started as purely a foundry.

A man by the name of Hall became the eventual owner. If my information is not wrong, he started as an orphan and probably was about high school age when he went to work for this Iowa Steel Company. The family that owned it became fond of him and adopted him. He was quite a character. He had this lion cage out at his house. He had two live lions in it. He got in the cage with those lions. He had them all trained. I know. I saw what he could do with them. He was also a very intelligent man, quiet, not pushy, resourceful. He had his finger in everything that went on around that town. I found after some experience that if I had a problem in another plant that I couldn't put my finger on, couldn't quite solve, particularly on the management side, I could call Mr. Hall and tell him what I wanted him to know after he learned to trust me. He'd say, "Well, yes, I'm a director on that board of directors at that company. Why don't you do so-and-so and so-and-so?" You'd always find he was right. He knew what he was talking about. He knew what was going on in that plant.

But I think the most interesting thing that happened was actually two incidents, all in the same situation. Iowa Steel had become not only a foundry

but a machine shop. When the war started, it also became a steel fabricating plant. Now these were in three different buildings, all adjacent and doors between them, solid brick walls.

The molders had had a contract with Iowa Steel . . . I don't know how many years. They had a long history of relationship, not always peaceful but a long history of relationship. They knew each other well. Now the molders at that time had the craft . . . through a craft idea they were not an industrial union as such. They didn't take in laborers, although there was laborers working alongside them. You were a molder, patternmaker, diemaker, or you didn't belong to the union. There might have been some chippers and grinders that they took into the union. Whether that's true or not I can't remember. They also formed an inferior union which took in the laborers. It was part of the Molders International Union but was not part of the molders contract. They had separate contracts. They had one in this Iowa Steel plant.

Then the war started. The company had already developed this machine shop to machine their own castings and so forth. Now they were primarily a job shop. They did jobs for other people. The machinists union

had the contract in that section. They had been there for some time, not as long as the molders had been. The molders were the dominant union. Then when the steel fabricating plant came in, they organized that in this laborers division of the molders union. So we had three contracts but not all negotiated at the same time--just one at a time.

The first one to come up was the molders and the superintendent was sitting in for the company. Now they would only meet at night, so we'd start about, oh, the end of the afternoon of the day shift and continue on until two or three o'clock in the morning and come back if necessary the next day and so on.

Well, finally the union asked to have a separate meeting with me. They said, "We're as far as we can go with the superintendent. We are not going to change our position anymore. From long experience, we'd like to have you help us." They said, "It's time to call in Mr. Hall." I had the story by that time. I asked him to come in to the next meeting. He eventually agreed to it. He said, "I'm trying to turn these things over to the direct management of the plant down there, but if you say so I'll come in."

So we started again at the end of the day shift.

We got down to a certain point, and Mr. Hall had moved a little bit on a few minor items, and the union had moved a little bit. Finally, Hall sat back and said, "Well, boys, that's it. You might just as well go out and start throwing bricks through the windows." Now I didn't know what he had reference to, but the union negotiators kind of giggled, laughed a little. They said, "Commissioner, can we talk with you separately?"

So we had a separate meeting and they told me what he meant by this throwing rocks through windows and bricks through the windows. They said this was his way of referring to the fact that he had gone as far as he was going because when he used to negotiate all of the contracts, they had to strike and they left this room. They went out, set up the picket lines, and some of the guys started throwing bricks through the windows. He always referred to that when he'd reached the end of his rope. When he told you to throw bricks through the windows, he was set.

So now it was up to the union, so they asked for a little while to consider things among themselves and make a few telephone calls. They called me back, I guess, in an hour and a half to this separate room that they were meeting in. They said, "We will have to

contact our international, tell them what we've got and what our decision is. Our decision is to tell them that we will accept the contract, although it's less than their plan at the international. Can you set up a meeting with management for about three days from now?"

Okay, I went to another situation someplace. This was up in Waterloo. While I was up there, I heard that the Iowa Steel was shut down by the molders. So this was strictly against any feeling that I had in talking with that union committee at any time, their leadership, that they were pretty solid people and they were experienced. They weren't greenhorns. When they asked me to set up a meeting they meant that there'd be no strike until they had their conference with international and got back in the meeting and told the management face-to-face.

So I rushed back down there, and this is what happened. All the departments of war--Navy, Army, Marine Corps, Air--had set up labor relations representatives. Well, in this particular case most of the product going out of Iowa Steel for armaments was going to tanks for the Army. The Army representative had come down. He had heard that there was a discussion

and a threatened strike at Iowa Steel. This was important stuff that they were making for the tanks that went to General Motors for their final assembly. He came down. He arrived there and he wanted to go through the plant. The company said, "Well, we don't think it's a good idea for a uniform to even go through the plant." Now this guy, before he got to be a major in the Army, about three or four months before that had been manufacturing caskets in Minneapolis. He was redheaded, flamboyant, and his name was Rozelle. Well, he insisted. So they took him out through the plant. He wanted to talk to a man here and a man there.

Apparently from what I learned the gist of his conversation was the patriotism we were referring to. He was talking about the need of this equipment, these casting and so forth, going out of this plant for the saving of lives and shortening of the war and this and that. But he also inferred, I was told, that if they went on strike the Army would be in there running the plant. Lo and behold, the word got around. These guys didn't strike; they just quietly walked out. There was no apparent concerted action under the direction of any one individual. They just walked out.

Well, I beat it back down from Waterloo, which is

about seventy or eighty miles from Cedar Rapids, and I got down there at ten o'clock at night. I couldn't find anybody to talk to except the management. They told me pretty directly what had happened and what they thought had happened. I finally found the international representative at the hotel who was also looking for somebody to talk to. He couldn't even find his own people. But he had heard through a telephone call that the president and the treasurer and another one of the molders committee was out on a little lake near Cedar Rapids fishing. So we drove out there, and sure enough we found him. They were full of home brew. They were still drinking home-brew. I don't mean beer. I'm talking about home-brew. They weren't drunk. They just had enough of this to be a little stubborn.

Through the international man's help I was able to convince these three guys that if I could talk that Army man to get the hell out of there they'd come back to work and we'd follow our original plan. But it would be a day late. They agreed to help contact the people. We got the plant back to work. I got hold of Mr. Rozelle down at the hotel and just very bluntly told him what had happened. I said, "I don't want to have to do this, but I also don't want any misunderstanding. Get your

ass out of town, or I'm going to call the Secretary of the Army, or some of my people will, to get you out of here." So at that time . . . I told you a long time back we threw our weight around a little. But this could have and would have happened. So he saw the light of day, and he got out of town.

Marcello: In situations of this type, could the Army have been called in? Could it legally have been called in to run that mill or that plant?

White: Well, even if it could, they couldn't have run it. They didn't have anybody to run it with. They had no authority to impound these people in that plant that were working there. They didn't have molders in the Army that they could assign to it. If they had done that sort of thing, the AFL would have been all over everybody in Washington. So that becomes a little moot. They just couldn't have run it.

I don't think I ever had an Army-Navy labor representative show up in a crucial negotiation after that. Eventually, before the war was over these people were no longer operating. They'd become inoperative. The other commissioners had had somewhat similar experience, a little different thing.

There was another situation that again involves women. I don't know whether we're going to have time to

go into that thing or not. It's at Quaker Oats in Cedar Rapids.

Marcello: Since time is passing on here, why don't we just cut it off at this point, and then next time we'll pick it up with the Quaker Oats story. We can continue on through your experiences in Des Moines. I would assume that you came from Des Moines to Texas.

White: December, 1949.

Marcello: You went to Des Moines in '43, and you stayed there until '49. Then, of course, you preceded down to Texas.

White: Right.

Marcello: Well, we'll pick it up the next time then through the rest of your experiences in Des Moines, and then take you into Texas.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: May 14, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. This interview is taking place on May 14, 1975, in Denton, Texas. This is the sixth in a series of interviews with Mr. White in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a labor mediator and conciliator during the 1940's and 1950's, and eventually we'll continue right up to his retirement from the United States Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Now Mr. White, when we left off last time we had reached the point where you were operating in Iowa or out of Des Moines at least, and we were about to go into an experience or a particular case that you had with the Quaker Oats Company. So why don't you just pick up the story at that point?

Mr. White: I think this Quaker Oats situation is pertinent to a lot of things that are happening today. By going around the mulberry bush, I'll try to get to that point. I had been in the Quaker Oats negotiations

in the first year that I was in Des Moines, Iowa, as a headquarters office. As usual in those days, most of the contracts were yearly contracts, not long-term contracts, so we might be in them year after year. I say "we." It might be me or the other commissioners or one of the others that was in the field or maybe even somewhere else if we were tied up, but somebody would be there, or at least the contract would be negotiated. Now I'd been in this situation the first year I was in Des Moines, Iowa, and we worked out an agreement.

This is the largest cereal plant in the world, and they had an unusual situation. A descendent or relative of Edgar Allen Poe was the manager. At this time he was about seventy years old and a fine old gentleman. Everybody loved him. That didn't stop them from tough negotiations. But to illustrate that sort of relationship as between a union committee and management and the employees and the management, the union committee called me aside when I first went into these negotiations and said, "Now commissioner, we want you to watch Mr. Poe. If he sticks his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and starts flapping his arms up and down like a bird going to take off, adjourn the meeting right then. Mr. Poe's a diabetic and he's got to eat, and we wouldn't hurt that

old gentleman for the world." So I thanked them and followed through. It did happen. I saw him stick his arms or thumbs up in his armholes of his vest, and we called the meeting off.

Marcello: Incidentally, what was the major points of contention between labor and management here at Quaker Oats? Do you recall offhand?

White: Well, always there's money. Nearly always there are some fringes, although they didn't demand as many fringes as they do these days, and generally Quaker Oats was a little bit out in the lead in their labor relations policy, particularly in their industry. In other words, they had some kind of savings plan very early where the company contributed, and after a certain number of years in investing, well, then that money that the company put into the savings plan became that employee's money in his name. I think it was five years. It was shorter than a lot of them now. They had some type of hospitalization deal, and a payment of so many week's wages if a person was sick after the first week and he was hospitalized. So socially they were quite a ways ahead. On top of that, they had . . . I believe it was this enormous plant that was scattered among some several buildings, all connected. There was four fairly large cafeterias and one smaller one down at the power

plant. And those will come into this thing which, I think, fits into the present day and age. In those cafeterias it would probably be more likely called a snack shop today, although they were large meals, as our general thinking of meals, were served three times a day. This was in the middle of each shift, and they operated twenty-four hours. When I say in the middle of each shift, what I'm actually trying to say is at the end of each shift. The cafeterias also made free to the employees coffee and milk as drinks, and rolls and doughnuts were furnished at cost. A doughnut there would cost you about a penny. A roll was about the same price. Now these were baked in the plant some place. I don't know where the bakery was, but they were baked in the plant there, so they were fresh every time.

Well, this leads to the social situation. Employees coming on the morning shift would not eat breakfast at home because they had a fifteen-minute break in the middle of their shift. They had a fifteen-minute break as near the middle hours of their eight-hour shift as they could. Now it was unusual to this extent that they shut all the plant down for these fifteen-minute breaks. The machines that crushed the oats were

shut down, and things stopped flowing. The machines that packaged were shut down. Everything shut down, and everybody went to the cafeteria for coffee, milk, doughnuts, and so forth as it went on. Now in the first contract negotiations that I was in nothing was said about this except it was explained to me how they worked it. And fifteen minutes was quite a while. After we had worked out an agreement in this first contract negotiation that I was in, during the next year some bright young man in the accounting department sharpened up his pencil, and he figured out mathematically that shutting down fifteen minutes in each shift made three shutdowns a day of fifteen minutes each. During that period of time over a year on a certain sized Quaker Oats box they lost 180 railroad cars of product.

He handed these figures over to the management, and they saw what he was talking about real quick so they brought up the question in the next negotiations that I was in. They said to the union, "We have this situation. We shut down, and so we lose product. Our machines are idle. The machines are there to do a job. If we can keep them running we make so much more product during the day, during the month, during the year. Now we don't want to take those rest periods away from you, and we don't want to deny you access to the cafeterias. What

we want to do is hire more people, train them for relief people, and we will relieve one line at a time maybe, or half of the machines on a line. With additional people, nobody will be laid off. We will hire additional people, and we will keep those machines running. This is good for you, and it is good for us."

Well, to use an old expression, which might be a little obnoxious to some people, this is where the shit hit the fan (chuckle). A great number of those employees in the plant were women, and they had enjoyed thoroughly visiting with their friends and working up ideas for their social activities and planning their gymnastic club activities and their baseball team and so forth--all these things more or less supported by the Quaker Oats Company, see. They were all talked about, and the men usually called it the women's gossip hour. So when this hit the people in the plant, I think that probably 100 per cent of the women were against it. So when the expiration of the date of the contract came, we had a strike over that one thing, and that strike went on for nine days. I didn't have anybody to talk to, and neither did management. We had one woman on the committee. This was chauvinistic men, I guess, but maybe the women elected them. But they would not give

up that complete shutdown. This thing caused disruptions in the home life. I think two or three divorces developed. Women and men were both working in the same plant, and the men wanted to go back to work, but the women didn't until they got their fifteen minutes back.

Well, through the intervention of international representatives of the cereal workers union and through a personal visit to a union meeting by Mr. Poe where he talked to the whole group . . . I was there and made my pitch, and we all talked the same thing. "You're not losing time; you're not losing money." And the company had even agreed to try to rearrange these lines so that particular people who were interested in particular things would be off at the same time. They were a very good company to work with. Well, it finally worked out that way.

Marcello: I gather from what you have said that in this particular instance that you were more or less in sympathy with the company viewpoint and were trying to point this out to the workers?

White: You had to be because they weren't taking anything away, and it was good for both the company and the workers. The company has got to make a profit, or it can't pay a payroll. Well, if you can add 180 railroad cars a year

with the use of the machines, you cut down the cost of operations--more profit. Then they can talk more money. So it worked out that way. You know, I don't believe that any of us was back in that . . . I mean commissioners--back in that Quaker Oats negotiations during the rest of the time I was in Iowa.

A strike is a great teacher, particularly where you don't win or lose except during a short period of shutdown. People think more logically after than when it comes up to deadline time, and also they had the experience of this change of rest periods which was not too bad. In fact, it worked out very well for a lot of clubs that the company sponsored. They did work out where most of them could get off at the same time to meet in their rest periods.

So that was really an experience, and I think its the first time probably that I had knowledge of the connection between men and their wives or men and their girlfriends. There was complete difference of opinion and different ideas, and the women enforced their ideas up to a point. Maybe that was a beginning of women's lib.

Marcello: I gather that generally speaking, though, here at Quaker Oats that there were pretty cordial relations between management and labor. It wasn't like the antagonisms

were a lingering thing that continued even after the contract had been signed and this sort of thing.

White: Oh, no, these people knew that they were leaders in the field as far as benefits for the employees were concerned, and they had quite a long experience. . . . when I speak of my first negotiations with the company, I don't mean their first contract. They had had a contract for quite awhile. The grain millers union generally is a highly responsible union. They've had very responsible representatives and very responsible leadership. So all those things put together there was a good relationship at Quaker Oats.

I can think of one more thing while I'm in Iowa, if you don't mine.

Marcello: Fine, go right ahead.

White: And it may have some benefit to somebody in the future just for historic purposes. There were very few people who knew there were two John L. Lewises in the mine workers union. Of course, the John L. everybody had heard about is the big fellow with the bushy hair, the bushy eyebrows, the booming voice, terrific command of the English language and Homeric expressions. Well, I just met that John L. once, one time, and shook his hand. Of course, you know he was born in Iowa, of Welsh descent.

Well, the other John L. Lewis was also of Welsh descent, but he'd been born in Wales and came here as a child.

To get back to the John L. we all know about, any student of the labor history again had heard about John L. knocking a mine mule down with his fist. Well, generally, we think of a mule as being that big Missouri Mule. I used the term mine mule intentionally. In this area there was a little bit of bituminous coal mining going on--Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, so forth. There were not big seams of coal like anthracite show up. Generally, they were more narrow, and you were lucky if you had a five-foot vein, very lucky. So they needed power back in the early days to pull these loaded cars from the mines, from the face. Not only coal, but the slag and so forth. So they developed this mule to do that--a cross between a small jackass and a Shetland pony. Some of them were little fellows, but they were all mules, and they inherited some of the bad qualities of the Shetland pony. They were mean little devils. They kicked the socks off of you, particularly if you had one that developed a strain to the cross-breeding where he had this black stripe and . . . a dun-colored little animal with a black stripe down his back and down his tail, and black mane. Now you could depend on it if you walked behind him he'd kick you. Well, these

were the mine mules, and actually I don't believe I could have knocked one of those down with my fist if I got mad enough at them. This is what I think . . . they never explained it. John L. just knocked a mule down with his fist. I think it was one of these little fellows. He might have done it when he was a young man because he was quite a man physically.

But to get back to the other John L. Lewis, he went by the name of "Shady" Lewis. So with my normal curiosity I wanted to know why they called him "Shady." And one of the other international representatives explained to me that he had a bad habit that when things got tied up in negotiations or organization he'd say, "Let's find a good shady spot and play a little poker." This was his expression: "Let's find a good shady spot." So he became known as "Shady" Lewis.

Marcello: Where did you first meet him, and what were the circumstances under which you met him?

White: Well, I think this was right in the middle . . . well, I know it was right in the middle of the summer in Iowa, where it can get hot as it can anywhere--high humidity. District Thirteen of the United Mine Workers was headquartered in Alba, Iowa. They had their own building and their own regional facilities there with the regional

president and the regional officers. Now "Shady" Lewis was a national office representative, but he operated in that Missouri-Illinois-Iowa district mostly, although he was subject to call anyplace.

They had negotiated . . . you know, the mine workers have two contracts, anthracite and bituminous. Well, everything in the Iowa district was soft coal. So they had negotiated these two national contracts and had come to the point of local negotiations.

I had a telegram from our Washington office that said, "Contact J. L. Lewis, Fort Des Moines Hotel, mediator needed immediately. Strike situation. Alleged violation of contract by management." Well, I contacted "Shady" Lewis. He told me briefly what happened. He said that they had a meeting with the operating management of several mines--their representatives--in this town of Alba. On top of that he wanted to know if he could ride down with me. This was about ninety miles from Des Moines. They had that meeting set up for nine o'clock the next morning. So I picked Lewis up at the hotel.

We drove down, and he filled me in on a little more of the details from their side. Part of the argument was . . . back in those days the miner was more or less a contract miner in that he was assigned, or he and his

partner were assigned, a certain face in the mine in which to work. They did the work in that mine, they got out the coal, they drilled the holes, they loaded the coal, they loaded the slag, and from there on another crew took over, and this is where these other mules come in. They could walk under those low ceilings. And the cars filled with coal and so forth were taken up to the head frame if it was a deep shaft mine or the side of the hill to a slope where the dump was. The contract deal came in that you were paid by the number of tons . . . Ernie Ford's great song, "Sixteen Tons." Each one of those cars that went out had the particular miner's number in it, and a checker kept track of the cars as they came out--whose they were and so forth.

Now the protest was that these miners had to furnish their own powder. They had to furnish their own steel. By steel I mean the drills and so forth. They had to pay for the sharpening or sharpen them themselves, the drills. And there were some other items the miner had to furnish that I can't remember. But it was in this area that the dispute arose.

The meeting place that they had arranged was not in the district mine workers office. It was in two rooms above some store buildings in uptown Alba, right on the

main street. Down below and over one floor . . . you had to walk up narrow stairs to get up. Originally, these had been a lawyer's offices of something . . . narrow stairs to get up there to this second floor where these meeting rooms were. But next door to the stairway was a restaurant. It didn't even have an electric fan, and it was hot.

Well, we started that meeting at nine o'clock, went through to noon, started again about one o'clock. We had all eaten together down in this restaurant--the operators, the miners committee, myself, and the international representative. It was kind of a big family. They knew each other locally. They were kidding each other. We went back up, and the longer we went the hotter it got. And I had tried everything I knew then.

Marcello: Now was this during the war when this difference took place?

White: This is during the war, yes. And I had tried everything that I had known, and I knew a little bit about coal mining. I had even called one of our men down in Kansas City who was a former mine workers representative. I told him the situation and asked him for help, and he couldn't give me too much help. It was a situation that had to be worked out locally.

Well, along in the afternoon, say about three o'clock, it seems like to me by that time the temperature was up to about a 120 degrees, but it was that humidity. Everybody was sweating. It was terrible. So I conceived a wonderful idea. This came about from hearing what Dr. Steelman had done in a mine situation in Pennsylvania. They were meeting on the side of a hill right out in the open.

Marcello: Now did you know Dr. Steelman by this time or at least know of Steelman by this time?

White: Oh, he was our director.

Marcello: I see. That's right.

White: Yes, he was our director, see. He had also been a mediator in the field. He'd done a lot of it. Well, anyhow, thinking what I could do, I got this idea that I'd separate these people . . . and it was hot up there. I'd put one group in one room and one in the other room and make a speech to both of them that the war was on and that we had to get this stuff out. I'd sat there and review their position, but I wouldn't be in either meeting. But I'd be where they could get to me. If they made up their minds to change their position on anything, they could get me--either side. It only took one to change position, and then I'd try to change the

other people. I made this separate speech to both parties, separated.

Now I went down to the restaurant to get a cold glass of buttermilk. Now my total idea there was that I had run out of soap except this one thing, and maybe by leaving them up there in their own little rooms, and sweating it out that somebody would come up and say, "For God's sake, we can't stand this heat. Let's do something."

Well, you know that happened. The operators, they sent a man down, and about the same time the union had decided they couldn't stand it any longer either, and they sent a man down to the restaurant. And there I was, sitting down there cooled off a little and enjoying a cold drink. They had not planned to come down together. They just happened to come out at the same time and come down together. So they both said, "Well, we want to talk to you."

So I went back up and talked to them separately, and they were both changing. I got them back together, and we worked out an agreement. They immediately set things in motion to notify their people that an agreement had been reached. I think that the companies agreed that they'd pay so much of the powder bill, and that they'd pay

for the sharpening of the steel. A man would still have to furnish his own steel. These people didn't object to that because they'd got stuff they'd taken care of themselves, see. I believe those were the only two changes that were actually made in the operating procedure, but it did bring about an agreement. The mine worker's committee had full authority. You knew when you dealt with them that they had full authority. So we got this all put down in memorandum form, and everybody initialed it.

"Shady" Lewis and I started back for Des Moines, and on the way back he said, "Well, Walter, I feel a little sheepish about what went on today." And I said, "Well, why?" He said, "Well, I'll show you and you can draw your own conclusions." And he reached in the inside pocket of his coat, and he pulled out a telegram, and he handed it to me. He said, "It's not too long. You can read it while you're driving." It said, "District Thirteen is in violation of their contract. Put those men back to work immediately. Period. Signed John L. Lewis, President, United Mine Workers." And it was dated the day before. My immediate boss and myself and "Shady" Lewis were the only ones who ever knew, outside of John L. Lewis who sent the telegram, what actually

happened. Now if I had known that telegram was in his pocket when we started for Alba, I wouldn't have gone to Alba. I'd have said, "You've got a boss (chuckle)."

Marcello: I do know that on several occasions during those war years that some rather serious trouble did develop between labor and management in the coal industry. There were several strikes, in fact. At one point is it not true that Congress did pass a law which authorized the taking over of those mines by the government or by the Army or whomever in situations where it was believed that national security was endangered?

White: Yes, I agree that there was some kind of law by the Congress or Presidential order. There was a very famous picture where the Army took over Montgomery Ward and threw Mr. Avery out, carried him out bodily. So as to my own experience, we never had anything like that happen where the government took over. But, yes, there was that kind of authorization and could have been done. I think it was probably done in some instances in the coal mining industry.

Marcello: In fact, I think the sponsor of that particular piece of legislation to which I'm referring in the Senate was Thomas Connally, Senator from Texas. In fact, his name

is associated with the act. This would be Thomas Connally.

White: He was quite a respected individual, both in his area in Texas and in Congress.

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about the selection of the site in this particular dispute involving the miners and the owners. How important was the selection of a site in the success or failure of the negotiations in which you were involved? Is it an important thing?

White: Well, in this particular instance, I think it had a lot to do with it, but the parties selected that place themselves. The union wouldn't meet in the mine operators' office which was in that town. There was one fairly large operator who had an office in Alba. They wouldn't meet in his office, and the operators wouldn't meet in the union's buildings. So they got together and said, "Okay, we'll meet up here. We can get these rooms." So they selected that themselves. It was not of my doing. However, very often where you knew the situation, you carefully selected where you would meet.

Marcello: Who usually did the selecting? Was this by mutual agreement of all parties?

White: If there was a matter of meeting on the grounds of one or the other, you'd meet in the company office, or you'd

meet in the union office. Then it had to be an agreement. But this didn't come about too often. The majority of the time the meeting place was selected, if possible, in an area which was non-partisan, not influenced by either party.

We had authority to rent hotel conference rooms. We didn't have motels back in those days. The authority was sometimes questioned by the regional director where the hotel charged too much, but if you knew your way around, you could go to the hotel operator and say, "Listen, I've got eighteen men coming in here today. I need a conference room. I'll see that they eat in the dining room if the conference room is free." And nine times out of ten you'd get it. If you couldn't do that, you arranged for the conference room. It was in your name, the commissioner's name, but he might open up the conference by saying, "Now listen, I called this meeting here. I'll be spending the taxpayer's money if we have to pay for it. The charge is so much. Will you gentlemen split this?" Most of the time you could get a split. They would agree to pay half. Again, if you knew the parties, it was sometimes wise to get the money from them . . . their check from them and take it to the hotel operator yourself because if you put it off too long,

one side or the other might forget paying his half. So when you didn't get . . . it didn't happen very often, but it had happened.

Marcello: But again, isn't it true that in certain instances that the selection of a site does have some degree of influence on the success or failure of negotiations?

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: In other words, the site selection isn't something that is done haphazardly.

White: A situation which gets a lot of media exposure . . . your public transportation systems and this sort of thing, such a thing as the coal and oil. I remember in one case here in Texas where after . . . not having very much success, I went to the manager of the federal building in San Antonio, and that time it was primarily the post office and court house. The only available room large enough to hold our group was the federal judge's courtroom. After talking to the judge, I thought that was an ideal place because again, it brought in pressures which were not inherent in a hotel room. That old judge laid down the strictest rules for using that courtroom for anybody that I ever saw. You couldn't even smoke out in the hall. There was to be no swearing. Although he wouldn't be there, he put it on you, the

commissioner, to keep the language down. "This is a place of justice. You keep them clean." And it put the pressure on, and it worked. Nearly everybody smoked. You'd see some guy reach for a cigarette, and you'd say, "no." They began to want to get out there just like those miners and mine operators wanted to get out of those two hot little rooms up in Iowa.

So sometimes you remove the meetings from the town. You'd have a change of venue. Maybe you'd get a place twenty miles from where the situation was, particularly if there was a strike on and there had been trouble on the picket line. I think that the majority of time when you did that that probably at least the leaders in the union knew that the meeting was being held, but the rank and file didn't. That was to try to give more freedom of leadership to the union representatives who were there. Sometimes it was the other way around--to get the management off the hook.

We had a situation in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where the major company had bought a small manufacturing plant in their same industry. They started to produce a different product, and the union who represented people in two or three of their other plants came in and organized these people, with no opposition because this company was used to unions. In fact, they had rather deal with the

committee than to try to deal with each individual when troubles came up and have a sit-down grievance procedure and so forth. They wanted these things.

But actually, right while we were in the meeting in this little town in the company's office, the telephone rang. The representative from the company's home office was there conducting the negotiations. You could tell from his side of the conversation, which was right in the room with both committees, that this was the Chamber of Commerce calling. I can't remember the exact words, but it ended up something like this, the conversation we heard. The company representative said, "Well, we thank you very much for your interest, and we like having this plant in this town. But the goddamn Chamber of Commerce is not going to tell us how to run it, and if I want to give these people a dollar an hour increase, and we can afford it, we'll give it to them. I want to assure we're not going to. But it's none of your damn business." That's what he told them--something like that over the phone. So thereafter, in negotiations we didn't meet in that town. The company didn't want to rile up the local people, and they didn't want the local people mad at the union people who were in that plant. So we just met in the next town.

Marcello: You mentioned something awhile ago that also brings another question to mind. How great an influence does the news media play in the success or failure of negotiations?

White: The news media, just as in nearly every other thing, can be a great help or a great obstacle to overcome. Now I recognize that newspaper people have a job to do, and the free press puts a little pressure on them to get information and pass it to the public. But sometimes they forget that the reality of the free press includes responsibility. So you can have some person who is overly ambitious and you can have a tight situation . . . again maybe its in public transportation, maybe its in telephone . . . those things which affect the community or those things which affect the total state or maybe a total area like a pipeline--oil, gas. In order to get a story in the paper, make so many brownie points with the boss, they must have a story.

Well, also in those things the commissioner has an obligation that this is a private deal, although we are government people. This is a private deal between two parties, not between us and them. It's between the two parties. We are not authorized without their permission to give a story to the papers, and any commissioner that

does is not quite living up to his obligation because it becomes somewhat a lawyer-client or a doctor-patient relationship. It gets back to that thing I spoke of-- trust. If you start talking to the papers, even though everything you say is true, pretty soon they stop talking to you.

Marcello: When you say, "Pretty soon they . . .

White: I mean the union or the management . . .

Marcello: . . . stop talking . . . "

White: . . . will stop giving you those hints, those little inkles, which could lead you to a way with the other people where you've got a movement going.

Marcello: I assume that this was what you meant.

White: You've got the crowbar in the crack, and you get something to pry with. They'll quit giving you those.

Marcello: I assumed this is what you meant, but I wanted to make it clear for our record. Were there any particular cases where you did maybe use the press in order to reach an agreement?

White: Oh, yes. I'd rather come to that a little later if you . . .

Marcello: Okay, that'll be fine.

White: I'll tell you what it was. Again, I'm going back to the potash industry but not when I was working there. It was when I was there as a mediator.

Marcello: And this obviously would have been after you had moved to Texas.

White: Right.

Marcello: I see.

White: Right.

Marcello: On the other hand, can you think of any instances up to the time we've now reached where the press did influence negotiations either in a positive sense or a negative sense? I'm referring now to the period when you were in either Des Moines or Omaha.

White: Well, very definitely. You remember I spoke about the Hinky Dinky chain of groceries . . .

Marcello: Yes.

White: . . . and the fact this newspaper reporter, who was a good reporter, had been denied by all three parties--myself, the union, and the company--the fact that women would now be working in this meat department which was a breakthrough that the international unions didn't want? Hindsight, sure, they would have come along a long time before they did, but this was their rule. But he got an inkle from somewhere that this was happening, so he prints it but gets it wrong. It stopped our settlement for a couple of days until we could get it straightened out. The publisher printed the retraction, the publisher himself.

Another one down here which I wouldn't mind speaking of right now . . . usually, when I went into a town where they had an active paper . . . and I don't know how to define that word "active" other than that they have at least one or two reporters who were on their toes and willing to work and that if they hear of something going on then they're out after it. So when I finally landed here in Dallas, I made my own personal contact after consultation with the man who was here, Ted Morrow . . . I made my own contact with the people on both papers--the Dallas Times Herald and the Dallas Morning News--who covered the federal beat. This included the labor beat. I explained to them my own personal viewpoint of my ability and my inclination to give the newspapers and the newspaper reporters a story. This was separately, at that time. One of them was John Shoelkopf for the Dallas Times Herald. He was a cub reporter. He ran for mayor in the last election. He understood what I was talking about. The other one for the Dallas Morning News was a fellow by the name of Mike Quinn. He's now one of the top instructors in the journalism school at the University of Texas and a wonderful person. After leaving here he served quite a lot of time as the Washington representative for the Dallas Morning News.

Then he left here to go to Washington, a woman was assigned then to cover the federal labor beat. I won't mention her name because unfortunately what happened, I think, led to a further progress of the mental disturbance she already had. But we were in the negotiations with Safeway stores. Now this covered Dallas, Fort Worth, and in a separate contract what they called the country stores. Now this was with the retail clerks organization. I had had the same kind of talk with this lady who was assigned after Mike Quinn left, and I gave her the same story--that I'd be glad to give them the information when I was authorized and as quickly as I could, but not until in my judgement it would serve the purpose of informing the public and not upset our negotiations. I thought she understood it.

Well, we finished up that agreement, and there was an awful lot of controversy. We had a big conference room up there, and in this last day of negotiations it was completely full of union people plus three or four Safeway representatives. But the union had brought in their job stewards from every store involved in the Fort Worth-Dallas contract and the country stores, and

it was full of people. The company objected to that, of course. I objected until I found that they had been formally elected prior to the start of negotiations as representatives. They were legally part of the committee, so I didn't have to argue with the company. I said, "Well, okay, go! They are legally there. We'll talk to them just like we do regular committee."

Well, we reached an agreement, and there was a lot of controversy and a lot of questions raised by these people who hadn't been in the negotiations, and we worked it out a word at a time. The points in the contract that were changed and so forth were more or less immaterial, but the time of the final agreement is the material to this thing we're talking about.

If I remember rightly, the deadline for the main edition of the Dallas Morning News is two o'clock a.m. in the morning. Maybe it's one o'clock. The first deadline for their early edition is eleven o'clock p.m. The Dallas Times Herald had a different deadline because of being an evening paper. They had people working at night. The Dallas Morning News did not have reporters working on their city desk and so forth at the time we finished negotiations at about two o'clock in the morning.

I kept my promise. I called both papers with the permission of the union and the management. I said that we'd only reached an agreement with the committee and the management committee that this agreement would be submitted to the rank-and-file of the membership for their vote on a certain day all over the area. I gave no details. So the Times Herald, of course, having an afternoon paper, came out with a story very much that way, that is, the way it was given because they had a reporter on the desk at night.

The next day this lady who was covering the federal beat called me and . . . she didn't apologize. She was mad that I had given the story to the Dallas Morning News. I said, "Didn't you get a request to call me?" "Well, yes, there was a request there." I said, "I called when the meeting was over. I asked for you. They wouldn't give me your home phone. I would have called you at home." I said, "I was not going to give the story even with no details in it to somebody I didn't know who was just in the office there that night." Lo and behold, she writes a story which is completely erroneous, and it hits the streets, and I got hit by both sides. Although this never came to a head--it was mentioned to me--Safeway darn near sued them.

Well, it caused enough trouble by going that way. This lady . . . she had some kind of mental problem. She eventually had to go to a psychiatrist, and she was transferred to or by arrangement to a friendly paper in Atlanta, Georgia. I understand that she was put on a course of tranquilizers and made a darn good reporter down there in Atlanta.

But things like that can happen in small towns. We'll come to this again later, where the publicity in the small town of Carlsbad . . . some publicity in San Angelo . . . we don't have much of it anymore, but particularly in the urban transportation field it can cause you terrific difficulties. Kissinger had them-- the same identical kind.

Marcello: Okay, when we had stopped to take our break, you'd mentioned that you had an interesting story involving the War Labor Board that you thought would be of some interest and that you wanted to get in the record, so I'll let you pick up the story at that point, that is, your story concerning the War Labor Board.

White: Well, previously you had asked me about the effect of the War Labor Board's actions on management and unions and the growth of unions and so forth. I made some

direct answers to the best of my ability on those things, but in the first year of operation of the War Labor Board a story began to circulate which, I think, illustrates management's attitude quite completely. Now this was supposed to have happened in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Board panel . . . they usually sent out three men to these hearings. They didn't always call the people into the regional office, but these panels would go out and hear situations which came under their jurisdiction. In this case they were meeting in Little Rock, and as the general rule the panel chairman would call on the pressing party, which almost always was the union. And being in Arkansas, it had to be the union because management didn't want a union organization. They could care less about having the union there.

So they were in the courtroom with the panel very formally sitting there at the judge's bench, the parties at their tables before them. The union was called on to state their position. So the union representative in detail and quite lengthily presented the union's case, and he suggested a solution, and what he would like to have the board award the union in this situation. It was very much as a lawyer would put his case before a tribunal.

Then the chairman turned to the management and said, "Now who is the spokesman for management?" And a fine patrician-looking greyed-haired old gentleman said, "Well, I guess I am. I'm their attorney." And we'll call him Mr. Jones. The chairman said, "Well, Mr. Jones, what position do you assume?" And a smile flickered across the old gentleman's face, and he said, "Well, you ask a question which I can better answer by telling you a story of a true happening." He said, "I represent a client who had a large plantation quite a ways south of Little Rock. And being in an isolated area, it's fairly feudal, and colored folks there are still the hands and the servants and so forth with the patronage of the owner of the plantation. However, this is a very enlightened owner, and his people are treated well. But he became particularly fond of a young couple from separate families, and he saw that these two--a boy and a girl--got through high school. He made those arrangements and paid what it was necessary to pay and so forth. They continued to work at their jobs at the plantation. And the young fellow had risen to a position of some responsibility with the plantation management, as the young lady had risen to some position of responsibility with the

household chores and so forth. Well, they came in contact, and they fell in love with each other, and they decided to get married. The girl put one stipulation--that if they got married she had to be like the white folks. She had to have a honeymoon. Well, the young man didn't know how he was going to manage that. So having the friendship of the owner, he went to the owner and explained the situation. The owner says, "Well, we'll take care of that." He says, "About all I can do is see that you get to Little Rock and see that you get a hotel room and so forth, and you couldn't get a decent one without the help of some white individual. So we'll take care of that. I'll see that the hotel and so forth is paid for, and you take one of the plantation cars. You give Clara Susie her honeymoon." So all this was arranged, and they go to Little Rock. They get checked into the hotel--no trouble. The young man starts taking off his shirt, he said, "Susie, you'd better get undressed." So she sheds her clothes, and he sheds his clothes. She got undressed first and got on the bed and said, "Now John, what position would you like for me to assume?" He says, "Susie, I don't give a damn what position you assume, you're going to get a damn good fucking (chuckle)."

And the old lawyer says, "That's about the way we feel about these proceedings (chuckle)."

Marcello: Now in August of 1945, World War II ends. What effect did the end of the war have upon labor-management negotiations?

White: Well, for one thing, labor had a taste and, as I've previously stated, of a type of security clause much weaker than the union shop or a closed shop, but they had this maintenance of membership often handed them by the War Labor Board.

Marcello: You might explain what is meant by "maintenance of membership."

White: Well, the maintenance of membership briefly is that if you are a member of the union you must continue to be a member of the union during the term of the contract. There is an escape clause which provided for certain written notice by the individual who wanted to get out of the union--a written notice delivered to the parties by certified mail, one to management and one to the union. It was so set up that very few people went that way. They just paid their dues and didn't go to the meetings. They maintained their membership by union dues, but they didn't go to the meetings.

But the unions had had a taste for this thing which assured them of money income. Naturally, after the War Labor Board ceased to function and the war was over, management felt that the pressures were not there anymore, that patriotism and the necessity of going along with the federal edict was gone, and they would like to get back to doing business as usual. Naturally, the unions wanted it the other way.

In addition, we had a great number of returning veterans. These were young men. They were deprived of a certain period of their productivity for their own life by their participation in the war and whatever position they were in, so they were quite aggressive. They became aggressive in the unions. They rebelled against their own international at times. These were not great rebellions, but locally they might amount to a whole lot. We had not a prevalence, but we had many more strikes due to, first, management wanting to get rid of this type of union security and, second, the aggressiveness of the young returning veterans. And they were respected people when they came back, and many of them became union leaders. And it took time to bring them back on a level because they were trying to make up time. You can understand the thing if you

looked at it socially. If you looked at it from the outside, you might think those guys had gone crazy on both sides.

Then the industrial unions during this period of time . . . and I'm talking primarily about John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers. About this time or a little before--it was in this area--he set up his catch-all union, District Fifty. Now I don't know how many regular districts they had in the mine workers, but District Fifty was set down far enough in the numbers that it was separate deal. This was set up under the jurisdiction of his brother, Denny Lewis.

Marcello: Denny?

White: Yes. Whether that was a nickname or not, I don't know. It probably was Dennis. But anyhow, they became quite aggressive in the industrial area. They'd take on any kind of a plant or any kind of a construction job. They had construction contracts; they had industrial contracts. I think in many ways of what I was able to observe and can remember that District Fifty helped stir up activity in a lot of areas by the very fact that they went out and they worked to organize.

Then the UAW was, of course, a bellweather in the sitdown type of situation, which had gone on before.

They'd had their internal fights and two predominant factions had emerged. On one side was Thomas . . . last name was Thomas. I can't think of his first name. He was president of the UAW at that time. On the other side were the Reuther brothers . . . Walter, yes . . . what was the other one's name? But anyhow, there was internal strife. Due to that internal strife, there was also terrific activity, both trying to outdo the other. Who would get the best contract? One of Thomas' men who was in authority or maybe one of Reuther's cohorts who was representing a union? They wouldn't call in the international representative who was Thomas' men, but the pressure was there to get a better deal than one of Thomas' men could get. This sort of thing went on. Due to that internal strife, I think, sometimes some management suffered unjustly. That, of course, eventually was worked out by election where Walter Reuther was elected president of the UAW. Thomas was ousted. There was a complete changeover of international staff. Reuther pressed through his strong organizations in the automobile industry for those things which had become social issues, I guess, in the matter of compensation in the form of continuing pay in case of shutdowns, the pressure against the

companies to not lay-off people during the changeover periods, pressure for health insurance, the pressure for SUB, the union company setup which we've heard so much about in the last two months running out of Chrysler during the lay-off and now running out from General Motors and Ford still going but not for long if the thing . . . all these things begin to take place with Walter Reuther, being a very fiery advocate of the rights of the individual employee and the rights of labor as opposed to the rights of management.

Along in this period we began to get a spelling-out of what was known as the "management's rights clause." Formerly when these clauses were in contracts they had said rather briefly that "management shall retain all rights not previously . . . let me go back a minute. "Management shall retain all the rights to hire, fire, direct, determine product, and all other rights inherent in management unless expressly set aside by this contract," It'd be a short clause, something like that. Well, due to pressures and legal cases these things began to be spelled out in detail so that instead of one short paragraph we might end up with two pages single-spaced, (chuckle), of the management's rights clause.

At times there were pressures for the spell-out to be put in the contract on the union's part. They wanted it their way. Of course, management wanted it their way. And these caused a lot of difficulty for the mediators because you couldn't always see everything behind the scenes. You couldn't see in a multi-plant organization the diverse currents among personalities with company management. Likewise, you couldn't see that same thing in the union or the different unions in the different plants.

I was told that in one of these multi-plant organizations which was already then a giant that due to the circumstances they decided that they would have a strike in certain plants at certain times depending on the circumstances as they approached. They would force a strike in some plants in order that they could avoid strikes in other plants. I know that has happened. Likewise, the union has often called a strike in order to enforce a situation someplace else.

Talking about District Fifty, there was a small international representative . . . and when I say "small" I don't suppose he had weighed more than 120 pounds wringing wet. But he was a smart guy. We had assignments where he had two contracts, two different

plants in one small town. We had been in those contracts since its inception, since he won his first NLRB election. Everything was going along fine. We'd negotiated a contract each year, and I think it was in the sixth year of these contracts that he came to me--and I had handled most of these negotiations from the mediation standpoint during this period of time-- he came to me after we were down the road a ways in negotiations, and he said, "Walter, I don't want to conceal the facts from you." He said, "We're going to have a strike in plant so-and-so." He said, "But you can't talk about that, and I don't want to discourage you. I want to go ahead and work out an agreement, but I've got to have a strike." And I said, "Why in the world do you have to have a strike?" He said, "Well, it's this way." He said, "Those boys down there that I represent have worked real hard, and they've got a pretty solid organization. They think that a strike will produce all the glory in the world." And he said, "I've held them down in the past two contracts." He said, "I don't think it's a very good idea any longer. I think they have to learn. So I'm going to pick the time when its not going to hurt management very bad, and we'll pick that time when

they're approaching their slack season. And it also won't hurt my people too long. I'll plan a strike that will last a week. That will give them their taste of a strike, and I won't have any more trouble for three or four years. And it'll teach management that we can strike, so we won't have any more trouble there."

Well, do you know he had the smartest idea in that operation I ever saw. It worked. We worked down to where we were right on the verge of signing a contract. He let the people blow. We were out for a week, and he called me and said, "I think we're ready to finish this up." I went back over, and I got the parties together in a hotel in that town, and we signed a contract within an hour and half. They went back to work and had a strike over there since. I mean, up to this day they haven't had a strike.

So what am I trying to prove now? The thing of the influence of a lot of pressures is like the old thing of railroad seniority that people thought was all you had to do was be senior, which wasn't true. It led to a lot of disturbances in the seniority area. A lot of people believed it was a strike due to all of the big publicity that had happened in those places where they drew publicity. The strike would cure all ills.

I think the end of the war, the experiences during the war, and the period immediately following the war created a lot of stresses on American industry that wasn't always bad. You kept hearing about a drop in man-hour production, but you also heard a great deal about a great increase in the gross national product. There was a continual striving on the part of management to get a machine to replace a man and a continual striving on the part of a union to control that machine and its manning. This is so well exemplified by the Dallas Morning News and the Times Herald strike and the printers or the pressmen. A manning clause, the influence of a few individuals such as Lewis, Reuther, the man on the West Coast, the longshoremen, Harry Bridges. A few, maybe bad, individuals like the operating engineers, two men in New York City, and the counterpart to Watergate only it happened much earlier, where they were complete labor bosses and sell-out artists and sold their own people down the river. I believe the fellow's name was Brown. Those things did happen. Maybe that's another thing I ought to talk about sometime--my impression of what is a labor boss, and what is the reaction to the labor boss, and what is the difference between a labor boss and a management boss.

Marcello: Since we're talking about the increased militancy of labor during this post-war period, do you think this might be a good time to go into that particular subject?

White: To the militancy of labor?

Marcello: Your definition of what is a good labor leader, a bad labor leader, a boss, and so on.

White: Yes, I don't think this would take too long if I can put the words right. We hear, particularly during election years, depending upon the area and depending upon the issues which might be on the air either nationally or local . . . for instance at the present time you can read in the newspaper ever once in awhile that the AFL-CIO will get what they want out of our present Congress because of the great amount of money which was spent on individual members by AFL-CIO, by George Meany as president. That may be true. I don't know about these things. But also we heard a great deal about this gentleman we talked about with "Monkey Ward" getting thrown out by the Marines or somebody on orders from the President because he wouldn't obey the edict of the courts and the War Labor Board and everybody else.

Now this gets me to the place of thinking where I've seen so much happen due to a lack of leadership

on both sides that probably would not have happened had there been a strong leadership on each side or a strong leadership at least on one side. And I've seen so much happen for the good when there was strong leadership in both areas. In political situations we call a man a labor boss, hoping to leave all the implications of an autocrat, a monarch, a complete controller of individuals, their minds and their bodies, that when he said jump they'd jump. We also have that same thing happen, probably in a more subtle way, from labor and about management or from politicians about management people.

Some years ago there was plastered all over the billboards in one of our larger towns the central area of the United States during a mayor and council election . . . great big signs. "Do you want the CIO to run your city? Do you want the CIO and Walter Reuther to head up your city?" Well, all in God's world that was going on there was that the local automobile workers union was very active in politics. Now how much money they spent of the union dues to get these things, I don't know. But what I do know is that they had enlisted by some method nearly every individual that could walk to get out and campaign for their selection of mayor. Now this is done by other sides,

too, but they weren't called autocrats. They weren't put on billboards, "Do you want these people running this city?"

We've got to have leadership. In the instance where a great number of people come together in periodic meetings, if you don't have a strong leadership, you can easily have mob rule. On the Establishment's side as I see the picture, if you don't have some strong leadership to control and direct the emotions of the people, you can also produce mob rule. And if you have two mobs coming together, you have almost anarchy. So I have no objections to the strong leader.

As an illustration of the leadership of a very common man, in one city I worked a lot in there were three tire manufacturing plants. One was known as being owned by Sears and Roebuck. It was owned outright by Sears and Roebuck. The other one was not too far from there and went under a different name but was owned outright by Sears and Roebuck with a different advertising system and so forth. And Firestone built the plant in this town, also. Now these three plants were organized by the United Rubber Workers.

Marcello: What city are we talking about?

White: Des Moines, Iowa, again. Lakeshore Tire and Rubber Company, that was directly Sears. Firestone was the

new plant. I can't think of the other one now. But anyhow, Lakeshore and this other one was about the same size, but it was not known as a Sears company. But Sears people used to talk about the nineteen companies. We won't have time to go into that, but briefly the nineteen companies at that time were nineteen companies totally owned by Sears, which manufactured part of their product. It may be twenty-nine now or forty-nine--I don't know, but at that time it was the nineteen companies, and that's the way they referred to them. Lakeshore and the other one was part of that.

Well, I had sat in the separate negotiations, one with a representative from Sears, one with the local company management, and a man out of Chicago who was a consultant. Of course, the Firestone people came in later, I mean, in negotiations. They were the third contract that particular year--one right after the other.

The next year these contracts rolled around, and their union had been successful. They had gotten the expiration date fairly close together. They had also elected a new president of the local, justifiably so, I think, at that time. This particular local had a

reputation of being somewhat red in color. But they had elected a new president. Now how this came about, I don't know; but he headed up the negotiations. He was tall, raw-boned, strong-looking guy, about six foot six. A very common sort of person. He slaughtered the king's English but had a lot more background than you'd guess when you first talked to him. Part of that background was about four years in the Missouri State Penitentiary for murder. It was tempered somewhat to some degree of murder, but some kind of murder. Due to good behavior and the fact that he showed an inclination to leadership while he was in the prison and so forth, he was recommended to the parole board and was paroled. He went to work in a rubber plant, got married, moved his family and so forth to Des Moines, got active in the union. And by that time his probation on his parole run out.

Well, we began to have trouble in this second year that I was in negotiations with the committee. It was noticeable. And this fellow trusted me, the new president, and he explained certain things to me that was going on. He says, "Now I can identify these people that are going to try to cause trouble when we finally get to the place of submitting a contract to the local. And it'll come in the first contract,

because they want to stop it." And that's about all he told me at that time. But these things began to show up that he said would show up.

So we finally reached a place where part of the committee spoke up and says, "Yes, we'll go along with what we've arrived at." Some of them kept silent --one or two. So they decided they'd submit it to the rank-and-file of this plant for a ratification. The president, this big tall guy, asked me to come to the meeting. I said, "Well, I don't believe that this is my particular place here. You have the committee and yourself; you've got a pretty good offer. You ought to be able to sell it." He said, "I don't want you to participate. I want you to come and see what happens." And he said, "Frankly, I might need a witness someday."

So on that basis I went to their meeting, and I guess there was maybe a 175 people--members of the union--at this platform, and he fixed a chair for me over in the corner. It was pretty close to the door. He went through the general things that happens, opened up by explaining what they were there for and what rights the members had. He also mentioned what he was going to do in explaining the changes in the contract,

and he wasn't going to read the old contract, just the changes and so forth.

Laying on the desk in front of him--he was sitting down--was what looked like a croquet mallet--only it was bigger--with a handle of about two feet long. So he started to explain the contract, and immediately some guy out here jumped up and began to protest: "We won't accept that contract!" He was making an inflammatory speech. And this old long tall boy rose up and with that mallet in his hand, pointed his finger at the guy, and he said, "You have a right to ask questions. You have a right to answers. But you don't have a right to make a speech. Now sit down, you son-of-a-bitch, or I'll knock you down." Do you know that they knew him pretty well, and they believed it? Well, this happened twice again.

He threw nobody out. He controlled that meeting completely. Maybe he was autocratic by force, but we'd had a strike . . . we'd have had a disruption in three plants, not just one, if that hadn't been accepted that night. He'd got a pro-vote, and three or four years later when I left Des Moines he was still running that union.

This is the thing I talk about of strong leadership. Sure, he was smooth, and possibly he was

autocratic in a democratic organization. And maybe strong-arm tactics were used, but they were used for the benefit of the majority. That's one of the falsehoods about a democracy. We sometimes let the majority rule when a strong leader would . . . now I'm getting into political philosophy. I better get away from that.

Marcello: During this period, that is, during this immediate post-war period while you were still in Iowa, what particular union or unions seemed to exhibit the greatest degree of militancy? Could you single any particular one out?

White: Yes, I could single one out, but I don't believe that would be illustrative because they didn't live too long (chuckle).

Marcello: You say "they". Are you referring to the life of the union itself?

White: I'm talking about the life of that particular international union. The United Farm Machinery and Equipment Workers was a part of the new setup of CIO unions. How far they extended, I don't know, but they had five or six pretty nice-sized plants in Iowa and a couple just across the Mississippi River in Illinois at Moline.

Their regional director was a young man by the

name of Charlie Hobby. He was quite a guy. I think he had read all of Karl Marx, all of Lenin. He was going to college, Coe College, in Cedar Rapids. It is a nice little liberal arts school, a good one. It's still in existence. He was going there with the intention of preparing to become a lawyer. He could fly an airplane and did. He had one.

He stirred up more trouble . . .and speaking of trouble in that sense, I mean he wouldn't agree to anything until it was right down to the last straw. He extracted the last drop of blood. He kept his people all stirred up. I don't think he was a Communist. He had a certain amount of influence in Washington due to his friendship with the Wallace family. How that came about, I don't know. Wallace was the Secretary of the Agriculture and so forth. He was the most militant guy I ever saw. But Charlie died young, and the union expired.

Marcello: Did you ever have any direct associations with him?

White: Oh, very definitely. I was in most of his negotiations at some time or another. I don't mean every year but in all of the plants he operated.

I had one in particular, the Oliver Farm and Equipment Company, which is now taken over by somebody

else. Either Ford bought it or something. But Oliver had quite an organization, and their main tractor plant was in Charles City, Iowa. It is in Jones County, and they had a great big sign outside of the town which says, "Charles City, the Industrial Center of Jones County, Iowa." And this was a pretty good-sized tractor plant. And this Farm Machinery Equipment Workers Union were the bargaining agents, legally so by certification by the NLRB.

And at the time I knew them the plant manager was another big man. He was six foot six because I asked him. He weighed about 280 pounds. He had the biggest hands I ever saw in my life. When he slapped his big hand down on the table, you could just feel the floor rattle. He'd started to work in that plant when he was sixteen or seventeen years old as a common laborer. His name was George Byrd. He and Charles Hobby had a complete dislike for each other the first time they ever met, I think. And George had worked there . . . as I say, he had started out as common laborer when he was just a kid and had become manager of that plant. Well, he satisfied a certain amount of ego by driving the biggest car in Charles City, but I say that in no derogatory manner because he was a swell

guy. He was one of the few who rose to that kind of position from the very lowest up through. He still remembered how laboring men felt; so he was always willing to listen. I mean personally he put in a great number of hours. But Charlie Hobby, he couldn't stand.

Finally, it ended up that he had a strike, and it was in the wintertime. The negotiations had broken down. They'd gone out on a strike, and I had left town. There was trouble on the picket lines. There was alleged attempted sabotage through the power system and things of that kind.

One night the telephone rang at home, and George Byrd was calling me. This was about three or four days after the strike had started. He said, "Commissioner, I have information coming to me that some of our people are not going to go back to work, but they don't want to go along with this strike either." And it was in the dead of winter, and it gets cold up there. This is northwest of Des Moines. He said, "They don't want to go along with the strike." He said, "I agree with them. We'd better get back and start meeting." And I said, "Well, I have some kind of committment and so forth. Can I call you at noon tomorrow?"

So this thing went by and in the meantime other things apparently developed up there, and I think this

is when this alleged sabotage was supposed to have occurred. And again he called me. And I'd made no meeting arrangements; but this thing had occurred and he'd set up a meeting for when I got there.

Well, I got this telephone call again at night. I had set the meeting for when I got there, which would be at night. I got out of bed, put on my clothes, drove to Charles City, and went directly to the plant. I always checked in with somebody when I went across the picket line because I didn't want anybody to take a crack at me if they were so inclined. So I stopped at this main gate and told the picket out there who I was. Well, they were expecting me. The rest of the committee and the management, I guess, was down in Mr. Byrd's office. So I drove on down to the office, and we got to . . . and I got in the office building, and the union was in their conference room, and the management was in Byrd's office.

Byrd had sent a man out to tell me to see him first. He wanted to tell me what had happened. So he went through the details of this alleged sabotage and so forth and his insistance that they meet that night. Well, he said, "When I came out here that Charlie Hobby was all dressed up like an Eskimo. He said, "He could

stay out there all winter, I guess." He said, "I drove up in front of him and stuck my head out and said, 'Charlie, I'm coming in. I want to talk to you.'" Charlie said, "You're not going across this picket line!" Mr. Byrd said, "I told him I had called you, and you were requesting that we meet when you can get here." He said, "This is the same thing I told you earlier, but I've called Commissioner White, and he's on his way." According to Byrd, Charlie Hobby says, "No, you're not!" George Byrd says, "Well, don't just stand there because if you do, I'm going to run over you!" He pulled his head back in the window and threw his car in gear and he started. And I think he would have run over him.

Well, anyhow, this ended up in a funny way. Hobby had a bad habit of always enlarging his demands. If he wanted an increase in the hospitalization insurance contribution by the company and he got that, then next he wanted the company to pick up all the life insurance. In the next meeting it'd be something else. The more he got, the more he wanted. He didn't always handle the truth right.

Now the unions had a supposedly good stenographer with them all the time. The company never had a

stenographer in the meetings. Well, on this particular night I had asked Byrd to bring his own secretary, so I'd have one on each side. When they started out and I opened up the meeting, I said, "Now I want to pin this thing down. I don't like this getting up and driving a hundred miles in the middle of the winter, in the middle of the night. I want to pin this thing down. What are the issues? Mr. Hobby, will you tell us what the issues are? We have two stenographers here, one on each side." And I said, "If you ladies will get this down . . . Charlie, talk slow so they can get it right." So he names off these things. When he got through talking, I asked each of the stenographers to read back their notes; and their notes coincided exactly. I asked them to interchange these notes to see if they used the same shorthand, and they did. This often happened, you know. And they could read each others notes fairly well.

So I said, "Okay, that's all I wanted to know. Now let's separate." So I went in and talked to Byrd, and I said, "I think I've got to this place where you're in a legal position that if Charlie wants to keep adding as he had in the past, you can take him to court," He said, "Okay, we'll go on that basis.

Now what do you think it will take to settle these issues we have outlined?" I said, "What are you willing to give?" And he told me.

So I worked back and forth then without giving either party fully away but indicating movement as we went along; and we worked out an agreement. We reached that agreement, and Charlie Hobby comes back and said, "Wait a minute. There's one more thing I forgot to put on that list." And I said, "No! She's got the notes of what I said and what you said, and this lady has notes on your side. We read them, and we interchanged them. You had a list. We've satisfied that list. Everything is agreed to. You have a contract." This committee agreed that Charlie was out on a limb. He was a troublemaker.

To bring in the unions that exist and to try to answer your question, I don't think you can say that at any particular time that there was any particular union that created the most difficulty.

Marcello: Given the area in which you were located, which was still basically an agrarian . . .

White: Yes.

Marcello: . . .I would assume that comparatively speaking, the degree of labor militancy in your area was not as great as it would probably be in some highly industrialized

area with a long history of unionism.

White: I think you're right in that assumption. So many of the places where we might have . . . an actual strike come on with people pretty solidly for that strike. In these more rural areas, and not having a background of being shop hands--father and son, grandfather and so forth--they had something else to turn to many times. They may scream they're losing their wages and so forth, but they had their little farms. They had a father who was still farming and so forth. There was many methods of contribution to the upkeep of the family. The suffering that can occur in a highly industrialized urban area didn't occur so much. On top of that a lot of them . . . well, the term that's used is "going fishing." They did go fishing. Sometimes illegally they'd go out and take a big trammel net. That's what they call a gill net on a . . . I've seen them on the Des Moines River drag that net out with fish like they used to catch in . . . you'd see them in the movie pictures. They were stuck all over there. This is an illegal process, but this is the method also of providing food on the strike line.

No, the mine is different. I expect that even in that area, which now almost all of Iowa's dollar income

as a state comes from industry not farming . . . some as the thing has changed in Texas. There is still very much of that attitude.

Marcello: In other words, you still have that agrarian mind.

White: Yes, I think so.

Marcello: Now in 1946, and to a large extent as a result of that increased militancy of labor, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act. How did the Taft-Hartley Act affect management-labor negotiations so far as you as a mediator-conciliator were concerned?

White: I think primarily that first passage of the Taft-Hartley Act affected us due to each side's own interpretation of the act itself. In any legislation document you can make various interpretations, or you can go back and pick up the history of the legislation if you want to dig through all the records of Congress, and maybe you can get a different impression. Or you can find something that will prove your point if you pick it out of context. Well, this is done all over the place on both sides with the Taft-Hartley Act. It was probably more successfully detailed by such unions as the machinists, the UAW, the steel workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, who maintain a legal staff. And these guys are experts in labor law, much more than

you'll find with a majority of corporation lawyers who are not experts in labor law. They get completely lost. So I think that at this time also is where the necessity of calling in specialists on management's side particularly came into effect--specialists in labor law.

But it was the interpretation that was put on the various items, and so many of those interpretations--and I can't name them--caused the rewriting of the Taft-Hartley, so-called. And it became the National Labor Relations Act as amended in 1947, which changed some of these things and clarified the positions.

Well, that also is the act which picked us bodily out of the Labor Department--bodily in its entirety and didn't change commitment as to civil service and this sort of thing. We still didn't have a civil service examination. You were not hired through civil service. The President could at anytime have said that these people no longer get the rights of civil service. We only got them by executive order. The act picked us bodily out and made an independent agency working directly under the President's executive office. He appointed the director and through that avenue bypassed the Secretary of Labor because we were no longer in the secretary's jurisdiction.

Well, they also picked out one thing that I've often thought, and I still think . . . we gained awful lot of insight into the people involved in negotiations by it being aboe to handle grievances. The Taft-Hartley Act said that the mediation service would not handle grievances unless they are a last resort.

Marcello: Why was this put in?

White: I can't actually tell you. I think it took away a lot of our understandings of the people involved or becoming intimately acquainted with the people on both sides because you do have much more if you're back in the plant every so often where they're talking freely about grievances with another. They're not guarded as they are in contract negotiations so often.

During the war particularly it created an awful lot of work. People who could not reach a settlement under normal circumstances would wait for a mediator to come in and tell them what to do--both sides. That part of it was good. It was intended to save the taxpayers some money and make people more responsible for their own actions in the labor-management field. But it sure did knock out a lot of your acquaintences and intimacy with people on both sides. That's about the best I can answer that question.

Marcello: What affect did the state right-to-work have upon the negotiations that you carried on with labor and management? What I'm referring to, of course, is that as a result of the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act states were permitted to enact the so-called "right-to-work" laws. Now how did those laws affect negotiations?

White: I'll try to answer that in this way. We're in Texas as of this present moment, and Texas has that so-called "right-to-work" law which prohibits closed shop, union shop, so-called agency shop apparently, but it will permit the maintenance of membership under certain circumstances. This is where the state has the right to apply more stringent rules than the federal law.

Now in Iowa where I was at this particular time, we still had an aftermath of the war and an aftermath of build-up of War Labor Board decisions, court decisions, and so forth. Iowa has an almost identical law. In one way it sent people underground. It's surprising how many in management would rather deal with the union than with individuals as such. And they would rather have a set procedure in order to handle grievances because they know that there will be grievances wherever there is management and employees of any number. So they'd rather have a set procedure. So when I say they

went underground . . . we negotiated a contract in Davenport, Iowa, which was under the jurisdiction of the Iowa right-to-work law. This was a union shop contract which was openly talked about in the conference room. But we went across to Illinois to sign it. Now what difference that made, I don't know, but maybe that saved somebody's conscience. It'll surprise you--and I never made a study, and I couldn't give the details--but it'll surprise you how many states like Iowa . . . it'll surprise a lot of people in Texas with all the media coverage of 14-B of that ace how many closed shop contracts there are in the State of Texas in existence today, and how many union shop contracts there are. I know some of them, but I'm not going to name them. I think if anybody can ever use this for research it'd be an interesting thing for that researcher to dig out for himself because some of those contracts are not too far from where you and I are sitting right now.

Marcello: Now also by this time the cold war had begun, and there was a general feeling throughout the country, at least in certain areas, of the possibility of some sort of internal subversion on the part of Communists. At the same time in a great many areas, militant unionism was associated with Communism. Now my question is, what

effect did the Red Scare have upon your activities as a mediator between the labor and management? Did management try to make an association between militant labor activity and Communism, and at the same time did labor leaders tone down their demands so that, at least in the eyes of the public, they wouldn't be associated with Communism? Now I've asked you a series of questions, and I'm hoping you can pick up on them.

White: I'll try to go over the last part of that first. I've talked about Walter Reuther, and everyone had heard about Walter Reuther, and those who follow us will read about him because he was nationally a leader. A leader in the field of labor, yes. But also in the field of social legislation. A man full of ideas. He was often called a damn Communist. I think I mentioned that Charlie Hobby had read all of, I thought, Marx and Lenin and so forth, but he was often called a Communist. I don't think Charlie was a Communist as we think of that bad implication of the word "Communist." When people used the term at that time, what they were really trying to say is Bolshevik, meaning that militant part of the Russian Communist Party which gained the ascendancy during the revolution. And throughout there

were the more moderate people who, I think, were pure Communists who wanted a Communist ideal. There is a fault in being an anarchist. We cannot as Americans say there is any fault with revolution, but it must meet our standards of a controlled revolution, and for the good of the people. I think that's my definition. So nearly everybody that disagreed, you'd hear the word the damn Communist. Many times I had warnings by management, "Now we're sitting down with a bunch of Communists. We don't want the government on their side." And I'd go through the explanation again that, "I don't represent anybody. Here is the law under which we operate, and here the pertinent points. I can't make anybody do anything, and if I could I'd be no good as a mediator. It's you people who must get together on the contract. I'm not an arbitrator. I can't tell you what to do. I'm an officer of the federal government, yes, but the only thing you have to do is meet with me. You don't even have to listen to me." And a lot of the time I was that blunt. Then I'd ask them, "What do you mean 'Communist?'" Are these people wanting to take over the plant?" Well, a lot of the time to that question, they'd say, "Hell, yes! Look at the contract they're presenting!" But that got down to the

actual argument and their taking a look at what they were saying, "Communist." You didn't most of the time talk management out of that attitude that these people were not Communists. They had the right under the law to organize and bargain if they went through a legal procedure. These people had gone through that legal procedure. Or if they hadn't, why hadn't you taken them back to court? So, yes, you would run into this thing quite often.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that the term "Communist" is thrown around more loosely in smaller manufacturing plants than among the giants? Maybe it's a part of that small town attitude or mentality?

White: Possibly that's right. I think with the larger organizations, the giants of industry . . . now they're still made up of individuals, and it kind of more or less depended on where you were when you were talking to the individual, that is, how you used that word Communist. In the small town they blurted it out . . . we were dealing with management representatives in the bigger multi-plant corporations who had a boss; and they probably had their instructions. Their feelings might have been something different. We had some consultants who were prone to use this sort of thing--that labor unions were

made up, the leadership particularly, of Communists. They used the term loosely in order to win a victory, to discredit the committee, to improve their position with the management. I don't think the thing was very successful overall in this trying to label everybody a "Pinko" or everybody a "Red" or everybody a "Communist."

Marcello: Did you find that the fear of being associated with Communism did lead labor leaders to tone down their activities or their demands?

White: With the majority I suppose it did. With stronger people such as Bridges, who was often called a Communist and who may still be called a Communist--I don't know--he seemed to take it in stride and continue his friendship with even some known Communists. Now whether Bridges was ever a Communist, I have no idea. By Communist, I mean more than a passing friendship with a few people or maybe even a loyal friendship with a few people who actually were Communists, I mean, card-carrying, a supporter to that extent. Walter Reuther was often called a Communist, and his brother. They were called that within their own organization, the UAW. But here were some pretty strong men who could override that sort of thing and continue to do what their conscience dictated they should do.

There was possibly an effect due to the government itself. Now during the war years, we had a clearance of sorts, I mean, a security clearance, but this was only a partial sort of thing. At first it was merely a statement on the back of our identification cards as to who we were and how we were authorized. Then it got on the back of the card that "Commissioner Walter C. White is a government official who had been cleared for entry into plants of up to and including . . . " some words to that effect. Then prior to the dropping of that first atomic bomb, it was about the time it became known that something funny was going on under the stadium of the University of Chicago. It came out with our organization--I don't know about other people--with a full security investigation, and this is what I'm talking about that might have influenced a lot of things as far as the use of . . .

And the fear of the term for a person who is accused of being a Communist. It brought a little fear to my heart. In our region I think I was the last man to receive full clearance, and later, by questions, as I was in various places it became pretty clear. Now this questionnaire they sent you was complete. It took you clear back to grade school, where you lived, then your working career and so forth.

Well, always a member and an officer of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Union. It was known that at least some of the top people . . . I don't think Reid Robinson was ever a Communist--he was the president--but many of his underlings were, and I think they controlled . . . due to that membership, and it fits in pretty well. Another one of our commissioners who retired about the same time I did was also a member of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers but was of an international level. I was never an international officer. He had a hard time . . . I think he was the last man in his region--I didn't know that at the time--to receive this full clearance. Well, it scared me because by this time I knew that there was a very definite element in the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers which you could lay your hand on and say . . . not Communist, but these people are sympathetic to the Russian-Bolshevik Revolution. And I have to define it that way because there was a French communist settlement--very few people know about it anymore, I guess--just down the river from old Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Mormans first settled when they treked west. This was communistic in its pure sense. They pulled away from the communal living and so forth there. They made the best homemade wine I ever saw in my life (chuckle).

Marcello: And, of course, in our conversation off the tape recorder, we mentioned that the Amana community in Iowa was another example of pure communism.

White: Right. And they're still in existence. And it's a wonderful place to go. It's a wonderful place to go and get acquainted with those people and see how much of a real humanist people can be . . . dedicated to an ideal. I can't say much more about what the ideal is. I became very interested and asked a lot of questions about the Amana Society. And about all I ever really learned was that the word Amana appears in the Bible one time. I think I'm right about that. But that was an interesting bunch of people. They were progressive in farming in the old way and owned some of the richest land in Iowa. Everything they had was paid for. They didn't get it until it was paid for. They had their own bakery, their own furniture shop, their own forges, their own . . . I'm talking about the oldtime blacksmith forges where they could hammer you out a wagon wheel or whatever you needed. Communal dining rooms, creamery. They were a real example of what I define as communism. They differed from some of the other religious organizations in some ways. They never refused to go to war. They recognized the right of the

country to have a draft law. They did confine their children to their own teachings for quite a long period of time. They didn't quite observe the law as to restrictions on the serving of meat and other ration products in their communal dining rooms which was finally . . . one of them was finally opened to the public. There was Old Amana . . . wait a minute. The original little community was Homestead. Then there was Old Amana, then there was New Amana, West Amana, East Amana--six of them--and they were all separate communities, but they were all part of the big community. Actually, the Amana organization that manufactures refrigerators and so forth is an industrial entity not connected with the community of Amana, the religious society.

Marcello: Now by this time, you had been associated with mediation and conciliation for six, seven, eight years, maybe. By this time, can you see the development of more sophisticated procedures in the negotiations on the part of labor, management, and the commissioners? Is the whole process becoming more complex, more sophisticated, as a result of the years of experience that have been accumulating?

White: Well, definitely, yes. By this time I was much better prepared to go into a new situation. Whether I recognized

it or not, certain techniques of the physical management of a negotiation had developed. A certain sense of timing. The necessity to read between the lines of what somebody was saying. The necessity to find out in a serious situation where the power was on either side. Yes, these were all individual sophistications that I hope that I acquired a great deal of. Timing--when do you make your break, when do you bluff, when do you . . . it's like a poker game. You're sitting there with a full house, and you don't know exactly what the other guy's got, but you know he's got a pretty good hand, but you think you can beat him. When do you bluff--on the first bet or the second? When do you try to raise him out of his chair? This sort of thing went on.

As to sophistication of the parties, that depended on where you were. If you were going to a meeting where on the union side you had an international representative coming into the picture who'd served in many negotiations--he'd been in arbitration; he'd been before the War Labor Board; he'd been with other mediators--that way you had a man to work with. He might even be a mean one. but you had an experienced man to work with, But we were continually going into new areas, new territories, and new organizations where

there was nobody on either side; and you had to even explain why you were there. This was constantly occurring. It's still going on, still happens.

There was a little sophistication, and you ended up being a teacher on both sides. I had one young man who was called in as a company attorney in a small plant who after the first day of negotiations asked to speak to me. He said, "Commissioner, how in the hell does a country boy attorney learn about labor law?" It happened to be that we had a very well-versed international representative sitting on the other side, and he realized the inadequacy of the company management in its background of labor negotiations and labor law, and he was taking every advantage of his knowledge that he could. And the young lawyer that supposed to be advising the management didn't know enough to say yes, no, or let's wait awhile.

What does a mediator do? You try to instruct. You can't carry his case for him, but you give him information as to where to go, where to advise his management. In this particular case, I remember definitely what I done. He'd ask me, "What does a country lawyer do to learn about labor relations?" I said, "If I were you, I would talk to my management.

I'll give you a break time when you can do it. You tell them honestly that you don't know anything about labor law, and if they want a lawyer it's going to cost them some money, because you want to talk on the telephone with somebody who is in the labor law business. Now I won't pick your lawyer for you, but I'll give you a bunch of names." Well, instead of doing that, they went through that process up to a point and they called in this representative of this firm of labor attorneys for management. They didn't fire the young lawyer, but they kept the other lawyer in the picture. Well, it made a little more balanced proposition.

You constantly run into new and varied situations. You seldom . . . I think I was only asked once, outside a completely military establishment, to show my creditals. I think I was only asked one time. That was by a young manager of a plant who had served his time in the war and so forth and became a imbued with a little of the military procedures that whenever you walked through the gate, you had to be identified. Now that was the only time I think I was ever asked to show identification. I often did this for some reason or other that might be pertinent at the time and it might not.

The sophistication of the union was a generally ahead of management except in these larger plants where they maintained a personnel department. I don't mean just a personnel department; I mean a labor relations department. Too often people in their using of words, like the sportswriter who says, "This set a new record when he threw the shot put, " they used the word "Communist" wrong in their context.

Too often personnel and labor relations are intermingled or talked of as one; and they're two different things. Outside of counseling a good intelligent high school-trained secretary with some experience could handle a personnel department. Outside of the counseling it should be done. They learn to be pretty good at it. They keep records. They keep them more accurately than men do, I think. They don't have that kind of experience to go to the place where they set down with an advocate across the table of a different position and argue the pros and cons and decide when to give and when not to give, when to compromise and not to compromise, or take their company into a strike or recommend to their top management. That only comes by experience, I mean, the real feeling for it only comes by experience.

I used to get amused. . . and that's not quite the right word, but we'd have some young man come busting into our office and want to know how you went about getting a job as a mediator. So we'd tell him. "Well, I had two courses under Dr. McCoy at Alabama in labor negotiations, and I've got a business degree. Doesn't that qualify me?" Then the question is asked, "Did you ever sit down and bargain with a union who knows more about it than you do? A man that's been working at it a third of his lifetime?" "Well, no." Well, the way to get to be a mediator is to get some of that experience, either on the union's side or the management's side, and you start down here and work up until you're in this contract negotiation business. Then you come to us. There are very few schools that carry a person to the point where he could sit down with this complex thing of labor law and labor negotiations, arbitration decisions, even to the reading of Commerce Clearinghouse Reports, and that sort of thing and be intelligent about it. There's no time for it. They've got to get the experience in the field.

It's just like in your profession. . . not particularly in your field of endeavor. When I went to school, I went to a teachers college, and, of course,

we had a lot of courses in education. Well, it taught me a devil of a lot about how to teach. I used to be a little griped about that. I came to the conclusion later that there just wasn't time in this world for any college in a four or five-year course to teach a man what to teach. They had to teach him first how to teach, and then he became educated on his own.

This is somewhat what those young fellows that had some labor courses haven't had time to realize yet. That's what some of the people who attempted to take over labor relations . . . and that's not the right expression either. They don't attempt. Maybe they're assigned to do it, and they have no background for it. By background, I don't mean just education or necessarily experience. It's good to be experienced by the association with people who know, association with people who do things and have done them and done them successfully. You can't teach a man to be a machinist or a plumber until he is out doing that work and has done it with a real mechanic.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying in effect is experience is not only the best teacher, but it is the only teacher.

White: I think that applies not only to this but to quite a number of fields of endeavor. I'd have an awful time

trying to handle the ministry of a church. I know a little about a church but how to handle a situation with the diverse population of a parish or a church congregation or whatever it might be, I would be lost.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: May 15, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. This is the seventh in a series of interviews concerning Mr. White's experiences as a federal mediator and conciliator. The interview is taking place on May 15, 1975, in Denton, Texas.

Mr. White, let's begin today by talking about the reorganization that occurred in the wake of or in conjunction with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act. Now just for the record you might begin by again repeating the exact name of the service as it was before Taft-Hartley and discuss how it changed after Taft-Hartley.

Mr. White: Well, to repeat as briefly as I can, the Department of Labor was established by Congress in the Organic Act of 1913. In that act was one sentence which said . . . this may be a little different than what I said before. It was one sentence which said, "The Secretary of Labor may appoint commissioners of conciliation to mediate industrial disputes as

he sees fit." Due to that one sentence, a small office was set up which became known as the United States Conciliation Service, Department of Labor. I never knew the first director at all. I knew some of the early, early commissioners. I want to thank their spirit again because they're gone. They opened a lot of gates for those that followed by their honesty, by their devotion to the jobs that they were to do, and by their pioneering in a field which was difficult.

It was difficult for the reason that this Mediation Service, dealing with labor on one side and management on the other, was in the Department of Labor. Everyone had the conception that the Department of Commerce was to do those things favoring business; the Department of Labor was to do those things favoring labor. So as commissioners were appointed and as they entered situations, they almost invariably had to prove their merit by the very fact of the suspicion of management that they were representing labor. This prevailed and the activity during the war and the establishment of rules and regulations and prohibition of certain manufacturing where a plant could engage in the war effort . . . all of those things came into the picture.

Senator Taft was one of those individuals very

definitely interested in this field of industrial relations. He was very intelligent, a highly intelligent, man. He understood what it was all about. He himself had no suspicion that as a whole the U.S. Conciliation Service was set up to favor labor. They were set up to mediate. He believed that a majority of them did that, but he realized the handicap, particularly in the first entrance or particularly on a continuing suspicion.

Due to certain other laws which had been put into effect. . . part of the National Recovery Act. I can't give a date on that. Certain other . . . well, not certain other . . . parts of this National Recovery Act had to do with the administration of federal labor law and were all kind of lumped into one great big act. That itself was difficult to administer--this total thing lumped into one law with several bureaus. Mr. Taft in the Senate and Hartley in the House of Representatives sponsored bills in their various houses. Of course, the general legislative process came about until they finally came up with so-called Taft-Hartley Act.

Marcello: To a great extent, that act, however, was passed in response to the labor unrest that came about after World War II.

White: Well, this is the part that involved us. The National Labor Relations Board particularly was, yes. Senator Taft and Representative Hartley were two different kinds of individuals. Even though labor representatives spoke harshly of his ideas, they still respected the man. They didn't seem to have that attitude . . . I don't mean to imply that Hartley was a vicious man either, but they didn't have that attitude against Hartley because actually he went out into the boon-docks and spoke for his bill both before and after its passage. Now I can't remember just what President this came about under. It must have been Truman.

Marcello: It was.

White: Thank you. The bill lifted the old U.S. Conciliation Service bodily--personnel, its primarily jurisdiction, if there is such a thing in the mediation process--out of the Department of Labor and made an independent agency under the executive office of the President. When I say bodily, in its first years it meant just exactly that. There was no change in our mode of operation other than the fact that the new law prohibited commissioners of conciliation from going into grievance procedures unless they were regarded as a last resort. Interpretations of that last resort varied

somewhat. Primarily, it meant a certain strike which might be prevented by a mediator going into the situation.

Now there's one other thing that comes in when I use that word "preventive." The title of the act itself implied and within the area. . . I don't mean the title of the act but the title of the section dealing with the mediator setup. Within that particular section of the so-called Taft-Hartley Act, it spoke of the area of endeavor that the new Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service could enter, which was a general thing that we had been doing with one exception. Grievances were taken from our jurisdiction. This brought up the probability of lay-offs, reduction in force, and so forth at this time because we had a great deal of activity in the grievance procedure in a number of plants that was written into the contract. Alright, we could no longer obey that contract between the parties.

Also, there was this one sentence which spoke of the prevention of industrial disputes. Now we had quite an area of operation, and we did go through a readjustment as far as personnel was concerned. Some people did get laid off--commissioners. Some were reduced a grade in salary. Then Cyrus Ching became the director of the Federal Mediation Service. At that

time that he was appointed he had been the labor relations director for U. S. Steel.

Marcello: Now would this be the Federal Mediation Service?

White: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. This was under the new law.

Marcello: Right. I wanted to make that clear for the record.

White: Just when in his administration he picked up this sentence speaking of prevention of labor disputes and interpreted it, we were given additional duties for which nobody could give a definite explanation. Ching held out that the law provided that we would endeavor . . . even though a contract was a part and we couldn't enter grievances, the contract was in effect. We didn't enter grievances except as a last resort.

We had an educational duty. We had a duty to keep contact with the parties, even though there was a contract, in order to detect troubles which might arise. This grew into a number of varied activities. We came more publicity conscious. Prior to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, we made some speeches at schools and so forth. But with the war on and so forth we had very little time. But now the war was over. We did have more time because while there was a period of strike activity, there was also a period of slack

activity on our part because very often people were popping out all over the place. They were on strike before we even knew there was a dispute going on. So, again, there was this interpretation of Cyrus Ching was concerning prevention. We were supposed to know those things. So you keep contact.

Well, the development of the preventive mediation service as a part of our work--and nobody ever agreed that that was a good name, but they couldn't think of anything better--has grown through the years. Now it was very difficult to get across to the individual commissioners in the field because even Cyrus Ching, who conceived this out of the context of the law, couldn't give you an explanation of exactly what he meant. "Do what you can to prevent labor trouble, industrial disputes."

Well, reorganization took place because of this act lifting us from the Department of Labor. No longer did the director of our service go to the Secretary of Labor with his budget to be presented as part of the budget of the Department of Labor. It became necessary that he follow his own budget and to to the Congress as an individual, as an administrator, of a division of the President's office. So prior to the act of our director might appear before the Congress to plead his own case or budget, but only after the

Secretary of Labor approved. In this case he was on his own. So how close a connection there was with the Presidency during the early days of the administration of this act, I don't know. I think it was pretty close.

Anyhow, where we had, I think, five regions during the war which eventually were set up, as the new program, new administration, the necessity for greater detail . . . I don't mean that a greater number of forms had to be filled out but rather a greater attention to detail as to what happened and what went on and so forth. Over a period of not too many years the five regions, if that figure is right in my memory, developed into ten regions. For instance, the West Coast and all of the mountain states west of Texas . . . Oklahoma is the western line, western Montana. All of this was handled out of San Francisco's one region. Well, at this time it was split in two with a regional office in Seattle. Likewise, part of the territory was taken away from Chicago. Part of the St. Louis territory was taken away, and this became region ten. That was administering five states, which included New Mexico and Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas. Is that five? Yes.

The regional director became much more responsible for the administration of the act in his region. The

old directors had been under the loosely worded authority of the old U.S. Conciliation Service, and also knowledge of the needs of the director for budget presentation became more known so that the reporting from the regional director's office must always be partially be pointed to that direction.

Also, this preventive mediation program required more money. The request of a Kiwanis Club in an area where there was industry for an explanation: "What does a mediator do? What does a mediation service do?" However you headed it, they wanted to know what we were doing. These were part of our job. We became public relations people. We became speakers regardless of how adequate. We didn't have speeches written for us. We had copies of the directors' speeches. We had copies of the regional director's speeches. They were only sent out as . . . if we could use them, fine. If we could write a better one, okay. We weren't even required to send in copies of the speech we made in the early days. In other words, you got up there and made a speech right off the cuff if you wanted to. That gradually changed to where at least they did want notes of what you said.

The regional directors in the early days of that

handled almost entirely the assignment of commissioners to disputes and the approval of preventive mediation activity. The staff in the regional offices was very small.

With the natural growth of the acceptance of the commissioners and due to the knowledge spread by the war activity where we had to go into a lot of situations where normally we wouldn't have been asked under the old law, this caused people to begin more and more to call of their own free will a mediator or notify a mediator that "We're now opening negotiations. Hold yourself open or have somebody open for about a certain time if we need you." This sort of thing . . . various items developed all over the place, which, again, required readjustment as far as budget, travel authority. When I first went to work we had a travel authority which covered all forty-eight states, the territory of Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, that is, the U.S. part of the Virgin Islands. Everybody had that same travel authority. We didn't have to ask anybody to make a travel request to a railroad, an airline, and so forth. All we had to have was an assignment. Then we had the authority to travel. Under the new setup commissioners were given a new

travel authority which included only the region of the states in which they normally operated and the area immediately surrounding that region. In other words, if I was working in Iowa and I had an assignment in Davenport and something broke out in Moline, Illinois, I didn't have to get authority to go across the river. All I needed was an assignment. I already had the authority to go across . . . or even to Peoria, which is a greater distance. If it were down here to, say, Albuquerque, New Mexico, to pick up a situation on the southern side of Colorado, even though we had three or four men in Colorado, in Denver, then that type of authority is still granted to commissioners in the region. If you want to go . . . if it's necessary for you to go for some reason and you're out at Snyder, Texas, which is way out west, and you need to go to Hobbs, New Mexico, you'd better get the permission of the regional director to cross the state line because that's in the jurisdiction of another regional director. Now whether that's good or bad, I don't know. This is one way things evolved in their changing pattern under the new law.

We had a much closer contact, personal contact, under the new setup with the regional director. He

finally acquired an assistant who handled primarily the assignments and the immediate supervision in particular cases, with the regional director maintaining overall administrative duties and a public relations end all over his region.

The difficulty of adjustment showed up at times. We ran out . . . in the region I was working in we ran out of communication money. In the government you have so much set up for this and so much for that. It's not a total amount of money that you can use helter-skelter. You have to get permission. If you've got so much set up for travel and you run short in some other area, to get a transfer of the money from travel, where you might have a lot of it, over to communications . . . well, this is what hit us. It wasn't me. I never telephoned too much (facetious chuckle). We all said that. But we ran out of communication money. Our regional director would even refuse . . . during this short period of time where they were getting an additional fund allotted, he'd even refuse to take a call where I said I'd pay for it personally. I guess this is a political ploy. I never could quite understand it because it caused me to have a strike when I could have used his advice very much.

The method of choosing our national director never changed at all under the new law. Probably, under the old setup the President approved a director of the U.S. Conciliation Service in the Department of Labor on the advice of the Secretary of Labor. I don't know that for sure, but I imagine this was the process that took place. At least there was consultation. Under the new setup the President appointed the director, period. Politically, nothing changed. In the top officers of any bureau or department, there are certain exempt jobs, meaning exempt from civil service and subject to the executive wishes of the administration which is in power. Below that level of the exempt jobs in a normal government agency, there is the area of civil service people. These people are not subject to the whims of the director, whoever he might be or whoever appointed him. We were all, as commissioners even under the new act, in exempt positions. I can frankly and honestly say to my knowledge that not at any particular time that I ever knew of did anybody bring any pressure on a President or a director of our service to do anything about changing a commissioner of conciliation either as to his area of work--I mean

that by the real estate that he covered--or his assignment to any particular office because of his political affiliation.

Now we were expected to be non-political, yes. Most of the men were. Occasionally, you might make a statement which could be regarded as political even in an industrial relations conference. Those things have been reported. If it was an honest statement and not an attempt to support some political individual or anything of that kind, nothing was ever done about it. These people were untouched.

I went through a number of Democratic and Republican administrations with never a question that I was going to be discharged, although I was not under civil service, because of a change in the political administration. To my knowledge, this has always been true, even in the very earliest days. They did not touch a commissioner if he was trying to do his job right.

Marcello: How do you account for this lack or absence of politics creeping into the service?

White: Well, I can account for it, but what actually took place in the early days to bring this thing about, I don't know. I've heard a few stories. One occurred . . . in the story I'm trying to tell, there was a

little incident which happened that has no bearing on place. It did happen. I know exactly that it happened. There was a change in administrations--Democrat to Republican. In this large town there was a person who was very actively engaged in politics. A funny thing about it, he was a minister.

Well, he had heard of the "Blue Book". Now the "Blue Book"--so-called--was this list of exempt jobs. So he got one. He found out that there was at that time about 226 commissioners of conciliation listed under . . . not by name . . . that many jobs listed under the exempt status. So lo and behold he shows up in the office in which I was working at the time and asked a lot of questions. He was answered honestly. Then he said, "Well, these are exempt jobs. We need some jobs for our people in this area. You gentlemen will have to expect that."

We tried to advise him in the nicest way we knew how that he had better look into the situation and talk to a couple of congressmen who had had experience along this line. Well, apparently, he didn't. But he made his recommendations to Washington. What the letter coming back from the congressman in his district said, I don't know. But he never bothered anybody ever after that.

Marcello: Do you think that it was perhaps a matter of tradition, that is, somehow from the very beginning the old U.S. Conciliation Service had been free from political interference? In other words, do you think that it could have been a matter of tradition?

White: Well, certainly as we changed over this could have been tradition by that time because we had a period there between 1913-14 and 1945-46 where tradition could be built. What started it in the first place, I think, would be more basically that a person is entitled to the respect he earns. My early predecessors had earned the respect of both parties, Democrat and Republican, whoever they might be, that they were within human abilities impartial. They were mediators. They were not selling a political philosophy. They could actually care less. If they were free to mediate they would not ask you, if you were the manager of the plant, what your politics were. They wouldn't ask anybody. They didn't care. You're a man. You're the manager of a plant. You probably knew that the international representative by reputation was of one political philosophy or the other, but they weren't all Democrats either. A great number of them were Republicans. I'm talking about union support of one party or the other.

Just as we have had as our recently resigned secretary of the Department of Labor . . . there for years people thought labor supported only the Democrats. Here's a man who supported the Republican administration practically all of his life, and he was appointed Secretary of Labor.

The attitude towards federal mediators has been good by the public. It was an organization I was proud to go to work for, and I continued to be proud to work for it. Now that doesn't mean I didn't get in trouble once in awhile by saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. We all make mistakes. But I never had any political trouble. I can also honestly say that none of the directors that I knew were or could be accused of political activity in their job as director of the service. They stayed clean. That was true of every one of them. Even though you knew in the background some person was a very active Republican or a very active Democrat, when he became that director he was a director of the Mediation Service, and he did not play with political pressures. He didn't ask a commissioner I ever knew whether he was a Republican or Democrat. It's still inspiring to me that this thing still goes on.

Marcello: On the basis of the comments that you've made thus far, I have come up with several questions that I'd like to throw in and flesh out what we've talked about. First, why did this reorganization take place in 1946 with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act? In other words, why was the old Federal Mediation Service bodily taken out of the Department of Labor and set apart as an executive agency with a new name, that is, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service? Why was this change made?

White: Well, I think your question probably is answered more quickly on the basis of some of the things I've already said. The Secretary of Commerce was considered, whether rightly or wrongly, as the representative of business in the government. The Secretary of Labor was considered as a representative of labor in the government.

Marcello: Okay, this is the point that I wanted to get clear. What you're saying in effect is that probably the primary reason for the organizational change was to perhaps give the service more of an image of impartiality or neutrality in labor relations.

White: Well, I'm glad you put it that way. This was what I was trying to imply when I . . . apparently, I didn't follow my trend of thought when I said that Mr. Taft was a very intelligent person and knowledgeable.

Definitely this was his idea, that we be lifted out and made an independent agency to remove any suspicion that we were there representing labor.

Marcello: In other words, he believed, I assume, that the service would be much more effective or could be much more effective if it were able to put across this idea of impartiality and neutrality.

White: Right. Very definitely. Of course, as to the attorney representing management in a speech he made to one of our regional conferences, when asked by a commissioner from the floor what his idea about a commissioner being impartial was, he said, "Well, I don't want one that's so damned impartial he's futile." That was nothing to do with the reorganization but very definitely this was the picture. . . this in-between party out of any connection . . . now there was an attempt to put it over in the Department of Commerce. This will show up in the history of the debate on the act if anybody cared to research that part of it . . . an attempt to put it over in the Department of Commerce on the basis that, "Well, this is business, and it has to do with the industrial complex. It ought to be in the Department of Commerce, not in the Department of Labor." Okay, they lifted it out of both of them. There's no

longer any question. It doesn't come up anymore. Set up as an independent agency, it has a greater and an easier entre' to management and labor. They're not representing either side. Part of that, of course, is due to the good job done by the early commissioners, that they established that reputation and it spread. Following commissioners also tried to live up to it. The early boys, the old pioneers, did quite a job.

Marcello: As a result of this reorganization, therefore, did it accomplish its purpose of creating the image of a more impartial and neutral agency?

White: With those people who were knowledgeable already about the activities of the Mediation Service, it just wiped all conversation out about, "Well, maybe they're representing labor." There's people today who never heard of the Federal Mediation Service. You still have to answer that question today in some areas. You go into a new town, new industry. Maybe . . . not in industries where they've built into a small town, but they're a branch of some other place where there's been labor activity. You don't have it there. It's the individual activity. You don't have it there. A person starts a new construction firm and this sort of thing. Maybe he's been raised under the old situation that

"This is my business. I run it. I hire who I want to," and so forth, and there's been very little union activity in the area. Then he questions today, "Well, what are you here for?" Well, you spend quite a lot of time explaining the background and so forth. It's getting more rare, but there's still going to be some of that.

I hope that enterprising young men get into this proposition of production, operation, and so forth. Unless they have somebody on their staff who has experience, they're not going to hear about the Federal Mediation Service until they're faced with it or somebody across the street is. Even if it's across the street they won't know much. You'll have to answer questions.

As a whole the reorganization was good. I don't think anybody would say that this thing of lifting the old U.S. Conciliation Service out and making it an independent agency didn't accomplish its purpose to establish a prima-facie evidence of impartiality.

Marcello: Another question that comes to mind is this. Why was it that the new service was prevented from entering grievance procedures except as a last resort or in certain exceptional instances?

White: The theory behind that barring of the commissioners'

entrance into the situation was basically that where they have grievances arise, they are grievances under an existing contract. Normally the parties had provided a method of settlement of those grievances within the body of that contract, and by the Mediation Service going in, even though it might be written into the contract in one step of the grievance procedure that the federal mediation would be called in, they were in a sense abrogating their own responsibility to settle their own differences. I think I said before that to me this, at times, was at cross purposes to one of the basic things about a mediator's work. First, he had to establish responsibility, trust of both parties if it was at all possible. So much of that could be accomplished in a more or less informal grievance hearing, where he went into the situation on grievances. You were less at sword points at this time of the grievance procedure. Nine times out of ten you knew there was a no-strike clause in the contract, and if you couldn't settle a grievance or grievances you could talk to parties into going into arbitration even though it didn't provide that in the contract as the final step. You could talk to them and talk them into it. So in that part of it, I always felt that we lost something.

Marcello: I was going to say that on the basis of your comments I gather that you didn't particularly agree or like the idea of not being able to enter grievance procedures.

White: No, I didn't on the basis of what I've said. This is where I established the thing that just has to definitely has to be established before you can be successful in the normal dispute over a contract. If you know the party, if you know their background, if you know their inside that you get through the grievance intrusion, you sit down forewarned when the contract negotiations come around. You are partially armed before you go into the situation. Maybe this is a minor part. I don't know how the younger commissioners now feel about it who never went through that experience of being a quasi-arbitrator without authority because they have grown into their job without this thing of handling of grievances other than what they might have had as experiences as employers, as an industry representative, or as a labor union representative. Even those people are entering new situations all the time completely removed from the industry they worked in or the union they worked with. So I don't know what their ideas are. I doubt if very many of them have thought of it because they didn't have this past experience.

I know that a great number of our older commissioners, most of them now retired, felt the same way I did. We couldn't do anything about it. It was the law. Sometimes we could do something about it because the regional director did have the authority to tell you to go ahead with both parties requesting you. You've got a problem in that plant which might develop into a wildcat strike. Okay, go ahead.

Marcello: I was going to ask you to give some examples of those extreme cases when you would enter the grievance procedure. According to what you said, the commissioners did enter in exceptional cases.

White: Well, that's right, and I'm sure that they probably still do occasionally.

Marcello: What were some of the exceptional cases in which you would get into the grievance procedures?

White: Well, as the specific example I'm going to use one that happened in a packing house. It was not one of the so-called "Big Four." I'd been in the contract negotiations a number of times, so both union and management knew me pretty well by that time.

There was a contract in effect. To try to explain the technical language as well as the usage of certain words in the industry would take too long. Just briefly,

let's put it this way. There was a contract in effect. This was after Taft-Hartley prohibited our general entrance into grievances. In this case the parties went through all the processes of the grievance procedure, all the steps including arbitration.

An arbitrator had had a hearing and handed down his award, which never satisfied either party due to the fact that the arbitrator didn't understand the terminologies used in the arguments before him as an arbitrator. Specifically, in the trade at that time--whether they do now or not--everything in the way of a hog. . . this was a hog killing plant primarily. Everything in the way of a hog other than the head, shoulders, feet, and hands were referred to as sowbellies. Now they worked on these sowbellies on a piecework basis. To go into the line and how it operated is immaterial. But they have to be trimmed. A trimmer can cost a company a lot of money by doing it wrong and all of this. So they were paid on a piecework basis plus excellence. In other words, you could make scrap out of half the sowbellies that you worked on. Now in that provision there was two rates --one for light sowbellies and one for heavy sowbellies.

This is where the arbitrator misunderstood what

they were talking about. He didn't know the terminology. They were talking about bacon, the bacon slab. They didn't say bacon slab, just sowbelly. So he couldn't understand why there would be any difference in handling a light sowbelly or a heavy sowbelly. But the smaller rate was on the trimming out of the greater part of the side of the hog to get that slab of bacon, and get it all, but get not too much fat on the flank or the shoulder, which would ruin the shoulder portion. The trimmer on that bacon, after the first cut was made and the bacon slab was taken out . . . it went down another line and the trimmer on that bacon then became . . . this then became a light sowbelly. It didn't make any difference . . . it could be a 400-pound hog or a 200-pound hog. It became a light sowbelly. This is where the smaller rate was, but yet the greatest accuracy of trimming was needed. This was what the union was protesting. "Okay, it takes me more skill to learn to get that. It takes me so long to get up there. Why the lesser rate?" So the arbitrator couldn't see any difference between light sowbellies or heavy sowbellies. He read the contract, and he said, "You have a contract in effect for so long." Well, actually, the company was not quite in agreement

with this after they heard all the union's arguments either. But the arbitrator ruled in favor of the contract, which appeared to be strictly "Pay for certain amount of money for trimming a heavy sowbelly. Pay for trimming a light sowbelly." Although they knew what these people were talking about.

So they jointly again requested that I come back into the picture because I had been there before, they knew me, and so forth. It got to be real laughable during the explanation when I was sitting with them due to the fact that this was one of the best known arbitrators in the United States. But here was a human error. So we sat down and we worked the thing out through a mediation process. I found out that the company was not objecting. They agreed to a certain point with the union's allegation of additional skill for trimming these light sowbellies. It had nothing to do with how much weight the man had to lift, some cases the women. So we worked it out with an increase. The company let it be understood by an inkle that in the next contract negotiation they would adjust the whole thing where the skill would predominate over the size of the piece of hog that the people were handling.

Marcello: Would you ever enter the grievance procedure in cases where if the grievances weren't settled that it might lead to a disruption or some vital economic activity, such as public transportation or something of this nature?

White: Well, this type of thing, yes. In the early days of the Taft-Hartley Act there were not too many what we refer to now as public sector contracts. Now I'm not talking about transportation in there. In those days there was an awful lot of bus companies, individually owned or maybe nationally owned, operating in rather small towns. They've disappeared due to the automobile, people's affluence and ability to transport themselves, and all of this sort of thing. When I say bus companies, at that time, primarily I'm referring to streetcars. Buses were being used but there were still streetcars with the old tracks down the middle of the street.

Yes, we continued on a selective basis to enter grievance procedures where a disruption of a public service of that kind would occur if something wasn't done or an attempt wasn't made. We never to my knowledge. . . and we had quite a lot of it in this region which was old region ten . . . atomic energy. . . actual setups of atomic energy, either the physical manufacture

of the atomic bomb or the experimental laboratories. This was an area we entered without argument, without questions. All we had to do was have a request by one side or the other.

I went back into the situation in the potash mines in New Mexico on a grievance after I had been away from there several years as an officer of the union involved and after I had been through a rather vicious strike as a mediator there. Both the parties called me back in to arbitrate a dispute, and both parties were on the phone when they talked to the regional directors. They requested me personally. Now I'm not bragging about that. I was there when the darn thing was worked out. There could have been a disruption of work in the potash mines if this thing wasn't settled in some way or other. Now they had an arbitration procedure. They had a method for selecting an arbitrator, but they said, "White has worked here. He's been here as a mediator. He knows what it's about. We want him." So we went back in.

Transportation situations could get pretty nasty at times in the grievance area because of the fact of its immediate contact with the public in the area in which it was coming about. These things get into the council chambers of the city. They get into the mayor's

office or the city manager's office. They soon become the knowledge of the riding public or . . . not only the riding public, the total public through the newspapers and so forth.

Marcello: What you're saying in effect is that you would enter grievance procedures where public welfare was involved, such as transportation, atomic energy, telephone, coal. At that time yet a lot of people were still using coal and things of that nature. You would probably also get into disputes perhaps where national defense was involved.

White: Oh, very definitely with national defense. It's the total area of what I wrote down as being . . . without question going to atomic energy setups. Even the suppliers of parts to the national defense, particularly in this area of the development of the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb.

Marcello: Now would you get into these special grievance cases? Would both parties have to make a request, and then would you have to get permission someplace before you could enter one of these grievance procedures?

White: After the law went into effect you always had to get permission from your regional director. Sometimes he would request permission from the national director. It depended on the situation. Most of the time he

didn't have to. He had the authority to authorize it if you could give him the information. But you have to divide that thing of a request. Certainly we had to have something from the parties. They didn't have to be from both parties. It could be from one. In that case we'd contact the other party. We'd let the first party, the calling party, know that we were going to contact the other party before we gave them an answer.

Very rarely did you ever find an exception. You might find a little argument but very rarely an exception where the other party who had not been a party to the request for a mediator would object to him coming in. Most of the time they'd say, "Well, sure, we'll go along. We'll cooperate. It might be a way of settling it." Experienced labor leaders are not strike-happy. It's only the guy that hasn't had one yet that is strike-happy. Experienced management is not strike prone. Again, it's the inexperienced guy that hasn't been through one, or he's trying to build a reputation. So honestly I think that in 99 per cent of the situations which arise, both sides now want to settle by some means other than punitive action--one against the other. I think that 1 per cent would take care of maybe a planned deal in some plant of a multi-plant corporation

in order to set up a study lesson for other people to look at.

Wildcat strikes still occur. People still walk out in violation of their leadership's rules, regulations, contract, whatever it might be. They still do that occasionally and probably will. I don't think the time will ever come when we're completely free of disagreement which can lead to some type of punitive action, especially where we have a free society and people are free to go on strike. The threat of violation of the law such as the New York law against teachers and public workers going on strike hasn't been effective as you all know. They go. Sure, they fine somebody. Maybe they pay the fine; maybe he goes to jail. People are not stupid. They know they can't put 15,000 garbage collectors in jail, or they can't put 30,000 teachers in jail. It would be very difficult to maintain a staff if they fined all of them. The law will not settle a question between you and me which is basic to our beliefs unless we both believe in law as such or the rule of law, I should properly say.

I think the mediator still has a lot of good work to be done through the entrance into a plant and its labor organization through the grievance procedure.

It's a wide open gate for the person to go in. But again, I don't know how the younger men feel about it.

Marcello: Well, why was it that you were barred from entering grievance procedures?

White: Well, I think I tried to explain that. I think the feeling was that grievances are usually considered as occurring. A person might be grieved, but he doesn't have a grievance--he's got a gripe--unless there's a contract in effect. Even there, in the first instance he's got a gripe but not a grievance until he's turned down. But I think the feeling was that in a contract where there was a grievance procedure he had a method of settlement and that people should be responsible. I think this is the total background as far as I know of the Congress's consideration to pull the mediator out of this free entry into any little grievance that anybody might want to bring out.

For instance, an engineering plant at the end of the war had a grievance come up. This was with the machinists union, which was a responsible union the majority of the time and majority of places. One of the first unions to get into the educational process for their local people with audiovisual aids and lectures

and books and explanation of contract and explanation of the background, the history, everything they could think of to educate the newcomers into the union movement. The machinists had the contract in this engineering plant. Now when I refer to it as an engineering plant, they engineered, we'll say, a power plant. Now they also had a machine shop. They had other equipment for the fabrication of special parts and things made from metal. They had the abilities within the employees that they hired to even build a new machine to make a particular type of thing as a working model to go to a manufacturer to supply, we'll say, some particular need of a power plant, a new hydraulic operation or something of that kind.

They'd had a contract for a long time--the two parties, the machinists and this engineering firm. There was no fight with . . . the fights were over. There were sophisticated people on both sides. I'm talking about in the plant itself. The end of the war came on, and not only did they have a clause in the contract which provided for the application of service to those who had been drafted and joined and were in the armed forces during the war that this would occur as time served, but they would also return to their

position or an equal one with accrued seniority benefits. This was also the law.

On this particular case they couldn't agree. When two men bid on a job, management said that this man who is not a veteran was better qualified than the man who was a returned veteran to operate a new machine which had been built by another manufacturer specifically to this engineering firm's specifications. It was a large dropforge deal which was to do a special job. I think it cost them, outside of the work they did on it, around \$50,000. They said, "We don't want to put this man--he can't handle it--on a \$50,000-machine." Now that machine today would probably cost you four times that much, so there was a lot of money involved.

Well, neither side wanted to go to arbitration even though they had an arbitration clause. I think the union representative called first to the regional director. He knew the procedure. The regional director said, "Well, will the management go along with you on this?" The guy said, "Well, I'll have him call you." They asked for a mediator to be sent in. The funniest thing happened.

I got the assignment. I went to the town. We met in the company's offices. We went through the

details somewhat as I've given to you here of the background, the veteran, the non-veteran, so forth. They had a seniority clause which hadn't been explained to me by either party over the phone and which specifically called for advancement by seniority. Qualifications were not mentioned. I suppose when that was written into the contract they just assumed that if a person had the seniority then, he would have had the ability or he wouldn't bid on a job that he couldn't do. Well, here was a hairline distinction. The company says a man can't do it. The union says, "We think he can. Besides, he's senior." Well, nobody had actually . . . well, actually, the company said that he wasn't senior. Nobody had pulled the record, so I just wanted to see the records. I'd read the clause in the contract, which was strict seniority.

They were quite worked up about it. This was the first returning veteran deal they had had. They brought in the records, and lo and behold, the returning veteran, counting his time spent in the Army, which the contract and the law provided for, had one day more seniority than the other individual bidding on this job--one day. They had both been hired on the same day, and this was what the company was looking at.

They never went any further. But that record

showed that the returning veteran had gone to work one day before the other employee. He had one day seniority. I laid it out there that way, and I said, "Gentlemen, I can't rule on this man's qualifications. I have a divergence of opinion. The union--and you respect each other--says one thing, and the company says another about the ability to do this job. The only thing I can advise you to do is . . . you have a contract. Here are your own records." The company says, "Okay, we give up." There could have been a strike over this, not so much over the man involved but over the veteran angle. The union was using a principle.

Marcello: In other words, you would be called in the grievance procedures when there were misunderstandings or technicalities involved, whether it be the difference between heavy sowbelly and light sowbelly or a matter of interpreting seniority as you just mentioned in this sense.

White: Yes, or even in just the interpretation of words. Somewhere along the line in this interpretation of words business, I learned early in the game that when you got in an argument in court on the meaning of a word, they referred to the usual meaning of a word in the English language as the meaning implied by the

court. Well, this intrigued me for quite awhile. I thought, "If this is true they have some reference that they went to." The law had been built by precedents and accepted interpretations of the meaning of words and that a body of law had been put together to give the court a quick reference. Well, I found out that wasn't so. It meant that but usually they went to the dictionary. The court did, also. One court might use Wagner's Unabridged Dictionary, and one might use another. But they meant, "What is the terminology as explained in the dictionary?" So we were called in for the interpretation of words very often. I'd always go to the dictionary.

Marcello: Another question comes to mind with regard to this whole business concerning reorganization. How did the reorganization affect the morale of the service?

White: Well, there at that time when . . . the war was over. Reorganization had taken place through whatever method they went through, and the determination was made that the budget wouldn't be as great as it had been. There was definitely in the air a layoff of some people. There was definitely in the air reduction of grade, not layoff, but you'd lose some of your salary, and not all people were singled out on this reduction in grade.

I don't know whether there's any left working for the mediation service that remember or have heard about that particular thing unless they heard it from one of us. Layoffs we could understand. The method of selection of those to be reduced in salary, although retaining employment, was difficult to understand. We didn't know what had been put in our personnel records --any individual--that might cause a regional director or administrative official in Washington to say, "Well, this man is a better man than that one, so we'll reduce that one." The man working in the field might think vice versa. And you ask what effect.

I have no idea today who the men were who were involved, but they formed what they called a committee of commissioners. I don't know where they were or who they were. I don't know how many. The only thing I know is that there was not more than six who actually knew all the picture. I couldn't swear to that other than on the basis of just things that have happened since then. They wrote about three letters to the then director. They were well-written. They were pretty strongly worded. Explanations were asked of "Why and how do you do this method of selecting who is to be reduced, who is to be laid off, and so forth?"

Is it done by seniority? Is it done by caprice? What method?" Well, they never really got an answer, but they stopped that reduction in grade to the individual commissioners. It might cost a few more jobs, and those that remained might have had to pick up a little more load, but it stopped that questioning.

Now all of these men were experienced with mediation. They had also had four or five or six years of experience on one side or the other in this method of trying to judge people to determine whether Dr. Ron Marcello can do a better job on an engine lathe than Walter White can, or whether Walter White can do a better job in a union meeting than Ron Marcello could, what type and so forth. So they raised some questions that apparently the administration of our service at that time didn't care to answer. We had about as near as you can get in the Mediation Service to a walkout. But actually there was only five, six, or seven men really involved in getting this done.

Marcello: And you have no idea even what district they were in.

White: I have no idea. One might have been working at the desk next to me in the particular office I was in at that time. Nobody knew it. The funny thing is that a majority of commissioners are, and always have been to my knowledge, against any organization within the

Mediation Service that might imply that they were a union. They felt capable and willing and responsible to write their own grievances. Although we didn't have the rights set forth under the civil service and so forth to grieve at all, a method of grievances was processed through the administrative offices of the service, and the commissioners were all requested to comment and so forth. It amounted to a grievance procedure if you wanted to use it. You could take the lawyer in, or whatever, at certain steps. You couldn't go to arbitration.

So that money angle more than anything else had direct effect on the mediators' attitude and so forth at the time of reorganization. Now there were other things involved in the background due to the then director, which brought about the commissioners', whoever they were, willingness to go to bat on this kind of situation. There were other things which they didn't think were quite Kosher. Not that the man was dishonest, it was a matter of arrogance and inexperience.

Marcello: Now are you referring to Cyrus Ching?

White: No, I'm not. I'm referring to Ed Warren.

Marcello: This would be your district director?

White: He was the national director.

Marcello: The national director.

White: He had been chairman of the War Labor Board in Chicago. . .

Marcello: Okay.

White: . . . and in the position of authority to this extent that the board passed down a ruling to you as the company and me as the union . . . this had the force of law. This was your contract. This was the maintenance of membership. This was the amount of wages they could pay. Sometimes a contract was not approved. The wage scale was dropped from what the parties had agreed to.

What I'm trying to build is . . . he came from a position of authority in the War Labor Board into government. This was his first experience in government. He started out just as a public member of the board, coming from a large university and teaching in a school of business and industrial relations division. Well, he couldn't keep from applying that authoritarian attitude in his handling of this mediator field staff. Even his personal conversations to you on the telephone was authoritarian. We hadn't been used to that. Well, a lot of it we didn't think was right, but not a great deal was done.

There was some individual gripes that went on until this thing of a shortage of money came up and

the application of layoff plus reduction in wages to some people, not all people, not a general thing, where they questioned the ability of an individual to make a logical judgement that this guy's worth one more grade than this one is just on the basis of sitting down at a table and filling out a form or writing a narrative report. Whether there were instructions as to how to go about this type of judgement or not, I don't know, but I know it occurred.

Marcello: While ago you mentioned Warren, and I brought up the name of Ching. Now I don't quite understand the connection between the two. Now the national director who was appointed in 1946 was Ching. Is this correct?

White: If I made that inference I'm wrong. Ed Warren preceded Ching.

Marcello: Warren would have been the first one.

White: I think that's right. Time slips by me. This was right after the end of the war and the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, so it had to be Ed Warren.

Marcello: And then did Ching succeed Warren?

White: Then Cyrus Ching came in after Warren.

Marcello: And then who succeeded Ching? By this time, where did Steelman fit in, for example?

White: Dr. Steelman is gone.

Marcello: Steelman is gone altogether?

White: Yes, he was away from the service. Actually, he left the Mediation Service before he left the government. He became . . . or he was called the assistant to the President. Truman called him into the White House.

We had some interim directors at the time. A very capable lawyer out of New Jersey by the name of David Cole was a short time interim director. He had a lot of experience in arbitration, a lot of experience on government commissions, a very well respected individual. Lord help me, I can't think of the old gentleman's name who had been deputy or associate director, whatever they called him, under Ching and under two or three other directors. He was two or three times acting director or interim director or at one time actually carried the title of director, although he knew he was just going to be in that position a short time. He didn't want it any longer.

Cyrus Ching was a Nova Scotian by birth, grew up there, went to Philadelphia, went to work as a track repairer for the street railway system in Philadelphia, helped organize the union, carried a great deal of the burden in the negotiations and in the strike that followed. I think at that time he was about nineteen or twenty years old. He continued

to work for that company--I don't know how long--but he got into the administrative end with the company. They saw a valuable individual and kept increasing his responsibilities. He became a director of labor relations for them and was then picked up later by U.S. Steel and had a great deal to do with the establishment of policy for U.S. Steel in their dealing with the unions and was with them when he was asked to be director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. He was six foot six, and he always introduced himself in a new territory or a place where he had never been before. . . on the podium where he was going to make a speech, he said, "I am Cyrus Ching. Now you can tell that I'm not a Chinaman." He had some of the most wonderful backwoods stories you ever heard in your life.

Marcello: I assume you thought a great deal of him as the national commissioner or the national director.

White: Oh, he was really something.

Marcello: How close a relationship did you have with him?

White: He was very gregarious an individual, great knowledge of human nature, real feeling for human nature. Now we had directors who might, say, come into Dallas and never go near the Dallas office. You didn't know he

was there till you saw it in the paper--not many, but we had some . . . not Cyrus Ching. That was the first place he went to. He usually let you know he was coming. He didn't expect any red carpet to be rolled out by anybody. He'd come up and visit just like any other boy, talk with you about problems. He had read your reports. He knew what you were doing. So I don't know a man that didn't have a high regard for Cyrus Ching. This same thing was with John Steelman, see.

Marcello: How long did Ching remain with the organization? You would probably have to estimate this.

White: I would estimate probably four years.

Marcello: Was this a fairly long time so far as a national director was concerned, or was this a relatively short time?

White: It was probably about average if you consider that changing administrations had the right to appoint a new director. John Steelman was a director for seven years. Ed Warren was a director for two years. I believe I'm right about that. I wouldn't swear to it. I think Ching was there four or five years. I can't remember the chronology of the changing directors. Sometimes . . . not always did they just fill out an

administrative tour of four years. They might resign to go to some other employment. They might resign to go to some other employment.

Dr. McCoy was a director. He came from the law school at the University of Alabama. He was dean of the law school at the University of Alabama. I think he probably served maybe three years as a director and returned primarily to the field of arbitration. He'd been an arbitrator for a considerable length of time before he became to serve, as David Cole did on boards of government-appointed commissions or industrial labor matters. He was very knowledgeable. I would find disagreement in some of the commissioners of my time and age, but I think he was probably one of the most effective administrators that we had. He wasn't a man to go around spending the taxpayers' money all over the place unless he knew why, and he wanted to know why. He was a common man in a lot of ways and quick as could be mentally. He was a very, very successful arbitrator and is quoted in many opinions.

The present director who was an officer in the machinists union before he was assistant secretary to labor, I think, is a very effective director. In what knowledge of things I have now, he has eliminated considerable fat from the operation that has built up

over the years in the Vietnam Wat situation and the Korean War. Things tend to grow when they're left . . . like a mushroom. When they're left unattended they get out of size. I think the present director has removed some of that.

As a whole, I think those who have been appointed director have done a good job all the way through-- responsible, dedicated individuals.

Marcello: I have a few more general questions with regard to the administrative changes that might have occurred as far as the reorganization was concerned. Did your paperwork increase any? You mentioned the reports that you had to send back to Washington and so on.

White: A little. This preventive mediation section of your job required a report. Now copy-wise it didn't increase. This is just an illustration. This preventive thing required a report. The preparation for the participation mediation program required considerable work. If you did your job right . . . if it was merely a speech to a Rotary Club or a Kiwanis Club or an industrial engineers club or the oil operators' meeting in Midland, Texas, you tried to gain some knowledge of the type, not the individuals, the type of people that you were going to be talking to and their interest and

where they fit into this thing of our job and their attitudes towards labor and management and so forth. So you made your speech to try to educate again, but you had to make it a little different. It took time.

Two of our men in Kansas City, on their own time and their own money, developed a series of audio-visual programs. They primarily not only did the picture-taking in various industries, but wrote the script and provided in the beginning--no movies involved, just slides. When those things began to come to us, you had to ask for one. You had to learn to operate a tape recorder. You had to learn to operate that slide projector. Now this doesn't seem like much, but we got some real funny-acting tape recorders and so forth because we only had one or two in the region, and you had to request them in advance, and they'd been used by, oh, a bunch of amateurs. Maybe they weren't working when they got to you. Nobody knew it because they hadn't been tested when they got back into the regional office. This all took time if you had to hurry up and take one down and get it fixed.

Marcello: Why was it that the organization was now becoming so public relations conscious? Again, was it felt that this was the way of becoming more effective?

White: Well, public relations . . . when I use that term I use it a little erroneously. It is a type of public relations but not in the sense of a Madison Avenue projection. It is an educational process more than anything else.

Now what I am going to say again is my own personal opinion. I think this job could be better done, particularly in the area where we have universities and colleges who have knowledgeable people on their staff. Regardless of a person's dedication, regardless of his lack of fear of making speeches or making an ass of himself in a speech when he's talking to a group, most of the men going with the Mediation Service had to have a certain amount of ability to speak somewhere, somehow. But, yet, they're not educators as such, I mean, the process of education which might lead that trained person like yourself as a teacher to use one method here before you used another approach over on the other side. These things also are even yet kind of one-shot deals. We have had programs where we covered the entire field as nearly as we could using audio-visual aids, speeches, question-and-answer programs, the old blanket method of illustrating with charts and so forth to put on maybe two

or three classes with a group of union committeemen where we could get them closer together in a region for two or three sessions. The same thing is true with a company. If we could get the company managements at the same time, not together necessarily, but the same time, and have a session tonight with the union and tomorrow night with the management and go over the same thing, that became effective. I still think it could be better done and can be better done by planned situations in a university or college.

I say that because I have been four or five times recently with Dr. Henry Sisk of North Texas State University. He probably has more background for this sort of thing than a majority of college professors. I also find that maybe that judgement's not correct because you look into the background of some of our college professors and they've done a lot of things. It just happened that I knew Henry Sisk a long time ago, so I know what his background . . . not only does he have the education of a degree, I think he's one of two qualified consulting psychologists in Texas. He worked representing management directly in plants and as a consultant in the areas in which I worked probably . . . it's two different areas . . .

probably a total of twelve years that I know about. I'm sure that he's done some consulting work in some of the highly populated industrial areas from things I've heard him say about various plants and so forth.

He conceived the idea first with the UAW, which has one of the best training programs for their committeemen of any union organization in the United States. Maybe this is one of the reasons why his idea was so acceptable to them. It started out through Henry's extra work from his teaching, that is, being an arbitrator, and a very respected one, that people on both sides, unless they had an experienced attorney or an experienced labor relations man on the company's side or an experienced international representative or attorney on the union's side that . . . locally, these things cost money to have in arbitration. You've got to pay the arbitrator. You've got to pay for a place to have the meeting. You've got to pay for a transcript, usually, if you want a transcript. Most parties want stenographers, court reporter's report verbatim. These cost money, so it's expensive to arbitrate. If you go unprepared not only can you lose maybe a principle that's involved, but you waste a lot of money. So through this type of thinking . . .

and I'm not quoting Dr. Sisk. I'm starting my own opinion about what I heard him say.

He evolved this thing about trying to instruct the people, not just unions but people, whoever would have him, and get a group together on this art of presentation of a situation to an arbitrator. Well, this evolved into grievance procedures. It evolved into "Is this thing properly before an arbitrator? What does your contract say? What reference are you using in the contract? What section applies to this grievance? Is this in writing? Was there proper following of grievance procedure? Was it all timely? Did it meet the time limits of the grievance procedure?" All of these things. He covered the works. I've been to four meetings with him recently, two of them to the same group and the other two to different groups. One of them also involved the machinists. They were one of the old-timers in providing educational material for their lower echelon people.

This is just one example that I personally know of, which is certainly not true for the whole pudding, but he does a wonderful job, and I think that we have other people in our universities who can do that same kind of a job. Probably, if you look back they've got

some industrial experience. People do a lot of things before they get a doctor's degree. Chipping paint on a Coast Guard boat--this is all instructive. So a university could set up this kind of a training program, a night course. They have the place. They could also have a sort of an extension service. We have some dedicated people who couldn't charge too much for a two-hour course in some other town. Besides that, you have the prestige of an educational institution. It can be set up for a period of training time where you don't try to cram everything down somebody's brain cells in two hours, and at night when they're sleepy and they've worked all day.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying in effect, then, is that the public relations functions that were performed by the Mediation and Conciliation Service were very positive. They did serve a positive purpose.

White: Definitely. This one part of it, I think, might be better served by a university. I don't think this would do away with the necessity of a Rotary Club in Pecos, Texas, wanting to hear what a mediator does. I don't think a doctor in the business school without the experience behind him could talk as effectively as a mediator could to that club in that area. The training area, I think, would be better done by a university,

More time could be devoted. More planning could go into it. By that I'm not saying that these people who teach are not busy. That's their field.

That part often develops in very interesting situations. I had a period of about . . . well, there was three meetings of the union officials and three meetings of the management officials of the Continental Bakeries in Dallas. This was primarily brought about by the request of Continental Bakeries' top industrial relations director. I had known him for quite a long time. I didn't give him the idea, but due to circumstances in their negotiations down here, he asked, "Could we do certain things?" I said, "Yes, this comes within the scope of our duties at this time." So we sat down and worked out what could be done, called the union representative in, and told him what we were thinking about and would they care to participate. They said yes. In this case, union and management people met together. We all had a little to do with the drawing up of the program, although the commissioner had to present the program. In this case, two of us did. We had, I think, a total of six meetings.

This thing spread all over the Continental chain

of bakeries--Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago. That could have been just as well by S.M.U., Arlington, and North Texas as part of this community service thing if nothing else. Don't universities, most of them, have a community service setup?

Marcello: The trend seems to be going in that direction.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: May 15, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 15, 1975, in Denton, Texas. This is the eighth in a series of interviews with Mr. White concerning his experiences as a federal mediator and conciliator during the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's.

Now I think the last time that we talked, we had finished discussing your experiences out of the Des Moines office. Then in 1949, somewhere in around there, you were transferred to Texas. Let us begin, therefore, by discussing the background concerning your transfer to Texas. Now as I recall from our earlier discussions, you mentioned you were transferred to Houston first. Is that correct?

Mr. White: That's right. This dovetails in a little bit with your question the other day of reorganization and its following effects after the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act. During the period up to about

1947, we had six regions. Then there was some expansion. We had these layoffs. Then business began to pick up again. I had a son who was, I think, born with asthma. We had constant fear and so forth. Of course, we went to doctors. After a nationally known pediatrician definitely said the boy at the age of three months had asthma, then he began treatment, which in those days included some antibiotics, although they didn't know what they were doing when they used antibiotics in this situation. We were told, to make it brief, that we'd better get the boy out of that particular area because through there was the worst area for asthmatics there was in the United States. We have been told that since then. So we were advised to get the boy out of that particular area. There was a confluence of Des Moines and, oh, another river-- I can't think of the name of it--right there at the City of Des Moines. So you've got a heavy humidity.

I asked our regional director for a transfer, and he didn't want to give it. He said he was perfectly satisfied with the work I was doing at Des Moines, Iowa, and that's where I ought to stay. For some reason, although he was a kindly person,

he couldn't understand that I had to do something. So that's about the way our last conversation ended up. Well, I guessed I'd have to do something else.

In the meantime I'd been thinking, putting two and two together--the rumors I'd heard and seen in the paper and in talking to people--that there was going to be an expansion of regions. So having a choice of possibly the desert area in California or the semi-desert area in Texas and having two brothers in Texas, I felt my first try for a transfer, which might be accomplished during this addition of regions, would be Texas.

So I again sat down and put two and two together. There were two men that I figured might be made the regional director down here. I eliminated one, got on the telephone, and talked to the other one. Sure enough, my guess was right. He and I had been friends for two or three years. I told him my story and said I'd like to transfer. He said, "Well, it hasn't been officially announced. I don't know how you guessed I was appointed regional director. But I am the regional director and I'll get on it." Well, the next day I got a telephone call from our assistant regional director that the transfer had been made already. Ted Morrow got on it when he said he would.

Marcello: Ted Morrow was the man who was going to be made the regional director in this area.

White: Yes. He was at that time the commissioner . . . well, there was two Morrrows, brothers, both lawyers by education, who were the commissioners in the Dallas office--Ted and J. C. Morrow. Ted was the older and had served a period of time with the state attorney general's office. These were some of the things I put together in thinking who would be next regional director down here. Well, anyhow, Ted Morrow had got on the job. I was given a transfer real quick.

Marcello: We did go into the background as to how you know Ted Morrow in a previous interview, did we not?

White: Well, I don't think we did, but we used to have regional conferences in which other commissioners from other regions were assigned to attend. It was in this method that I first became acquainted with Ted Morrow. Then, for some reason or other, I served on a panel with him and another commissioner in Oklahoma City. This was with a gas pipeline company. It took four or five days. We were jammed into one room for about twenty-four hours a day for about four days, so we became pretty well acquainted. We both liked the same kind of beer.

Well, anyhow, after the telephone call from St. Louis and our assistant regional director saying the transfer had been accomplished, I contacted Ted Morrow again on the phone and asked him when. He said, "First plane you can catch." So he understood I'd have to make the arrangements--there was about a foot of snow on the ground in Des Moines--so that my wife and family could be taken care of. I believe this was about Wednesday. He told me to report down here on Monday, which meant a Sunday flight, which was immaterial. It was a little easier to get a flight on Sundays back in those days. I did everything I could to make the family okay. We had a house to sell because we weren't coming back to Des Moines. My wife had that problem on her mind plus three small boys--one who was subject to recurring asthmatic attacks which were sometimes very desperate--a foot of snow on the ground, and swinging garage doors that were hard to get opened.

Well, anyhow, I caught the plane out of Des Moines. It had snowed the night before. It snowed all the way to Houston. Never did I see so many fender-bender accidents. People didn't know how to drive, which was astonishing to me at that time.

I never stopped to think, but that I had been driving in North and South Dakota, Iowa, part of Minnesota, Missouri . . .

Marcello: Plus having been raised in Kansas.

White: . . . plus having been raised in Kansas. You learned to drive, or else you were stuck where you were. Well, these people would get out and leave the car right in the middle of the street--just walk off and leave it.

Anyhow, I immediately received assignments. They were on the desk assigned to me in the Houston office when I got to the office on Monday morning. Primarily at this time they covered the area around Houston. When I say around Houston, I mean we were holding Louisiana at that time out of the new region. We had two men in New Orleans at that time. We kind of split the difference. We'd go to Lafayette sometimes. Sometimes they would go out of New Orleans. I did an awful lot of work at the time in the Beaumont-Port Arthur-Orange area.

Marcello: What was the state of management-labor relations in that particular area when you arrived there in 1949?

White: Well, of course, the Gulf Coast and this particular area, which is the first had become highly industrialized due to the big oil discovery just north of Beaumont and all up and down the Gulf Coast . . .

the building of oil . . . the shipping in Galveston Bay, including Houston and Galveston ports. Shipbuilding developed during the war--I mean big shipbuilding--Bethlehem Steel and so forth in the Port Arthur-Beaumont-Orange area. Chemicals were just moving into the picture, that is, petrochemical installations. Dow Chemical had built what I thought then was a terrifically large plant, but you can hardly find it in their present setup--the original.

So generally in this particular area, the people were familiar with the fact that they were faced with union organization and union contracts and did have them. One thing I noticed particularly in my first coming into this area is that the attorneys, consultants representing the companies, and some of the representatives of the union were so much better in all of those laws that . . . well, the National Labor Relations Board actions and so forth, the application of the wage and hour law. It took me a little time to figure out why they were that way, and it was because they had been through . . . they'd fought every step of the way. So they had to learn. In the field of labor law there were some union representatives down there who were much better lawyers than the rank-and-file of labor lawyers

representing management. They'd not only been through the mill, but they'd read an awful lot, and they continued to study on their own--some outstanding individuals.

So the atmosphere in this particular area was fine, however, from that situation was the first time I ever had anything to do in the Rio Grande Valley. Now this was just like moving into another country.

Marcello: What was the situation in the Rio Grande Valley?

White: Well, there was very little organization. Of course, there was citrus fruits and gardening--produce gardening--from the mouth of the Rio Grande River clear to Ringo, which is quite a ways up the river. I think it's about at the place where they built the second dam on the Rio Grande now. Then back from that is what used to be the winter garden area from Del Rio south-eastward for a ways. Now this was mostly agriculture-oriented.

Marcello: And a great many people of Mexican extraction, I would assume, were involved in this area.

White: And wetbacks--so-called wetbacks. They were not only involved in the farming operations, but they were also involved in the plant activities, such

as canning plants and so forth. This brings up to me a little bit of attitude again. The social side of it, I guess, was beginning to get back with me.

I had an assignment with the Taromina Canning Plant. They originated in New Orleans. At this particular time--I believe I'm right--their big operation was in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. One of the original Tarominas was the head man. I would guess he was a man in his early sixties at that particular time. I can't even remember the name of the union that organized it because there were so many conflicting things. I can remember the name of the company lawyer. He's still active to my knowledge. It's Scott Toothaker. I'll talk a little bit more about him in a minute.

This man, Taromina, who was in charge of the Texas operation, probably created the desire for union organization all by himself as much as any other thing. Of course, there were other pressures. There were union representatives there trying to organize that plant because their low prices for labor and so forth made terrific competition where the unions did have contracts. So they had this obligation to try to organize. But the people, and

particularly the women, fell for it because the stories they told about that old gentleman who headed up the company were something terrific. He walked with a cane. Whether he needed a cane or not, I don't know. He always had this cane. There's just one story that I heard all over the place. To use the kindest word I know how, he kept "goosing" the women with his cane, and they resented it to no end. There was no pleasure in that for them.

Well, anyhow, I'll get back to the negotiations. They had gone through the National Labor Relations Board channels and had been certified as the bargaining agent. We met in McAllen, Texas. We were making no progress whatsoever. The parties couldn't even agree on a preamble to the contract. Finally, I was beginning to think I was wasting my time because of the attitude presented, the evasiveness and so forth by the company spokesman. I would try to bring the thing to a head and find out just where we all stood by asking a direct question in a joint conference. So when we got into conference, reviewed what had happened in previous meetings, which was very little, I made a direct question to Scott Toothaker, who was the attorney for the company. I said, "Mr. Toothaker, I'd like a direct answer. Do you intend to sign a

contract with this union?" He said, "Mr. White, you'll get a direct answer. We do not intend to sign a contract with this union." I said, "With that kind of statement, you know what it does." He said, "Yes, I know what it does. It'll put you out of business, and the union will file charges with the National Labor Relations Board." I said, "Let's adjourn."

So that was the end of that negotiation, and they did go through the board. The board did order them to negotiate and sign an agreement. A commissioner was again called in. This time it wasn't me. Another commissioner went into the situation. By the way, it was a fellow who hit Houston, who'd transferred, at the same time I did. He had come from Washington, D. C., office. So he was in a new situation. Well, anyhow, they still never reached an agreement. Of course, he had other things to do, also. He couldn't just stay there. How long that went on, I don't know, but eventually they did sign an agreement, which was more or less meaningless. It just covered up the words. This didn't last very long. But the thing that brought about the signing of the agreement . . . they did get a wage increase. One of the sons of the old gentleman that was so

obnoxious to the women took over the operation of the company.

Marcello: Now was this one of the first cases that you were called into after your arrival in Texas?

White: No, it wasn't one of the first cases. It was one of the first that I had ever . . . it was the first that I had had in the Rio Grande Valley.

Marcello: On the labor side in this particular case were most of the representatives of Mexican descent?

White: Most of the committee there was, yes.

Marcello: How did you have to alter your techniques or tactics in dealing with these people? Maybe I should say, did you have to alter your techniques?

White: At the time I didn't because we had an Anglo international representative there. I can't even think of the name of the union that was involved. All of the committeemen could speak good English. They were bilingual. This was a good committee. So the only thing that I had to do was to help the international representative educate them in the processes in which a mediator would go through so that they could follow the action. This was new to them. This was the first time they had ever sat in a negotiation. This part, with the international man's help, was not hard. The fact that the lawyer was

so well-versed and quite verbose was a handicap. We went through so many things that had become more or less regular in my previous meetings in the North. We covered ground that we had covered in 1942 because this was new. Now as far as the Taromina company is concerned and their canning operation and farm operation and so forth, I couldn't say as to the percentage of illegal aliens or not.

I later had a gas company assignment in Brownsville, Texas. Now this was their district office. It was a central gathering station from where gas was distributed throughout South Texas. We had quite a number of complaints. In this particular case the union representative coming into the situation was from the Con Edison Company in New York City. He was a native New Yorker, had gone on the international staff, and had seized this opportunity to get out of New York, and knew not nearly as much about what went on in South Texas as I did.

So the company completely disrupted negotiations. They had the foreman . . . and they admitted this. This is not my dream. They admitted it. They had the foreman go around to all of the illegal aliens, and they laid them off. If my memory is not wrong, this was about 45 per cent of the employees. This

completely disrupted the union activities because these people just stayed across the river. They were coming back and forth across the river every day. I'm talking about illegal aliens. These weren't card-carrying Mexican nationals who were coming across on a permit. They were just coming across. Everybody knew they worked for Con Edison's or they passed through just as if they had a card.

Well, this again brought in the National Labor Relations Board and eliminated mediation for awhile. Oh, after the NLRB had gone through their processes, I went back into this situation. We did sign a contract.

One of those rare things that happened . . . this young fellow that came out of New York City from the Con Edison operation in New York City, native of New York, liked it so well he just stayed down there. He ceased to become a union representative for this union because of the fact that he didn't want to be away from South Texas. So he stayed down there. The last I heard he had become a personnel representative for this particular company, and a good one. He did a lot of good for the people, and he did a lot of good for the company.

Maybe with this same company in a different area is where it first was brought back into my mind or exposed me more literally to the differentiation between the Anglo, the black, and the Mexican . . . whether he be a Mexican national, Mexican-American or of Mexican descent. We negotiated . . . this happened to be in Houston. I'm not going to mention the name of the company, although it was a subsidiary or part of the one at Brownsville. I can't remember its exact name, and they've changed names since then.

This was the first time I ever ran into a lady personnel director. I don't mean personnel director in the terms we used the other day. She was their chief labor negotiator for this particular setup which covered an awful lot of the Gulf Coast in Texas.

The thing that brings it back to my mind so much was the company's accusation that they couldn't put blacks or Chicanos--that was a term I hadn't heard by that time--or Mexican-Americans in position of authority and so forth, trust, because of the fact if cold weather came along they didn't show up. They were undependable. If they had a wedding, well, they were more likely to take off and go to the wedding than they would be to come to work. So they couldn't advance them. They very definitely had . . . now this wasn't the first

contract I was in. They had a contract. They very definitely had a stop. They only entered blacks and the Chicano in a particular job or jobs. The progress chart showed a definite stop. That's as far as they could go, where the Anglo went on up in their progression with some seniority and so forth, but not over here.

I began to wonder why. It was about this time, too . . . either just previous to . . . no, it was right after I got here the the Legislature--by what method I don't know--changed the Texas law which was discriminatory against both Mexican-Americans and blacks in about the same manner. They changed it so they gave full status, as I remember, to the Mexican-Americans of Texas and U. S. citizenship, legally. But the black was not disturbed. In other words, they still had to have a sign "Black Men" or "Colored Men" or "Colored Women" on the toilets in the public places and in the factories and so forth, where the Mexican was free to go to a white toilet by that time.

The attitude also showed in a plant in Texas City. This was the only tin smelting plant in the United States. A Dutchman of Dutch nationality, world-known engineer, was brought in by the United

States sometime right at the beginning of World War II, either a little prior or a little after, because of the fear that enough tin could not be brought in in its refined form, to set up and operate the tin smelter at Texas City. He had worked all over the world and understood the conflict between races. But he needed some experienced help. Now the tin ore came from Bolivia by boat. It was unloaded in Texas City docks. He needed some experienced help in the refinery, so a few South Americans were brought in to assist in the starting up of this operation and to stay and were in somewhat of supervisory positions, not the top line but in the immediate supervision of workers. I said this manager was of Dutch nationality. For this reason of his having worked all over the world and understanding differences between races, he was conscious of the fact that he had in the immediate area from the working force blacks, Mexicans, illegal Mexicans, and these people from Bolivia and wherever the tin smelters were, who were primarily of Spanish descent. He had four different problems, four different possible problems, through race or place of residence.

Well, the plant was in operation, and again they had a contract which had been signed the year before I got to Texas with the machinists union. No, I'll take

it back. This was with the operating engineers. A fellow by the name of Foster represented the union. He was a fiery sort of a guy, explosive both at management and at his own people, very knowledgeable as to the law and so forth and how far he could go, and pretty well-versed at that time for being able to stir up difficulties in race relations if it was necessary. So this year . . . they'd had the contract the year before.

This year there was trouble showing, so both sides requested mediation. I received the assignment. The guy that had helped work out the contract the year before, the commissioner, was in Houston, so he was there for me to pick up background from as to what he knew about the situation. Well, previously, prior to the other contract being signed--I guess it was one of the things that helped bring about unionization--was conflict in the dressing areas, the change rooms, the lockers, showers, toilets, and so forth. I think this was an undercurrent all over the place in the work force due to the black, Mexican, Mexican-American, and the South American.

The Dutchman understood the situation, so he got an appropriation to build a new bathhouse. After a lot of thought and so forth, plans were drawn and the construction was started, and it was finished

during a period of negotiations in which I was involved in this plant. Now I wasn't involved in this situation until later.

It came ready for occupancy, and the manager thought this would best be handled by the superintendent who was a native Texan. So he called him in. He went over it thoroughly what had to be done. Now divisions had been made in the dressing room, I mean, definite physical divisions. The numbering was consecutive except it stopped at a certain place at this end, and the middle had a certain place, and the next one had certain numbers, and over here it had certain numbers. Then the people were listed on this great long list by alphabetical progression through the names, both Mexican-American and whatever else might be involved, blacks. The numbers were so that they'd all end up with the blacks all in one place and the other nationalities the way they thought they wanted them (chuckle). The superintendent looks it all over, and he called all the people together. He had the shifts show up and paid them all at the same time. So here's this crowd of men. There probably was around a hundred at that time. They were there for the assignment of the ribbon-cutting at the new bathhouse. Well, the

superintendent, after all of this instruction, he looks down his list and he said, "José Ramos, you're a Mexican. You go in number one over here. John Jones, you're a nigger. You go over here." Now these were the words he used. Well, it took two days to get the people back to the plant. They ended up with a complete mixture in those bathhouses because even though individually there was discrimination between the various groups themselves they couldn't go for this public thing.

That was one of the funny ones. We finally ended up with a short strike other than that.

Marcello: When you reached Houston, were these the first instances where you ran into situations involving race, whether it be black or Chicano? Did you have very much of this in Iowa or when you were working out of the Omaha office? Now obviously the social mores, that is, the segregation and so on probably would not have been prevalent in either, Omaha or Des Moines.

White: Well, that's a surprising thing. It was. But it wasn't as noticeable. I had been brought up in an area where we knew the term "nigger," but it was seldom used. It was either "colored people," occasionally, "black." This same thing was pretty

prevalent through Nebraska and Iowa, that in the hinterlands in these two states there was not too many blacks. Of course, there was a lot of people who were second and third generation Europeans from various parts, religious sects, where discrimination was somewhat practiced, and partially through their own reactions. But up and down the river--I'm talking about the Missouri and Mississippi rivers--was the greatest concentration of blacks. Of course, they went up the rivers in their migrations from the South. You seldom ever saw a black in a skilled job. Occasionally, you'd see some in the building trades, not where the union . . . these were non-union jobs where you'd see a black machine operator, bricklayer, rarely a carpenter, but occasionally. You found them in the cement plants. There were a lot of cement plants. You found them doing the unskilled jobs in packing houses most of the time, although there was one plant in Omaha--I can't tell you which one--which had quite a contingent where the most highly skilled men in the bunch were black, the boners. They were good. They're the guys that take the bones out for sausages and this sort of thing. If they leave too much meat on the bone, why, that's a loss. It's piecework by the pound, I guess. I often thought

one of those guys was going to cut his arm off. I watched them and was just fascinated by the way they work. But they never did cut themselves. I would have.

So this discrimination was an undercover sort of a thing. It was there. I think at the time I had the feeling--and I talked about it--that the black was better off in the South than he was in the North when he was down and out because he knew he could go around to the back door of the house, knock on the door, and he'd get fed. Up there, no. He had to knock on a lot of doors to get fed, back or front. This, I feel, was true. I think it's still true. As far as living in a ghetto, they were just as segregated there. In fact, they were more segregated than they were in Houston because the way Houston grew you had a band of whites, you had a band of colored, you had a band of whites, you had the band of colored. There was more of an intermingling, not socially. Possibly this is an area of discrimination which I really don't understand yet.

So I think the main thing that hit me between the eyes was this difference between discrimination in the Mexican-American in Texas. If I'm right, the passage of the law which freed the Mexican-American

legally would have left the black in the same position. I would notice in towns and in Houston where in a restaurant you would have Mexican-American girls waiting tables, the blacks only doing busboy jobs or the dirty work. You might go down the street two blocks and find an exact reverse, where the black was waiting tables and the Mexican-American was doing the dirty work. I think, also, not so much in Houston, but in San Antonio, Austin and so forth, south, was the visual thing that you could see as to child labor.

Marcello: There was still a great deal of this in that area as late as 1950?

White: Oh, yes! It was completely ignored. Now I don't say by that that the Wages and Hours Division was ignoring their responsibility. They didn't have enough people to police every employer. I'm not talking of the manufacturing plants as such when I say this child labor was there. This was hard to determine because you seldom ever saw the whole total volume. I'm talking about some jobs that were considered dangerous under Labor Department rulings, Wages and Hours rulings, which were small operations where a father and three sons might be working on a job right there within your sight and maybe that younger son was ten years old.

Marcello: Did this create any special problems for you as a mediator?

White: The child labor, no, because we didn't get into those plants where . . . I mean the bigger plants pretty much obeyed the law. They were inspected. It was these others that you could see but didn't had enough labor force in the enforcing agencies to make an inspection on all of these, and the other people ignored it. This, what, had been going on for fifty years or a hundred years or whatever it was? So it was a natural thing. They just worked, and that's all there was to it. I have some views on the restrictions on child labor that maybe somewhere down at the end I might express.

The thing of discrimination again showed up in this matter of how far up the line in a progression could a black go or a Mexican-American go in an industrial plant.

Marcello: Did this particular thing become one of the more important grievances that the blacks or the Chicanos had in your negotiations? Was this something that they were particularly concerned about and did not accept, or is this simply an observation on your part as based on your experiences?

White: At the time I think it was an observation more than anything else. It didn't come up too often.

Marcello: In other words, I assume from what you've said that they more or less had resigned themselves to the fact that they were going to reach a certain point within that company and get no farther.

White: They discriminated against . . . that's right. That was a feeling I had. That's the feeling I still have.

Marcello: In other words, it was more or less a sign of resignation on their part, and the whole subject very seldom came up in any of the negotiations that you carried on.

White: Except in this setting up a progression chart, and then I remember very little objection. One reason is that these were white-dominated unions. If a black was on a committee it was due to the fact that they were making a gesture in order to be able to help control the blacks. I believe that. Now in saying that I don't mean that these were vicious union men who set out to willfully take advantage in the continued downbeat for the black or discriminated race, wherever it might come from.

In fact, I had quite an argument with my older brother who worked for an Humble Oil Company in their Baytown refinery. Prior to their being unionized,

they had the Humble Employees Association of some kind. This was--I hate to say the word--in a way a company-dominated union. Well, for awhile my older brother was chairman of that group. They did negotiate with the company, at least talked with them. It was during that period of time that this Humble Savings Plan and Humble Insurance Plan and so forth . . . which were bellweathers in leadership in the oil industry and affected a lot of other contracts, even auto. Well, one of the reasons, of course, was Humble didn't want to deal with the union which was putting out handbills at the gate every once in awhile. They could deal better this way, so they gave benefits.

Well, the thing I was trying to illustrate, I fell out right on the street with my brother in the little town of Oswego in which we were raised in Kansas. We were walking down the street, and here came one of my old friends down the street--fished with him and hunted with him, refereed basketball games. He was black. There was never any social relationship--family and so forth--that I know of. But he was quite a musician. At one time I sang with a barbershop quartet, believe it or not. He was the bass, beautiful bass. Well, he could also pick a

banjo, guitar, mandolin. At the time I'm speaking of that my brother and I were walking down the street in this little town of Oswego, a little town of about 2,000. Now he'd played football in high school with two blacks on the team. He had worked at that time for quite a long period of time with Humble Oil, in Baytown, Texas.

Well, here comes this friend of mine. I have a nickname of Vic, which I was always known by in Kansas. He comes down, sticks out his hand, a great big grin on his face, and says, "Vic, where in the world have you been?" So we shook hands, patted each other on the back, and talked about old times. He said, "Isn't this your older brother Harv?" I said, "Yes, that's Harv." So he stuck out his hand. My brother had been cleaning his fingernails with a pocketknife. He said, "Don't stick out your hand to me, you black son-of-a-bitch!" I resented it. We got into quite a little discussion. Of course, this hurt this fellow's feelings to no end. He was a talented man. I remember telling my brother, "Listen, the more you kick that guy down, you're kicking yourself right down with him. Anytime you try to keep a person down, you have to get down there in the gutter with him. If this is your attitude towards your fellow workingman, then, by God, go on back to Texas and stay there." He's a changed man today, my brother.

Not particularly because of that, but that helped.

Now here was an attitude which grew up from merely association where the white dominant feeling was prevalent in a large industrial plant. Here again was one of the places where the progression line stopped for the blacks. The white could go as far as his energies and equipment would take him.

So in the early time there I think my thing was mostly observation and my own feelings of not understanding completely why. Maybe this came about . . . I was sitting in negotiations in a steel fabricating plant in Houston. We were negotiating back in the superintendent's office, which was an enclosed glass space with the foreman's desk and the superintendent's little enclosed office and secretary and so forth. It was back in the plant. It wasn't up in the business office end. So you could see all over the plant. You could also see what went on in the lot next door where a building was being built.

I think there were two blacks on this committee, and this was the steel workers union. They had very little to say, but I became fascinated by what was going on in the lot next door. There was

a man on a clam shell shovel, the kind you drop and pick up. Sometimes the clam shell was hooked on there as he moved dirt; sometimes it was used as a crane to shift material or put the material up where it was needed. I became fascinated because this guy was so expert. In one of the breaks in negotiations I commented to the superintendent, "I'm afraid I've been a little lax here. I got interested in what that guy can do with that crane and shovel and so forth over there." I couldn't see in the cab. I didn't know who he was. He said, "That guy is good, isn't he?" I said, "Not having ever been one of those kind of operators, but it looks like to me that he's one of the best around the country." He said, "You could lay your watch out there, and that guy could drop that clam shell down on it, and he wouldn't break it. He's that good."

Well about that time he swung around so that the cab was facing me. Here was a big black man sitting in there. I said, "Well, that's a colored gentleman." He said, "Yes, he's black." I said, "You've been sitting here telling me that you can't change the progression schedule in this contract operation that you're not negotiating because a black can't do the job?" He said, "Well, that's a different kind of a job. That's outside." (Chuckle) Some excuse of that

kind. I didn't pursue it because it was not a demand of the union. But it was a definite illustration of a guy that was one of the most expert clam shell operators in the country, and the white boss recognized it, but he wouldn't have given him a job inside that plant as a machine operator to go where his abilities would take him.

Marcello: Getting back to this business of race and so on again, I would assume that these are the types of peculiar situations that you found upon your move to Houston that perhaps you didn't experience back in Omaha or back in Des Moines.

White: Yes, but I'm sure that there was some operations where we had some of this. It was not so out here where you could see it so much. Possibly the other thing was the headlines about the legislators changing the law to provide freedom for one race and not for the other, if I'm right about that.

Marcello: To tie these things together just a little bit, I would assume, then, that in the negotiations that you carried out during this period here in Houston that the whole business concerning segregation and race relations and what have you really didn't come up too often in contracts themselves.

White: No, they didn't. When we're talking about Houston I'm talking about the Gulf Coast area where it's heavily industrialized. We had quite a number of bus . . . city operations. Many of these, especially Port Arthur, Beaumont, Corpus Christi, three I remember, were National City Lines. This was one company with headquarters in Chicago who operated lines in various places in the United States. I do not remember the thing of race discrimination coming up in the drivers' operation at any time in those contracts. I had some city lines, streetcars and so forth, in Omaha, Iowa, and so forth. Every once in awhile they had a black operator. But again, there wasn't too many of them. They didn't meet a quota. But the issue was not raised, and it was not so outstanding that you'd notice it too much. I think that's one of . . . this is my own social viewpoint.

I think that's one of the things that people have been so deceived, in my thinking, about all the problems the people face in school desegregation and so forth. The first great pressures were put on the South, where actually they were greater acquainted with their own people than the northern people were. De facto segregation was as much a fact in the North

as it was in the South where it was de jure by the law. So it was another little thing that came into being there. I don't know how it is now.

San Antonio was divided by a street which went through San Antonio east to west. The road at that time from Houston came in on that street. The road to Uvalde went out on the other end of that street, where you'd go to Uvalde out to El Paso. South of that street was the Mexican population, not completely but a great majority. At that time I think they said that San Antonio was the second largest Mexican city in the country, in the western hemisphere. North of there was the anglo town. Now there was some intermingling with Anglos in the south and Mexicans in the north. But if you drove down through that Mexican section--and I think you could still do it today--a lot fifty by seventy-five feet might have five families living on it in shacks and so forth, crowded. There was no . . . very few streets with even gravel--dirt in the summertime, muddy in rain. On the north it was a different proposition where seldom did you run onto a gravel street. What their zoning laws were in San Antonio, I have no idea. They must have been something. Even health facilities were . . . the Chick Sales were plainly back there in the back of the lot.

Probably one of the most interesting situations that I was ever involved in developed in San Antonio. This happened right at the time when I finally got out of the wet area of Houston with this asthmatic son and transferred to San Antonio.

Marcello: How long did you remain in Houston altogether?

White: Officially at the Houston headquarters just about seven months.

Marcello: In other words, after seven months you realized that Houston was not the place to live with an asthmatic son.

White: Well, we knew that in the beginning, but having a new regional director, he had to get his feet on the ground. Actually, the boy was better off in Houston than he had been in Des Moines, Iowa, but we were still looking for that place where it was high and dry.

Marcello: Before we move you on to San Antonio, let me ask you this question. In your experiences in Houston, did you ever deal very much with the dock worker or the maritime unions or anything of this nature? If so, surely they must have represented a segment that you hadn't experienced before.

White: Well, yes, and this was a little different than you would experience on the West Coast or eastern Gulf or East Coast negotiations with the same union.

Marcello: My first impression when I think of dock workers or anybody connected or associated with the maritime union is that these are tough individuals.

White: Well, certainly I think they deserve that reputation but probably not in the sense that we're implying as such. It's not an easy job, and in the beginning prior to the time that I was born, the loading of the ship was done with handcarts and brute strength and the knowledge of what a ship would hold. So in that sense they had to be tough. They also had this "show-up" that I spoke about some time back in the packing house, where when a man showed up to work he didn't know whether he was going to get a job or not. It depended on what they had to do. The gang leader or the foreman or whatever he might be in charge of some area of loading a ship or the total ship, depending on the size, called so many people, and the rest went home. When the dock workers union started, that's one area of research I never became too interested in because by the time I had my first assignment with them I had satisfied my curiosity about a lot of unions.

Marcello: Now I assume that in the case of these dock workers unions that there was a tradition of unionism here. In other words, we don't get that agrarian attitude that might be prevalent in other sections of Texas.

White: Very definitely. These were union-oriented people. I said that the situation is not only new to me, but it was different from what you would run into other places.

Marcello: Then you're referring to dock workers along the Atlantic Coast or the Pacific Coast.

White: Yes, or even the eastern Gulf area, I mean, New Orleans and east of there. This particular situation caught me by surprise. There were two locals involved--two local unions. I understood that they were negotiating a contract simultaneously together in the same room with the shippers. When I got down there I found there was two locals. These meetings took place in Galveston. There were two locals. One was black and the other white. How this started originally, I don't know. I had two stories. One was that the blacks felt that they were denied their rights in the operation of the union, in the "show-up," the choice of jobs, this sort of thing. The second story was that they were, at the time it happened, almost equally divided about fifty-fifty black and fifty-fifty white. They wanted to have, again, some control of their own destiny. So both sides agreed and they set up their separate locals, although they had the same contract.

It's a little surprising that you brought that up at this particular time because recently this thing of two contracts, one black and one white, two unions working on the same docks, one black and one white, run head-on into the law against discrimination. Who do you hire? How do you hire? Both sides, both contracts, have seniority clauses. They don't mention color in either contract. Each union, local, has a business agent and their own offices. Whether they now use the same meeting hall or not . . . I believe they do. At the time I was familiar, which is twenty years ago, they didn't. But this, again, as I understood it, was of their own choosing. When I say their own choosing, it was the black.

One of our retired commissioners was appointed by the parties recently as a hearings officer to make a decision which the parties would live up to. Now it's a little different from an arbitration where it would be binding. He'd make a decision, present it to the parties, and they would have the right to accept or not accept. If they did accept they would live up to that decision. Commissioner Willis Ray, who retired about, oh, in the same area of time that I did, was chosen to be that hearings officer and had his hearings and made a decision. It was quite complicated because

each time you run into this thing of discrimination and violation of the law. He finally arrived . . . I can't give you the details of this thing. He finally arrived at the conclusion that the two locals should remain as separate locals with their separate operations financially and otherwise. The only change, if I am right in what I have heard-- and this is not by seeing anything in writing--the only change that he suggested was that they would have to intermingle their seniority list by some type of agreement whereby there would be no possibility of discrimination. It didn't come into the area of a black being discriminated against because he didn't have seniority because they had seniority. They had as much as the white folks did. They had had a local almost as long. In fact, most of their members in each local couldn't remember the time when they weren't separated. But they were local unions. So not having that problem to face of possibly getting all whites or all blacks or a great majority of one or the other laid off when work was short, the thing would work out on a seniority basis. However, I understand that the hours would be . . . what is the name of the organization now that supervises the quota system?

Marcello: I don't know. HEW?

White: Well, it's within HEW. It has not accepted the decision. They want those locals combined again. Now this, at this time, is hearsay . . . pretty direct but hearsay on my part. I can't tell you at the moment whether this comes to me by one of our North Texas State University arbitrators, J. D. Dunn or Henry Sisk or Stevens. I think J. D. Dunn had an arbitration case on the docks somewhere in the past two or three weeks. That's Dr. J. D. Dunn of the business school.

So it's an interesting situation that has developed where, again, it appears that the law is setting aside the wishes of the people which is not hurting anybody at all. Maybe there's facts I don't know. It seems to be one of those areas.

So before I went to San Antonio I had that experience. I later had other experiences up and down the coast--shipbuilding. After getting over to San Antonio--and again I was working out of my own house over there.

Marcello: There was no office as such in San Antonio.

White: No office as such. There had been commissioners there before, stationed there, but no office, no office facilities, no secretary. You had to have a straight line phone even if the telephone company wouldn't give

you one. You had to have some kind of pressure to get a straight line telephone back in those days, too.

Well, anyhow, working in that kind of a situation, I was more often than not pulled out to cover situations arising in New Mexico or deep West Texas-- El Paso primarily--New Orleans, occasionally Oklahoma City. In Albuquerque we had one man. In Oklahoma City we had had one man, but we had one at Tulsa. We had two men and occasionally three in New Orleans covering Louisiana. So the regional offices usually used one or two commissioners outside of their regular assignments to cover emergency situations in these other states or within the state as things arose. There was very often in oil negotiations where it practically left the region barren because the oil negotiations are concentrated primarily in Houston. But Houston, Port Arthur, and Beaumont . . . and all contracts being opened at the same time and meeting on those contracts, you might have to have twelve, thirteen, fourteen contracts in Houston, Port Arthur, Beaumont, and the three men then in Houston just could not cover that kind of a situation. So people came in from all over the region. This sort of thing not only broadens your experience, but it created some difficulties about your home life.

Marcello: How did you find the labor-management situation in San Antonio to be different from what it was in Houston, or didn't you find that much difference?

White: Oh, very much so. In talking about San Antonio there's two things you talk about there. You've got a city in the first place, which was a large city then, but in a way an international city. In other ways it was a very provincial city. Then you had the small outlying towns and scattered towns in the valley in West Texas where there was one plant with a very isolated local union and this sort of thing.

Marcello: Here again, I keep coming back to this, but I think it's important. I would assume that when you get outside the San Antonio area in particular, you run into the agrarian mind with regard to unionism--something that we talked about in previous interviews.

White: Probably more so because in any direction you went from San Antonio you were running into an oil field somehow, somehow. It surprised me how many people had little farms, inherited or purchased in better times or some method . . . maybe it was only five acres.

Marcello: Then we're talking about relatively new oil fields, I would assume.

White: Yes, right. Most of the natural gas around the oil fields was still flared off. You could see them burning

at night. But there developing . . . well, this was in the McCarthy era of the wildcat and so forth when he was the big name. They built the Shamrock Hotel. You remember that McCarthy?

Marcello: Now which McCarthy are you referring to?

White: I can't think of his first name. The picture show, "Giant."

Marcello: Oh, okay, I know who you mean now.

White: That was made about his background. So he was wild-cattling all over the place, and successfully so. So, yes, you ran into this agrarian type plus this oil field thing. Everybody expected that next week they were going to hit a couple of good oil wells on their tract. Most of them had a little income from leases or so forth. I say most of them . . . that wouldn't be right. But those that had land had leases on them.

Marcello: I would assume, also, that when you got outside of San Antonio and working in that particular region that there were no real union movements among those people, let's say, that were involved in agriculture. I'm referring now to the canneries and food processing and things of that nature.

White: Yes, you're right. There was very little activity where . . . well, we have some pecan processing

operations in South Texas and some of the smaller towns in Central West Texas--peanuts--such as Comanche county and so forth. They never heard of a union.

Marcello: I was thinking in terms of a city such as Crystal City where they grow a great deal of spinach, I think.

White: Well, this is a part of that winter garden area that I spoke of. The only union that I know there was the telephone union. Crystal City was a part of the old San Angelo Telephone Company, which was the big portion of what is now General Telephone of the Southwest. At that time it was a big property. But it was still San Angelo Telephone, although that part down there was then Del Rio Winter Garden Telephone Company.

Speaking of San Antonio maybe we can better illustrate . . . this is a political reference, not unionism as such. One of the first assignments I had in San Antonio was with the meat packing companies there.

Marcello: Well, you sure had a little experience in this area, I would assume (chuckle).

White: Well, I had a great deal of experience, but I ran into a brand new thing. I think at that time there were

seven plants in some kind of meat processing which were involved in the negotiations. These were all under contract or coming into being under contract with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters. There was a man by the name of Williams who was the international representative and who was quite an experienced individual. He had worked in that capacity in the northern area, too.

The new thing I spoke of running into, which was completely new to me--and I had to learn quite a lot about it--was the fact that we were talking about goat and sheep killing. Now I had had sheep killing plants up north, but not in the same sense that they were down here, and particularly cabrito. I found out that this was a very skilled operation. You just didn't skin a goat and get his wool all over the meat because then it tastes awful. It was a particular job. Also, their market was concentrated in the South and Southwest Texas primarily, so the market was limited.

The reason I brought Williams into the proposition, I'd heard derogatory remarks about those "damn Mexicans" from the management. So I asked him, "Are these people down here good butchers?" Williams got kind of a dreamy look in his eye, and he said, "They're the best butchers I ever saw in my life." He said, "They even operate on each other." (Chuckle) So you've heard those stories

. . . whether they're true or not, that's what he had reference to.

I can illustrate this. To go back to this political thing . . . during the break-up in the separate meeting where I had the union in one place and the management in another . . . now the management was well-represented by a firm of attorneys there. Each plant . . . there was four major plants. Each one of those four major plants had a lawyer besides the main attorney. They each had their own lawyer; they each had their own manager there. In a couple of them there was another individual where they were large enough to have a personnel department. Well, that personnel department was in there. Then there would be at least one from these three smaller plants which were primarily in the goat killing business. So they had quite a group.

As things do in your separate meetings, and sometimes in your joint sessions, they wander off the subject. So these people in this management group got to talking politics. This was not too long after Beauford Jester had died, and Alan Shivers became governor. I think this is the first reference that started this political conversation. I just sat there and listened. I was new in Texas, non-political. I

had to be. But I had been raised in Kansas. I did have the understanding that normally Texas was a Democratic state and Kansas was a Republican state. After listening quite a little while, one of the attorneys turned around and said, "Well, commissioner, you've heard a lot of political talk. What does it sound like to you?" I said, "Well, I won't ask a question. I'll just make a statement that I would guess in the State of Texas that the majority of you are Democrats." He said, "Well, your guess would be close." I said, "You all sound like Kansas Republicans to me." This was so true. There was no difference in their philosophy. So this illustrates a little, too, the difference in the philosophy of recognition of labor unions which had come about in this Golden Triangle area of Houston, Orange, Port Arthur, Beaumont, and the area removed from the heavy industrialization.

In San Antonio, the city itself was completely different. There were an awful lot of small family businesses that operated. There were also a number of manufacturing plants, sure. There were two ceramic plants. By ceramics I mean that manufactured toilet equipment. But up at the top they were together. Two separate plants, two separate companies, but . . .

Marcello: Same management.

White: Same one man representing management. He understood an awful lot. He was rather elderly at the time I knew him, but he was living with his third wife, and all of them had been Mexican-American women. So he understood very well the workers. He knew most of them in his operations, and they knew him. Now I don't think there was any great love for him because he was a hard taskmaster, but he knew how to handle them and spoke the language.

We had some machine shop operations and engineering firms who did machining. Alamo Steel was a fabricating plant for construction and industry. These were organized but not firmly. I never could quite understand on one street that I took to go to my home in San Antonio . . . there was a plant . . . a job machine shop, a large one, on one side of the street. Across the street--directly across the street--was another plant about the same size in exactly the same business. One was organized. The other was not. No matter how hard the machinists tried, they could not get a contract in the plant across the street. These were not tight contracts like you would run into in Houston or particularly in the northern industrial area--no mention of union security most of the time. The grievance procedure could be changed around by caprice without any real method of enforcing it. So

the surprising thing was that the plant that was unionized did have a better rate, and they had exactly comparable jobs. The union plant had a better rate of pay--I know that--than the plant across the street because I made a personal survey. Why they were never able to organize is one of those mysteries of San Antonio.

This thing of union organization . . . again, there were several brick plants around San Antonio, say, in a circumference of forth miles from the center of town. One of them was Atlas. I think at the time I was there there were three. I can't remember the name of the major one, which was later taken over by another company. It was a little town about twenty miles out of San Antonio--pretty hilly country out there. This was a company town. This was a company operation. They owned the houses; they owned the brick plant; they owned two of the stores in town. It was strictly a company town. Now they were organized by the Brick, Lime, and Cement Workers, and quite an active organization. All three of the major plants were organized, but they were isolated because they were not in San Antonio. They did not have too much contact with other people. I would say that those people around those big plants, within their capabilities, were pretty much shop-oriented, not so much of the agrarian-type mind.

You found in those plants molders and such. It's a different job than a metal molder, but still it required some skill and knowledge. They were black, Mexican, white--didn't seem to be any discrimination except you didn't get a supervisory job if you were Mexican or so forth. You'd get skilled jobs.

We had a strike at one of the plants while I was there. That brings up something else. I'll get back to the brick plant in a minute. We had strikes. I picked up the philosophy early that it's not the commissioner who fails. It's the parties when they have a strike. The more you think about it the more you find that is true. Very seldom can a commissioner influence a situation to the point of having a strike. The only real influence he can do is towards a peaceful settlement where the parties want it. Then he guides it. So if they fail, why, you have a strike, not the commissioner's failure.

Well, anyhow, to get back to this brick plant, we had a strike out there. There was a little violence involved, partly among the workers themselves. Occasionally a truck tire was slashed, or all four tires had the air let out of them or something like that, not where anybody was hurt

too bad. But the funny thing about it is that those things never got in the paper. I think it's a pretty good illustration of what news media can do where things are publicized day after day. Those brick plants down there, as opposed to the strike in San Antonio involving the bus lines . . . the San Antonio Transit Company was in the paper every day. It kept on going and going and going, pictures and so forth. "Commissioner Plans Parley for Friday." "Commissioner Says No Progress." Every day there was something. "Commissioner Has Hope." We always have hope. But down at the brick plant . . . there was no mention in the newspapers. You're much freer to work out a contract under those circumstances than you are when you get complete publicity.

The building trades in this area . . . when I speak of San Antonio, I'm talking about much more than just the city of San Antonio. The building trade had contracts. They were active up to a point.

We had friends there who originally came from the same town in Kansas that we did. They had moved to San Antonio for health reasons. The man, father and family, were stone masons, brick masons, plasterers, in the building trades deal. They had always

been in unions. His health improved in San Antonio, so he was able to again work at his trade. After three or four years he became very much in demand as a fireplace man. He got to the place to where he could say, "Yes, I'll take the job," or "No, I won't take the job." He didn't have to worry about a job. All this time he belonged to the bricklayers union.

I had a pretty tood in to the operations of a bricklayers union. I think this is illustrative of the condition of the building trade unions. I am sure that they all operated pretty much the same way, although it didn't come to the fore in the other unions as it did in the bricklayers union. Now what I'm trying to say is bricklayers, the skilled craftsmen, on construction, and particularly public construction, were primarily white. They were served by both black and Mexican-Americans. The cement mixers, the mortar mixers, they hod carriers and so forth, the labor end of it were of the other race.

Due to something--unrest within the union --the blacks and the Mexican-Americans set up a separate, but connected with, union which was the laborer's end of the bricklayers union. This was

done somewhat with the assistance of the local bricklayers office.

Then a funny thing developed. Within that group of this laborers' union, the Mexican-American became predominant both by numbers and by membership. It got to the place to where enough power was generated by this group that there was darn few blacks getting hired. Even though a bricklayer would say, "I'd rather have John Jones than Jesús Ferrer," why, he got Jesús. So here was a small tempest in a teapot for quite a little while.

That never got too far into the public eye except when a job would stop on the construction site because they didn't have common labor to service the bricklayer. This wasn't a strike. They just stayed home, or they were sick, or they went fishing or whatever excuse. They just didn't show up. Then they'd try to get common labor to service the thing. Then pickets would show up, just briefly. They were a hit and miss sort of thing. It went on for quite a little while.

Finally, the international took over the local. What happened there, I don't know. Whether they still operate on a basis of split personality, I'm not sure.

The elevator constructors union--and there is a separate one--had a separate local serving South Texas. Funny thing, we negotiated that contract in Uvalde where there was no union. We even used the commissioner's court room in Uvalde for meetings. Who set that up, I don't know.

In Austin, the newspapers were organized, but very loosely so. Probably the strongest union, and usually was, was the typographical union, the compositors, with the pressmen running second. There was no other mechanical unions involved in Austin.

I had an interesting situation. There is a different name, but you've heard of Austin stone--I'm sure you have--the limestone with all of the shells. Well, these quarries lie north of San Antonio. When that stone's uncovered you can cut it with a pocketknife. In fact, they sawed it out in great slabs, and these were lifted out and cut into shape. The Lime, Cement, and Gypsum Workers had organized that plant. They had a cutting plant in Austin. They had their own little railroad that ran from the quarry to the cutting plant. Now this is where they did the art work and fancy detail things of stone. They also had a cutting plant for square blocks and brick size and so forth.

It went through a national process of National Labor Relations Board and so forth. We finally got into the situation--I did--by request of the union, I think. We had the prettiest place to meet. They had a picnic table out under a giant live oak tree. We met there for about two or three days. That was quite an experience. It finally came up a rain, and we had to adjourn to a little church next door. The company kept pleading that they couldn't change operations and the fact that they didn't think as a company in this sense they would be operating very long because they were in financial difficulties.

They seemed sincere, so I got permission from them to definitely investigate their statements. They gave me a note, a letter of authority, to go to a bank in San Antonio--two banks--and one in Austin, and contact by phone an insurance company. Well, these four all confirmed the company's statement of loans, their mortgages on the property and so forth, the fact that the company had not paid even interest in the past couple of years. They'd gone as far as they could with loans. If they continued to operate it'd have to be a complete reorganization, probably with new officers, new financial backing, a new operation.

Well, I conveyed this to the union and also laid it out on the table at a joint meeting. Well, the union still didn't believe the company and struck anyhow. So the company closed down all over, and they did reorganize. They were down. They did have to reorganize. They came back with different ownership, different management, but still put out stone after the shutdown was over.

I met at that time a representative of the Lime, Cement, and Gypsum Workers by the name of Youngblood, Buster Youngblood. He lives in Dallas . . . still lives in Dallas . . . a very interesting guy. I was new to Texas. He was new to his job. That was his first assignment as an international representative. He ended up carrying a picket sign all by himself. He hated my guts for a year or two.

Marcello: Why was that?

White: Because this was his first strike as an international representative. It was lost. The company was gone as well as all of his organizational efforts. He laid it all off on me for awhile until he became more experienced. I know this because he told me that.

Then he came down to the office in a couple of years. This was a couple of years after I had transferred to Dallas. He had told me what had gone through his

mind, and he had thought it was all my fault. He had found out that it wasn't, that I was trying to do him a favor and keep him out of trouble with the company that was going broke. We became very good friends personally, and I worked on a lot of situations with him after that. I could always depend from there on that I got the full story, as he knew it, from Buster Youngblood. He was a rugged sort of a guy.

I imagine these brothers in that union would be quite surprised to know what Buster Youngblood did financially with . . . and honestly by living economically and investing in land. He had little pieces of land all over Central Texas. Most of that, as you know, has increased like the devil in price. So Buster is still living the same way he always did, but he's a pretty wealthy man right now.

Marcello: In general, what seemed to be the major areas of contention between labor and management in that San Antonio area? Was it a variety of things, or were there some specific issues that you can pinpoint as being rather familiar issues in a great many of the cases that you came into?

White: One of the underlying issues . . . and this was not only true of San Antonio. It's true in quite a lot

of Texas. It was the inherent dislike by management of union organization.

Marcello: Did you find this to be more vehement in Texas than you did in either Omaha or Des Moines?

White: Yes, with minor exceptions, yes . . . put it all over, this is true with the probable exception of that one area on the Gulf Coast.

Marcello: You might talk a little bit about this because I think it's an important segment of your experiences in Texas.

White: Well, I tried to illustrate it by this one thing in the Rio Grande Valley in the Taromina situation and the reference to the attorney, Scott Toothaker, stating in a joint meeting in a violation--and he knew he was in violation--of the law on a direct question from me, "Do you intend to sign a contract with this union?" He said, "No, commissioner, we do not intend to sign." He knew what he was doing when he said that. He knew he'd go to court.

This was the thing that surprised me with the attorneys or the consultants representing management in Texas, I mean, the people who were Texas-Louisiana area oriented--their knowledge of the law and how far they could go and what they could do. If they got in court and got a court ruling, it would take so much time that the union's strength would dissipate, and

the membership would dissipate due to time and lack of interest. It would keep them tied up in that one situation. It would then be difficult for any other union to come in and reorganize them while there was a case in court or a case in the National Labor Relations Board which was unresolved. They'd carry it clear to the Supreme Court if they could.

Marcello: So in other words, one of their major tactics was simply trying to . . .

White: Delay . . .

Marcello: . . . delay or wait out that . . . I guess the term we use is to "wait out" a union.

White: Well, I think that's part of it. Part of it is also disintegration of the strength of the union.

Marcello: Time will take its toll upon the union.

White: That's right. It's just like somebody said in a speech to a conference to commissioners. He was talking about the commissioners entering into a situation. He said, "You've got to remember that every situation of the kind we know will eventually settle itself. It may be after the strike. It may be while the strike's going on, but if you stay away long enough it will eventually settle itself. But there's also the proposition that if you go in there

you might prevent a strike. You might bring about a quicker settlement, and there are other virtues that arise through tax money and so forth that are lost during a strike." So this same thing applies, that eventually if you can keep a union at bay long enough it will disintegrate and will disappear. It will settle itself.

Marcello: How do you deal with a situation such as this, that is, where you have people who are so vehemently opposed to organized labor or unionization in any way, shape, or form? Does this sort of situation demand special tactics on the part of a mediator?

White: Based on the assumption that a contract between labor and management is a desirable thing as opposed to a strike, I think I can answer that question pretty shortly. If you are up against a situation where management is so set against unionism or somebody taking away part of their authority, you're faced . . . and no war going on. You don't have a real chance to appeal to patriotism. You can't dig up any local pressures because the whole community is not going to become involved, or they become involved too much on one side. You are faced with one thing . . . this is true. This is not favoritism on the part of any commissioner who recognizes it. The commissioner's

only strength to bring those parties together, then, is the strength of the union. If a representative comes into contract negotiations with the other side, management, one of these people who wouldn't have a union on his place . . . he'd rather have a couple of skunks. If he comes into those negotiations with a great percentage of the employees as being already participating members in a union . . . by participating I don't mean just doing things. I mean going to meetings, taking part, accepting responsibility, talking, educating families to the eventualities and the recognition that this thing may come to a point of a work stoppage, preparing for that if it's necessary. If you have that kind of strength--and I'm talking about the commissioner--and you know it, it comes to a point where even the majority of people who don't like unions . . . they do want to make a profit, and they recognize that in their plant, in their operation, whatever kind it might be, whether it's agribusiness, whether it's making fertilizer, whether it's mining, whether it's building aircraft or towers for radio broadcasts, there's one thing that can shut that job down fast. That's the man.

That's the employee. That's the only thing. You can get a breakdown . . . even in a strategic place in a chain of assimilation of various components to make a complete machine, you can get a breakdown. Sure, you're down for awhile, but you can fix that. But you can't fix the man who's out on strike, unless he's willing to be fixed, to come back. So if you've got this kind of strength behind you and you know it, maybe you can convince management that the better way to go--using this profit motive--is to go union.

Then let's talk about restrictive contracts. You try to satisfy some of the objections of management. You have a demand in the union's proposal for straight seniority, a straight promotion based on seniority. You limit that to seniority and ability, or you turn the words around to give more emphasis to the word ability and seniority, or you attempt to break it from a plant-wide seniority to a departmental seniority if the thing might fit that way. You have a lot of areas that you can talk about. It's difficult to talk about it unless you have an individual situation that you can make reference to. The parties that have their strengths on each side and who have learned to respect each other and who have acquired a certain amount of honesty with each other

are nice people to deal with on both sides. We have a few illustrations where troubles have been caused by one side because of their action in nearly every situation in which they were involved, but these are few. I'm not going to mention the particular oil company that I'm referring to because you might have a credit card with them. That would be unduly influencing you (chuckle). We had a situation where a major craft union had an offshoot union, a subsidiary union. The craft union I'm talking about is a building trades union, but this offshoot is an industrial-type union. But the craft union dictates, I mean, literally they dictate the contract proposal, and that representative in that plant trying to negotiate a contract cannot change one word unless he gets an okay from the union's headquarters office. At one time they had five contracts in the State of Texas that I was personally involved in under negotiation. To my knowledge--that was direct knowledge--they never succeeded in doing anything except get a few people out on strike. They never got a contract anyplace because they had things in there that no firm could live up to.

The company . . . assume that this is a situation involving a fabricator of structural steel.

Now when the architect draws the plans and they're approved . . . this is detailed . . . steel that goes into the surrounding of an elevator shaft is detailed as to length, size, so forth, where the holes have to be, because they're going to put rails to run that elevator up and down on. The elevator's built to certain specifications, or it's a standard-sized elevator. In either case they've got to know where these things are going to go. So a question comes up out on the job that the fabricator finishing the fabricated steel has furnished the wrong size, made the holes in the wrong place, put in insufficient holes, whatever the question might be, he wants to reserve the right to have his own people go out and inspect that job because if he doesn't, if they just throw it out, he doesn't know where the steel goes. He doesn't have any control over it. This is one of the things the parent union insists that goes into that shop contract, that they don't send an inspection crew out.

I think in all five operations I was talking about where they never got a contract this was a major hold-up. One company tried awfully hard to reach a contract with them. They finally took a strike on that thing. Wages and everything else had been agreed

to. To that one thing, they said, "No. You're honorable people and all that, but we don't know who's honorable out on that job because we don't know what the job is. We haven't got it yet. They may say we punched two holes in the wrong place, but if we can't go out there and if we did adjust it, we could lose \$10,000 very easily." So these things work sometimes on both sides.

The dock workers went through a great deal of crises in the handling of . . . the way they handled material. Part of it was between where the teamsters dropped the product coming in to be loaded on a ship or the dock worker picked it up who put it on the ship, how the containers were loaded, how much went into a sling, who operated the boom, the crane, to put that stuff up to the hold and drop in the hold. Part of his troubles came about by their own making because of the dictatorial attitude and the control that they had over the total area at these times.

The railroad shops in some places used to have somewhat this same kind of situation where maybe in one division point they had the roundhouse and so forth where they repaired and rebuilt locomotives. Such a tight control would be developed where they couldn't even get an engine out on time because they

started it themselves. The machinists, the workers who did the machining, didn't follow their own rules that a machinist could do anything. A tool and dye-maker was skilled beyond that point where he could operate all machines skillfully. Well, the machinists began to restrict what one man could do. Just like the bricklayers restricted how many bricks a man could lay in a day.

Management very often causes an upset in their own operation on assembly lines where they try to stretch the ability of a guy to keep up with a moving assembly line and just keep crowding more bolts on him for him to put in till it gets to a place where he can't do it, or he can't do it successfully hour after hour. He starts making mistakes.

Totally, we've got a human condition which I guess all of us are trying to get a little of the upper hand, even the best-intentioned people. You've got this human condition, and we all object to the other fellow having the authority to make our condition a little worse.

Marcello: I have a couple of general questions at this point that I want to throw out for your reactions. Awhile ago we talked about the agrarian mentality that one finds in areas such as Texas, areas that do not have

a long tradition of unionism. In my eight years in Texas I've also observed that many people have what I call a Chamber-of-Commerce-type mentality, this desire to have new industry locate in the state. One of the ways that they seem to think that they can attract industry into the state is to publicize the fact that unions aren't strong here. In other words, many people in Texas, I think, see unionism as being detrimental to attracting new industry into the state. Was this one of the things that you perhaps observed, also, in your experiences after you moved here?

White: Well, yes. In our use of this word, agrarian mind, I think we both use it in the same sense. It's not a derogatory term. It's a natural thing. It's an independence involved there also, which is the good old American spirit, the good old immigrant spirit. But it's still the best word I can think of in the use of the agrarian term. That very definitely is here. Of course, that's in the smaller towns of our great agricultural areas of the central United States. The desire for movement of industry to a particular area . . . I don't know whether it's any greater here than it would be in Podunk, Iowa, or Beatrice, Nebraska, or Pierre, South Dakota, if they could dream up the way or getting industry to move.

Certainly this thing of lack of unions and the availability of cheap labor has come out very definitely in the State of Texas. I think there's two areas where this applies. In the beginning it applied in the deep south coastal areas where much of our oil industry in its various forms is concentrated, and all the supplying firms. The other partially comes about by a dissemination central operation. For instance, Haggard Slacks, whose only plant used to be in Dallas. Now they have no operation in Dallas, only an office. They moved the satellite plants to areas in small towns surrounding Dallas. Now at one time while the plant was in Dallas they were organized by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and a strike developed. It went on for quite a little while. Now facetiously, whether the movement of the satellite plants and the dissemination of the operation in Dallas occurred as a result of that strike, I couldn't say definitely as my partner Ted Morrow handled that situation. But it seems like it's more than a coincidence.

Marcello: Another one that comes to mind and which is very similar to what you've just mentioned is the Farah plants, which are very similar to the Haggard plants, of course.

White: They are recent in their published newspaper media history that we know about. Yes, this has happened since I retired from the game. However, I knew something about the garment manufacturing in El Paso, Texas. At one time I serviced El Paso after I moved to the Dallas office. I did a lot of work in El Paso. This was primarily in the garment trades. So Farah went through the same type of thing that Haggar went through in the beginning here in Dallas. However, they did come to a full contract after a lot of court . . . after a lot of difficulty, after national boycott. Now the union . . . not only that union but the total AFL-CIO has instructions to push Farah in their own communities. I don't think there was ever any question but what Farah made a good line of clothing, also colorful--same as Haggar made a good line of slacks in the beginning. In connection with that particular thing, we used to have the Texas Textile Mills. In their heyday they had a big textile mill at McKinney, one at . . . oh, what was the historic little town that was part of the Texas revolution? Gonzales. They had a plant at Gonzales. They had one down south of Fort Worth. I can't think of the name of that town either. There were five of them.

The owner, and total owner at that time, was a very strong individual. Now by virtue of two marriages he had two sets of two sons apiece. One of the sons of the younger marriage was much more interested in sports and so forth, one was much more interested in the cotton exchange setup where this firm had a seat on the cotton exchange. One was interested in the manufacturing end, and one didn't care much for any of it. After the father died, the management evolved to this younger son who was actually more interested in sports. He is the starter and the first owner of the old Dallas Texans, which later became the Cowboys. I think they played about seven games before he ran out of money. This was almost personally financed by that young fellow. The brother who wasn't particularly interested in any of these businesses was killed in an auto wreck. The one who stayed with the cotton exchange, if he's still living, is still with the cotton exchange. The older one of the old gentleman's first marriage became the manager. Now he was a pretty strong individual. He had certain definite beliefs that he backed up by a religious reaction, biblical reference, and so forth. This is not a bad thing, but he insisted on prayer before every

meeting. He'd do the prayer. Not a bad thing, but it seemed to me at times his prayers were a little prejudiced in what he was asking for.

Marcello: (Chuckle)

White: But the textile business . . . the type of textiles that they manufactured, the type of goods, got into the flamboyant colorings, red denim, pale blue denim, pink denim. They weren't equipped to handle it because all their plants were old. These fashion stylings were coming out of El Paso and in California. They began to lose business because they were unable to furnish the necessary colors that customers were being forced to order.

They had a union for quite a long time. Now this was in the textile industry which is . . . this was the Textile Workers. They had a contract. The other big plant was in Waco. The Waco and McKinney plants . . . the one at McKinney . . . I know this one specifically because again of this interest in the historical background of my wanting to know how things developed or came about. It started out again as a little company-owned area, company-owned homes, and so forth. Well, it grew bigger, and the company didn't have houses enough to furnish all the employees with housing and so forth, so deals were made with the

city of McKinney for paving, sewers, and so forth partially paid for by the company--this was in their heyday--but to be maintained by the city of McKinney. There was to be a drop in city taxes if the company didn't fight the city's annexing the company area, which it would have to do in order to maintain the streets and sewers and so forth.

All of these things were before my time, but they were still in the picture when I got over there in negotiations. This older brother had taken over the management of the company. The father had died, and the younger brother had started the football business.

I sat there over a period of three or four years and saw this company disintegrate. First, the product they couldn't handle. They couldn't raise financing enough to get the necessary equipment and so forth. The union sent in their own experts--and they do have real expert engineers in that line of work--not with any charge to the company but to assist with engineering facilities that the company couldn't hire. They didn't have the money. A lot of things were done to try to keep those mills open.

Well, next to the plant in Waco--and I skip to Waco because of the situation--there was a firm which

manufactured primarily church furniture of various kinds. Primarily, I guess, their big manufacture would be in pews. Well, the carpenters organized this furniture company which was right adjacent to the mill--the textile mill. They went on strike and it had a lot of strike which affected the union over at the Waco mill.

About the time that the furniture strike was settled and that plant went back into operation, the contract for the Waco plant came open, and nobody applied to open up the contract and negotiate another one. Well, there were two reasons for that. The employees knew the plant was going under difficult times, to say the least. Money was short. People had been laid off. The strike in the furniture plant next door had a terrific effect in those employees in the textile plant. They didn't want any.

Well, that in turn affected the McKinney plant. So eventually no contract was asked for in McKinney by the textile workers union. Another union tried to organize it later, and it was on the downgrade again. About the time I retired I think another company took over. Whether this would dissipate the assets taking over on the basis of debts owed or what, I don't know. Whether that plant is still making textile goods or not, I can't say.

Marcello: Now by this time had Texas passed its right-to-work law?

White: Oh, yes. Very definitely. At some time very soon after the Taft-Hartley Act, I think in the next Legislature, they passed the so-called right-to-work law.

Marcello: How did this affect your position as a mediator? How did it affect your activities as a mediator?

White: I'd been through a great deal of this in Iowa because the laws were at that time very similar. It would seem that the Legislature in Texas went up there and picked up that law and brought it down here and changed a few words and installed it almost verbatim in the Texas legal setup. I was definitely not unused to working under this kind of a situation. When I came down here I would have been more used to working in a situation where a union shop was prevalent. No particular change--we had more of a fight against organization by unions, I think, particularly outside of the Golden Triangle area on the gulf around Houston. Certain oil line unions, yes, were established all over the place--some weak, some strong. But they had contracts. So in those . . . and I say in all truthfulness whether it was a union shop . . . there probably is still a union shop in violation of the

Texas law, but it works fine so nobody reports it. Those that want a union . . . and we have plants who are enticed into the state by these things of the availability of power, water resources, transportation, both air and land, water, cheap labor. Some of them come down here, and they want a union to deal with, so maybe in some of those plants there's some union shops.

Marcello: Why would they want a union to deal with?

White: They don't have to talk to Ron Marcello individually and settle his grievances individually. They don't have to talk to Walter White individually and settle his gripes. They don't have 101 different ideas about the rules. They want to deal with one man or one committee speaking for a whole group.

Marcello: How busy were you at this time as compared to your workload back in Iowa? Now you'd been in Houston, like you mentioned, around seven or eight months, and then you remained in San Antonio. How did your workload compare with what it had been back in Iowa?

White: If you used figures as to the numbers of cases, that is, if you had one situation a month or you had five . . . to compare it that way with the area outside the Houston area, your caseload would be lower. But you can't use that only. For a man who is headquartered

in San Antonio, which is not yet even highly industrialized area, it's a combination of a lot of things. If you were working out of San Antonio, you covered West Texas, South Texas, Rio Grande Valley, the hill country where you'd occasionally get an assignment, little aircraft firm over there in the hills, a few suppliers, oil producing companies, oil drilling companies in West Texas. Now these were also handled out of the Dallas office at the time I was in San Antonio. But what I'm driving at is, I could get up at seven o'clock in the morning and be in Beaumont for a ten o'clock meeting by driving an automobile. I could get up in San Antonio, and it'd take me a whole day driving like the devil to drive to Midland even though the roads were good. Time and distance comes into the picture.

Then if you're working an area like a heavily industrialized area in Cedar Rapids or Waterloo, Iowa, and your meeting runs out unexpectedly due to certain circumstances unforeseen, say, at noon . . . maybe you started at nine o'clock, and at noon circumstances come up that you can't continue there. The parties have some reason or something. Almost invariably you can save time and money by setting up another meeting at that same town because you've got one waiting. Or

you can drive fifty or sixty miles to another manufacturing town and keep right on working.

If you worked Midland, Lubbock, or Odessa, when you got out there you'd better stay out there and finish a job because the boss would start raising Cain about all the money you'd spent in travel running back and forth.

Then on top of that, while I was in San Antonio and also in Dallas . . . I said before I covered a lot of situations primarily in the garment trades in El Paso. Well, that's a long, long way from Dallas. I also worked in New Mexico, and generally your meetings in New Mexico were in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Building trades, for instance . . . all that I knew had a statewide jurisdiction. It's not a heavily populated state. But at that time . . . in my service we were servicing a lot of heavy industry construction for government projects--White Sands, Sandia Air Force Base, Los Alamos, another installation in Santa Fe. Nearly all of these meetings were in Albuquerque. Well, very often you almost had to have an automobile, so driving out there was an awful long way to go even with the good roads that we had. You'd have to drive like the devil to make it in a day. So then again you'd better stay there.

This same thing occurred . . . there was quite a lot of organization, surprisingly so, in New Mexico. The major chain operating then at that time, Safeway, was organized by the retail clerks all over New Mexico wherever they had a store. These were negotiated in Albuquerque. With some of those installations . . . take an installation there at White Sands. You might be negotiating with a contractor, but you'd have to make a trip over to see the Army or the Air Corps commander who happened to be in charge for the government of contract operations on the White Sands Proving Grounds. The same thing . . . you might have to go up to Los Alamos unless you wanted to take the chance of obligating yourself and ask one of the management or one of the labor people to take you up there. Or you went through all of the red tape to get a government car, or you drove your own car, were free to move when you had to.

So numbers alone doesn't cover the situation. A person working in St. Louis, a heavily industrialized metropolitan area covering both sides of the river, could handle more cases individually in a week than some commissioners would handle working West Texas in a month.

Marcello: So in other words, what you're saying in effect is you have to look at this . . . that is, you have to look at the caseload in terms of time. In Texas you may have been handling fewer cases but spending just as much time on those fewer cases, or perhaps even more time.

White: More time an awful lot of the time because, again, with so many of them you had this educational process that you had to go through. You couldn't just call up and say, "I'm Walter White of the Federal Mediation Service. I understand you people are almost deadlocked in your contract negotiations," or words to that effect. "I'd like to set up a meeting with you on such-and-such a date," and maybe set it up for nine o'clock the next morning and be fifteen minutes from the office in which you made the telephone call. You had to set it up when you could get people from the home office, maybe out of Chicago, into Lubbock. You had to get to Lubbock. You had to get the union representative maybe out of Houston or off the West Coast. So you had a great deal of time spent in just conversation trying to get everything set up, and particularly where you had an active firm of labor attorneys on one side or the other because they're occupied. So it becomes a geopolitical affair to even set up a meeting in some of these places.

I had one situation which was unusual. There was a big firm, but it's a small firm, which is a contradiction. If the man's still living they're still headquartered in York, Nebraska. That's a little town about the size of Krum, Texas, near Denton. The only job they do is paint electric power plants. These could be steam or some other kind of generation, but they were electric power plants. That's their only job.

Well, West Texas Utilities built a new plant sitting out on the plains up there in the panhandle. A controversy arose about the painters' contract. Now I won't go into details except that the contract that the local painting contractors had signed with the union was not in anticipation that any construction of this kind would ever come under their jurisdiction.

So they just signed a contract because it wouldn't affect them. But it provided that on the ground was the base for starting to figure pay. Using brush on wood was the second area. Any variation of that caused an increase in pay. If you got ten feet off the ground, you got so much more. If you were painting steel with a brush, you got so much more. If you were using a gun, you got so much more. If you had to sit in a boatswain's chair, this is so much more. Well, it ended up that if

you got up about seven stories a painter would be making more money than the iron worker who was standing up there hoping he had a couple of sky hooks to hang on. He's on the top rail.

Well, these sort of contracts exist in the painting industry, but this little firm or big firm, whatever it is, does most of the electric power generating plant painting in the United States. So they have an overall contract whereby certain parts of this increase up above and so forth are waved because in building the present generation of power plants, he may be forty feet off the ground, but he's standing on a concrete floor. He's not going to fall off because this guardrail was put up there, and an adequate guardrail, before he ever gets on the job. You and I would have an awful time just climbing over it.

So we got into that, and here we were with no place to meet, way out in the country, a union which had no information about this type of side contract that the international union had signed with this one particular paint company and didn't believe it even though he had the copies. I got into the situation. I couldn't change those local people's minds either. The contractor even agreed to a certain thing which

would increase their pay over and above what he was used to paying. They still wouldn't change their minds. A contract was a contract, and they had jurisdiction. It was in their territory. Well, it took me about five hours of telephoning from a telephone booth to run down the international representative of the Painting and Decorating Union to get somebody to come in there who spoke for the union, I mean, just that much time alone just spent on the telephone trying to get hold of a man. Eventually, he got in in the middle of the night on a plane. It took about two hours the next day to work the thing out. Here was all of this fussing and fuming and time and distance involved. I don't think I'd get any more credit than that in the Washington office computer. This was one case.

Marcello: So, again, in the case of Texas distance and the educational process in many ways determined how long you would be on a particular case and how many cases you could handle. Okay, why don't we stop here, and I think we can begin the next interview, then, with your experiences in the Dallas office. That can more or less . . . well, we can start at that point the next time.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: May 20, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 20, 1975, in Denton, Texas. This is the ninth in a series of interviews with Mr. White concerning his experiences as a federal conciliator and mediator.

Now Mr. White, the last time we had talked, we had been to the point where we were just about finished with your tenure as a commissioner working out of San Antonio. Before we go on and talk about your experiences in Dallas and your transfer to Dallas, let's just clean up some of the loose ends that we still have from your stay in San Antonio. In our pre-interview conference you talked briefly about a . . . you mentioned a strike involving the bus company in San Antonio that you think would be an important incident to get into the record, so why don't we start by your talking about that San Antonio bus strike.

Mr. White: Well, I do think that this is somewhat of a landmark situation in the South Texas area particularly. For

one reason, there had been a union contract with the San Antonio Transit Company for a great number of years. During the period of the last of that union, that local union there, there had been two presidents. One was president of the union for at least thirty-five years and was a highly respected and intelligent individual. For South Texas they didn't have a bad contract, actually, in the comparison area with other southern city transit lines.

Marcello: You say "for South Texas." Are you implying that a great many of the contracts in South Texas were not very good ones?

White: Well, if I did I didn't mean that as far as South Texas is concerned. There was only one other contract in South Texas that I know of. It would have been Corpus Christi.

Marcello: Now when you say one other contract, you're referring to contracts with transit companies.

White: In comparison I'm talking about the South actually, which includes Mississippi, Louisiana outside of New Orleans, whatever it was--Mississippi, Georgia, Atlanta, and places like that. The San Antonio contract was as good or better . . . at that time. There hadn't been a strike in San Antonio in forty-two years. There had

never been a federal mediator on that property. I use that term . . . the way we use it, you're on somebody's property even though you might be forty miles away, if you were in this situation.

I think one other thing that probably would be of interest to people in the future if they should happen to read this is the fact that the president of the local union there at the time I was involved was J. W. Connally. He is the cousin--he's still living--of our former governor, John Connally. I believe he told me that his father had seven brothers. There were eight boys in the family. One of the brothers is the father of John Connally, the governor. One of the older boys was this J. W. Connally's father. Now he had become president of the union, and I think rightfully so. He was intelligent, a hard worker, good reputation, nice family, but he was without experience in the strife of a strike situation.

Marcello: What was it that precipitated the strike situation here with the San Antonio Bus Company.

White: Well, the war was over, and I'm sure that during the period of the war that wages didn't rise as fast as the cost of living. Some benefits that had been acquired by other streetcar or city transit line unions had not been given in San Antonio.

There was also an outside situation which had a bearing, I think, on the feeling of the people. In the larger cities, nearly all the larger cities, the passenger count was going down in the city transit lines. Well, this wasn't true in San Antonio. It held steady. It had one of the highest percentages of occupancy in their seats of anyplace in the United States. The union felt that this company could afford to bring them up to what they considered standard benefits.

Well, the manager of the company was a man by the name of Larry Winegerter. Larry was a fine person, and he was not green to negotiations or the union relationships. He was a very good manager. Now this company was almost entirely owned by one man, a Dallas resident, but Winegerter seldom had to confer with that owner. He called the shots. He wasn't easy, so they hit a deadlock.

Unfortunately, the strike occurred during the period of time I was transferring my family from Houston to San Antonio, and we hadn't yet found a place to live. I had them stashed in a motel that was costing me like the devil by the day--three little boys. So these things always bring about a lot of publicity--two newspapers in competition in San Antonio.

Marcello: You mean any possible strike involving public services always tends to generate a lot of publicity?

White: Right. Not only that, but it affected an awful lot of people because there were an awful lot of riders. When you take the buses off the street, there was no method of transportation for those people to get to their jobs. Most of the riders at certain hours were industrial workers of some type. A little bit later the household employees were moving from the south side of San Antonio to the more affluent section, the north side. This reversed itself in the evening. So generally this particular strike affected nearly everybody in San Antonio in some way or other. A man couldn't get a ride to his job, but likewise the employer was affected because he didn't have a man on the job, whether it be a household employee or factory worker. So we had a lot of publicity.

The city council got into this situation. This resolved itself by agreement between me and them that one representative could do all that the city could do. So they asked the mayor to sit in and . . . the mayor at that time was Jack White, who was behind the plans for the development of the San Antonio River and the River Theater and the Old

San Antonio situation. With the architect he was actually a participant in the drawing of the plans. I bring him in for one reason. He was quite a guy. He started out his working life as a bell hop in the old Gunter Hotel. As far as I know it's still in operation.

The San Antonio Transit Company or the owner of that company in Dallas built what was then and for a long time the tallest building in San Antonio. It was at one time called the Smith Towers. This was right across the street from the Plaza Hotel. The Plaza was a nice hotel. I stayed there quite often before I came to San Antonio to live. There was a tunnel connecting the hotel and the Smith Towers. Well, in the Smith Towers, on the top floor, was General MacArthur's office. Now he wasn't there then. This was his office during the time he was commandant at Fort Sam Houston. He had this office uptown which was furnished to him by the owners of the Smith Towers. It was preserved just the way it was the last day he was in it. It had a big conference room, nice private office, reception room, and so forth. This was where we met on our meetings. It was a very comfortable situation that way.

But the strike developed--very unified strike as far as the union was concerned. They all went

out. This included the shops, the mechanics, the drivers, station attendants. Everybody that was eligible for membership in the union was out. Now there were many Spanish-American drivers and mechanics. This would be a guess at this time, there were probably a greater majority of Spanish-American drivers and mechanics than white, Caucasian. But they were well-unified in this particular strike, and it went on for quite a little while. At this time in my life, I can't remember how long.

I had previously met an international vice-president of the Amalgamated Bus Drivers by the name of Art Steele. He came from Oklahoma. I had never met him in the North. We had other vice-presidents up there. I had met him first in Beaumont and was highly impressed with his abilities. But the union, for some reason, did not want an international representative on the property, but I finally persuaded them to call Art Steele. They needed help. I needed help although they didn't know that's the reason I was calling.

Marcello: In what way did you need help, and in what way did the union need help?

White: Well, the union needed help because of their inexperience. They had a strike going on that they didn't

know how to end. I needed help because they were inexperienced, and I had not become completely acceptable. I couldn't get to them. I felt that I was not getting the full story all the time. So I was able to sell them. They did call. They did request Art Steele, and he came into the picture.

Marcello: Incidentally, do you ever have anybody else come in and sit in on the negotiations? You mentioned Jack White, the mayor of San Antonio. Could he come in to sessions if he wanted?

White: No, I could have barred him from my sessions. But as the executive officer of the city affected by a strike, he could have called his own sessions, which would have been much worse towards getting a strike settlement. Then the whole city council would want to get in and have their say. You'd have a battle going back and forth on city councilmen's striving for publicity and this sort of thing. It has happened. This is one reason I say Jack White was a highly intelligent individual. I met with him and the council and persuaded them that the better thing to do was one representative so that we could work together and not at cross-purposes.

Marcello: In other words, for the most part, then, White and the city officials in San Antonio stayed out of the negotiations.

White: Mostly, yes. When we met with Jack White in his capacity as mayor, it was usually in his own private home. He had bought an old, old, old stone house on the road out towards Fort Sam Houston, rebuilt it, and he had a beautiful place out there.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that after the negotiations had started that you would have used your powers as a commissioner to have barred those city officials from sitting in. Are these sessions generally considered executive sessions? By what authority can you bar people?

White: Well, we spoke of this a little bit in some previous session. This is government business only in the fact that a mediator is meeting with people, the go-between. He happens to be a government employee. That's one-third of the side. The other two sides are both private. This is their private business, although it affects the public. This is their private business. However, you get into a situation where . . . I'll back up a little bit. You asked by what authority. Generally, it was not a matter of authority or throwing your weight around, except probably occasionally during the war period. It was a

matter of persuasion. Somebody would want to sit in, and you would explain to them why, and they could usually understand and go away. We had young, rambunctious reporters from the newspapers who couldn't understand why they couldn't sit in and report what they saw. Most of the time you'd explain to them, "This is private business." You offered to cooperate with what you could tell them after sessions were over. I let them take a picture that satisfied their necessity for being there, and they would let you go ahead with the session without any more trouble.

The mayor and the council in the case of city transit lines or utilities of that kind, they're in a little different position than the normal situation of the union vs. a corporation or private company because you're affecting the public, and they are the representatives of the public in that city. So you work out a reasonable solution so that they can participate, but they don't with their inexperience of these things take over. They don't threaten. They don't fly off the handle and threaten to establish a jitney system real quick or call the other bus companies to operate on the streets in place of the franchise they have with the transit company which

is already serving, which would get them in legal trouble. There's a lot of complications can arise, and San Antonio was a place where a lot of it could have arisen because of the fact that so many people were affected. However, thank God, we had this knowledgeable, intelligent mayor.

Well, after the international came into the picture, we were able to arrange separate meetings. When I say separate, he was staying in the same hotel I was. The transit company's office was in the Smith Towers that you can get to going through a tunnel. I could call Art Steele to come to my room, call Larry Winegerter, who was manager of the company, "Why don't you slip through the tunnel and come over here and talk about what we can do to settle this thing." I'd get those two individuals, and we might arrive at someplace where the company would say, "Okay, we'll give here, but over there we can't," and give the reasons much more freely than they would talking to a committee of twelve or thirteen individuals who worked for them. They'll give you things which are within the purvey of the company's operation and financial structure that they don't want exposed to the public. This thing began to happen. Then maybe a movement was made and

Steele could say, "Well, of course, I have to sell a bill of goods to the committee and then to the rank-and-file of the membership, so let me go feel their pulse. Let me go have a talk with the union. I'll be back in a couple of hours or call you." So we had conversations going on all the time but not always together, and not always did the company people know where their manager was. Not always did the union committee know where their international vice-president was. Now it got around to the place where J. W. Connally began . . . as I say, he was intelligent, respectable, and in this new experience he's trying to be tough. He came around to the place where we brought him into the picture in these separate meetings because neither Steele nor I had the ability or the connection to feel the pulse of the total people.

Well, things went on there till we were still quite a ways from an agreement contract-wise, but you could see the beginnings of breaking on the part of some union people. The company, through all of this publicity that was going on, had easy access to getting their statements printed. Unless a contract was arrived at such-and-such a time on such-and-such a day they would begin hiring new people at eight o'clock at such an address the next

day after the breakdown of negotiations. The thing carried on and this deadlock still continued, although we had moved quite a ways.

The company did set up this hiring office, and they did begin hiring people. The main point that the company was trying to make . . . it might have been that some of the union representatives knew something about what was behind this plan, too. They set up this office in a storefront which had a window opening right on the street. Their personnel people were sitting behind that with an interviewer at the window and other interviewers back in the office space. They did that intentionally so that the strikers could see how many people were applying for jobs because the company already had quite a list. I made it up and around to go down and take a look myself around the corner. There was quite a long line. I set up another meeting for that afternoon, and the attitude changed. I guess in about ten more hours of negotiations we had a contract.

Marcello: How much pressure is there upon a mediator in a case like this where the public interest is involved? Is there more pressure here comparatively speaking than there is in a case where the public is not directly involved?

White: Oh, very definitely so. You take this case of the transit company in San Antonio which was serving the public. In that kind of a city that San Antonio is, it served more people, both riders and employers and just merely pleasure-seekers, than probably any other city outside of New York City or Chicago. So here was a great public interest, but this is in one city. If I may I'd like to illustrate a situation that arose back in Carlsbad, New Mexico. This is where I started in the union business.

Marcello: Did this case take place while you were in San Antonio, that is, this case in Carlsbad, New Mexico?

White: Yes, right at the end of my living there. I believe this was in 1952. I can't remember the time of year it was. But I had been in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with the Sandia Company. It was named after the Sandia Mountains out there--Sandia Air Force Base, Sandia Army Base. I'd been out there . . . stuck there through Thanksgiving for a period of time, longer than I wanted to be away from the family. But you didn't leave those kind of things.

Marcello: Why was that?

White: This was a very secret operation. I think it can be said now that there was one area . . . they had their physical property set up and numbered. I say physical

properties. This meant both land and buildings that might be on that land. The Army was the contract enforcer for what was made with atomic energy after it left the laboratory. There was one district on the Sandia base that we did not talk about. It was occasionally referred to by number. That number was where the first atomic bomb was built. That's where they were put together. That's the reason we didn't leave those things. We didn't talk about them.

Well, anyhow, this public pressure that can be brought on a commissioner, or is brought on a commissioner, I think, can be pretty well illustrated in this Carlsbad situation. Now normally you think of potash in rather an abstract manner. You just don't think much about it. But it was growing in need due to the necessity for fertilizing worn-out southern cotton beds, southern tobacco fields, the need for land and so forth. This is where it was being used when I was with the union out there. I know this because I did the research to find out where they sold the darn stuff. Potash constantly grew in demand. Now there are other uses for potash. They make a caustic potash which is in a way like caustic soda. It'll burn

the pants off of you if you happen to spill it on you. A little of it is used in the manufacture of munitions, but not a great deal. But it's still an important item in the manufacture of certain types of powders. So the greatest need was agricultural in usage. We had an expanding economy, an expanding foreign trade in agricultural products, recuperation and assistance to our allies during the war, which was still being fed into the European community.

So when things hit bottom in their contract negotiations, by that time there were six mines in Carlsbad. When I worked there there was first two, and a third one just started in operation when I left. Now there were six and another one sinking the shaft, making seven. It would have been when that was finished. These are in an area east of Carlsbad, probably twenty-three miles to the closest mine and maybe thirty-five to the farthest.

The commissioner who had been on the job for some reason had got in a bad condition with both union and management, so both sides called for him to be removed and another commissioner sent in. I got the assignment. I happened to be in Dallas. I was still living in San Antonio. I was in Dallas so I was able to verbally protest to the regional

director that I don't think I should be sent back in there. I was a former officer of that local union.

Marcello: Was anybody back there that you still knew?

White: Oh, some individuals, yes. But I couldn't put my finger on any particular individual who might be an officer or a committeeman or anything of that kind.

Marcello: You mean at that particular time you couldn't identify any union officials that you had formerly been associated with?

White: No. The only name I had was the president of the local at that who was a young fellow by the name of Smothermon from Lubbock originally. He'd had a couple of years at Texas Tech. Family finances and so forth had forced him to quit school. Well, anyhow, I couldn't put my finger on any individual and say, "This is my friend and this is my enemy," or anything of that kind. But I was sure that there were people around who would identify me, and the fact that my name was on the second and the third contract that was negotiated with the original combined. There'd be somebody sitting around that conference table that'd put things together. Although I'd acquired a lot of gray hair by this time. Well,

anyhow, I protested to the regional director. He looked at me and grinned, and he said, "You've got the assignment. Go."

Marcello: Now this was still Ted Morrow?

White: This was still Ted Morrow. I got there three days prior to the strike deadline.

Marcello: What seemed to be the major grievances involved?

White: The grievances were a few real and mostly imaginary. But they had a contract in effect. It had a re-opening clause very specifically set forth for wages only. So the only thing legally that they could argue about was money, wages--the wage per hour. Not even fringe benefits were in this opening clause. It was wages. By the time I got there it was all over the place.

Now I think I expressed in the beginning there was an awful lot of good people working in those mines, these steady Finns who could be stubborn but they were steady. There were an awful lot of people, so-called Okies, who had got out there by virtue of the dust bowl or depression. This sort of thing--same thing from West Texas. Now these people were not miners in the true sense of being an experienced miner. They were trained there, a majority of them, outside of these Finns.

I got there three days before the strike occurred. Now they were meeting in the Knights of Columbus Hall. This is about, oh, three or four blocks off of the main street in Carlsbad. They'd had rather regular meetings every day.

The companies had called in a firm of attorneys. One, the head of that firm, had been legal advisor or on a legal staff of Harold Ickes. I'm trying to think of his name. Well, I'll think of it pretty soon. Anyhow, he was an experienced management representative in this field of labor relations, but he was nasty. He'd say things to insult you. Now he was also familiar with government, so he never said those things to me, but he would to the union committeemen and so forth.

After a couple of days of meeting I had recognized one man on the committee, but for some reason or another he never recognized me. He was a good friend while I was there. We had gone on camping trips together and so forth. I'd notice him looking at me a lot, but he never came out with it. On this third day . . . and the strike was to occur at midnight that night. To begin the meeting . . . I'd also noticed two men on the management side who kept looking at me.

So I thought I had better be in a safe position--I talked to the regional director whether I should do this or not--and tell them who I was, my reason for being there, refer them to the fact that I was an officer of that local at one time and had been in negotiations of a couple of contracts and so forth. So to start the meeting off I expressed myself somewhat that way, that I noticed a couple of management men, Mr. So-and-so and Mr. So-and-so. They would look at me every once in awhile with kind of a query in their eyes. One man on the committee down here, the union committee, also was kind of wondering. I said, "Outside of being on the payroll, I was known around here, due to the fact that some of my family lived here, as Vic White when I worked for the Potash Company of America." I said, "When I left here I was financial secretary of Local 415. You will find my name on two contracts, 1935 and '36," whatever the dates were. One old boy said, "We'll just find out." He reached down in his briefcase and pulled out a copy of all the contracts they'd ever had there. Sure enough, there it was. So it was a funny thing.

It had become evident without any conversation that there was something behind this situation as it existed other than an argument about wages.

Marcello: Was there ever any objection to the fact that you did have this past association with the local union?

White: Never anything open. In fact, right at that meeting, after they had pulled the contracts out and there was my signature on two of them, the man that was then resident manager of the U. S. Potash Company said, "Well, I've been wondering and wondering two things. First, I thought I'd seen you someplace. You and your sister and Bob Clark, who was an electrical engineer for the company, had dinner at my house." He said, "I think we were on a civic committee together or something." I said, "No, I wasn't on that committee. I didn't feel I had been in Carlsbad long enough. I was asked to be." He said, "Anyhow, I knew I had seen you before." Well, then the company I had worked for . . . the fellow that was then resident manager had been an engineer in the . . . not in the electrical sense or mechanical sense, but a civil-type engineer. (Chuckle) He said, "I knew it. I've seen you." He said, "I could just see you walking across those damn plant grounds out there, but I couldn't place it."

So the fellow on the committee never said a word. This was another thing that made me wonder then what was back of this demand for wages, these other things that the company was refusing to talk about.

So this worked out pretty well. The company said, "Well, we're glad you're here. We don't have to tell you about the potash mine. We don't have to tell you about the refineries. You know how they operate. These things are not all new to you. We're glad you're here."

The union never expressed itself. They did . . . a feeling developed. They did turn against me. They thought I knew more about their communism than I did.

Marcello: So were Communists infiltrating . . . or who had infiltrated this union?

White: It had been infiltrated. There was a fellow who was an American citizen, but he was being looked for in the United States primarily for questioning at the time. He had been in an accident and had a patch across his eye--black patch, you know. Quite an attractive-looking gentleman. He made it down to Carlsbad from Canada where he was trying to keep away from this questioning by the FBI or whatever agency was looking for him. He was a vice-president and an alleged Communist in the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. I will always be convinced that they had a cell . . . not all the workers were interested, of course. Most of them, if they had known all of these things, would not have gone along with it. But they

had a cell of communistic activity in that town, and it was pretty damn tight.

Marcello: Where did you get this information?

White: Well, I said this one fellow on the committee was a good friend when I worked there. We had gone camping together and so forth. Well, when we got out of this particular meeting . . . the strike was to occur at midnight, so I knew that he would be up. I called him at home and asked him if I could meet him someplace. He said, "Well, I'll come down. I've got to come down to the hall anyway. I'll come down and come in the back door of the Crawford Hotel. What room are you in?"

We had quite a conversation. Now this boy was what he himself called a "Jackal Mormon." Well, he wasn't a boy any longer. He used the word, "Jackal Mormon" as a person of a Mormon family and religious descent who didn't practice his religion very often as such. But he had that background and training. He couldn't have been made into a Communist, so he couldn't be in the confidence of this inner-circle of the group. He told me quite a few of those things. This is before the strike occurred.

Well, the strike went on. They closed those mines down. They closed them down. New Mexico and I guess the other mining states, although I never ran

into this situation as such . . . New Mexico had a law that actually all you had to have to shut down a mine was control of the hoistment because you had to be a certified hoisting engineer in order to operate these lifts that took ore out of the mine, took machinery down the man lift, that took the men in and out. You had to be certified by the state. They were pretty tough on us because they had had mine accidents. All you needed really to shut a place down was to have those men. If they couldn't get the men down the shaft, they couldn't get the work done.

Marcello: About how many men were involved in the strike?

White: Oh, in all the mines there was probably . . . I think the exact figure I had at the time was 620. That would make . . . no, there was more than that. We had six mines. Some of them were bigger than others. There must have been totally about 1,000 involved--directly involved.

Now during my absence, between my first being in Carlsbad and the time I went back there as a federal mediator, old Local 415 had prospered. Those additional mines had gone down. They had brought into membership almost a total work force of the mine with the exception of the craft unions which still had contracts. They had an Army base outside of Carlsbad. When the war was over they

bought one of those surplus buildings, moved it into a residential section of town, and set up a real nice hall, well-equipped. It would probably hold three or four hundred people . . . well-equipped kitchen. They had a newspaper, which I had been instrumental in starting, but it was just a scab sheet at the time we used it. It had become quite a little newspaper. They had a cooperative grocery store which also had a line of over-the-counter drugs and this sort of thing. You could buy things much cheaper there if you were a member of the union. I could go in there and buy things, but I got charged the normal price. But if I laid my union card down on the counter, immediately there was a 20 per cent reduction or something of this kind.

Well, the funny thing about it also was that the president of the union now received a salary--was a full-time employee. He'd taken over the . . . well, they'd changed the constitution so that he was then the executive officer, not the financial secretary. He was also the editor of the paper. He was also the manager of the cooperative store. He had a pretty darn good income.

Well, anyhow, this thing got a little rugged. I had acquired a habit a long time before that when I stayed in a hotel . . . when I left my room . . .

because occasionally some stupid guy would come sneaking into your room thinking that you had something that he could use in the way of . . . I mean . . .

Marcello: A document or something of this nature?

White: Yes, that might be of value to one side or the other. I'd gotten in the habit of leaving a little . . . oh, maybe a matchstick sticking on top of the door, a light in the bathroom with the door just barely cracked, or things of that nature. So I was doing this in Carlsbad. Well, I never had any invasion of that kind, but they began calling me at night, all night long.

Marcello: What was the purpose of doing this?

White: As I say, they had turned against me, thinking I knew more about the background than I actually did because I'd once been connected with the union.

Marcello: And they were trying to get you completely out of the situation.

White: They were trying to get me out or confused or go away or something.

Marcello: Now when they called did they say anything, or was it simply a matter of hanging up as soon as you answered the phone or what?

White: Well, it could maybe be compared to a lot of these vulgar calls people get nowadays with the exception that they named me by name. I was called a lot of

beautiful names over the telephone (chuckle). I thought that was quite an honor that they thought enough of my being there and my ability to be there to take that means and try to run me off.

Well, anyhow, this went on. I had a sister in Carlsbad. Her husband had died. I got to the place where I'd drive up and park in my usual place at this old Crawford Hotel and go in the front door, go up to the room, clean up, go down the back stairs and out the back door and walk over to my sister's home and stay there.

Marcello: Did they ever try to do any damage to your car or anything of this nature?

White: Nobody ever bothered my car. It was sitting in a pretty well-lighted parking area behind the hotel. Nobody ever tried to bother my car.

Marcello: Were there ever any threats in these telephone calls?

White: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What sort of threats?

White: Well, "You better get out of town. You're not doing any good here." "We'll call a congressman and have you removed." Oh, they weren't violent threats. They were threats against my job security more than anything else. Surprisingly, they might have convinced some congressman that I ought to be investigated. I don't know.

Marcello: Did any member of the Congress enter this situation?

White: Well, this is why I brought this thing into the picture again--this thing of public pressures with that background of the need for fertilizer and so forth, primarily. This was all over the country. After the strike had been on for a period of time, well, the outcry for fertilizers reached foreign shores. Previous to this discovery of potash in this Permian Basin, our major suppliers of potash had been Russia and France. They'd had these mines going a long time. We did have some evaporative surface mining in California which produced potash as one of the products. Both France and Russia rushed into the situation of supplying potash with subsidized ships and subsidized mines. They were laying potash down on both the West and the East Coasts on the docks cheaper than you could take it out of the ground in Carlsbad. So it was a serious threat.

I was there quite a little while, and I did want to come home and see my family. I was getting tired of sending my shirts to the laundry and doing my own underwear in the sink, and I was in contact with the regional director every day and in contact directly with Washington quite often because of this thing of . . . and part of this surely came from the

companies that the French and Russian importation of potash with their low prices could eventually shut those mines down. A lot of that information was fed in by these potash companies involved. Agricultural experts and so forth were involved. Well, all of this concentrated on going up to Washington. Each time I'd ask the regional director, "I'd like to go home over the weekend." "No, too much pressure, too many congressmen calling every day. You know it. Stay there."

Well, I had an idea flitting around in my mind that in this particular case, more than any I had ever seen before, that even though the union didn't like me they somehow realized--whether they knew definitely or realized--that I was in a position where I had to keep the parties together as long as I could think of something to talk about in an attempt to bring that situation to a peaceful settlement. I made trips down to the union hall. I saw a reporter beat up in a crowd down there. In fact, I was able to assist him a little bit by jumping in and pulling him out of that crowd--a little local reporter. We had people in there from Associated Press and others of the wire services because of all of this conversation, pressures, so forth coming into Washington. So I had had this idea floating around

in my mind, and it finally became clear that they were using me . . . not just me as an individual. They're using the Mediation Service, the fact that we were here and meeting every day, to keep these people out on strike. And the people don't want necessarily to stay out on strike. It's gone too long. The companies were beginning to open up and hire. I'll tell you a little story about this part of it in a minute.

I conceived this idea that they were using me, definitely using me, taking advantage of the fact that I was calling meetings every day. So I talked to Ted Morrow, the regional director, and explained my idea. I said, "Ted, they just using me. Is there any way that you can call a regional conference and send me a telegram, which I can leave lying around, that I must be in Dallas for the regional conference at such-and-such a time and for such a period of time? I can not only leave that laying around, but I can announce to the newspapers and the radio stations who carry this thing every day that the federal mediator is leaving town. I said, "I think before I get back they'll have a settlement because the union is ready to crack. Legal pressure is being brought on them. They're in a illegal strike situation."

So Ted went along with it. He took the bull by the horns and . . . I don't think he consulted Washington on this one. He just sent me a telegram to come in and what for. Well, I notified the newspaper and the radio station, the company, the union, and I left. Sure enough, before I got back out there four days later, they had an agreement. The parties were ready to return to work.

There was violence on the picket lines. This old friend of mine was pulled into court, and I don't think there was anything evil in his mind. The companies took pictures of the picket lines. They had a picture of him standing there cleaning his fingernails with a hunting knife on the picket line with quite a group out in front. He was indicted later for threatening with a deadly weapon.

There's always a little fun mixed into a situation. Now to make it as brief as I can, part of the land in New Mexico is privately owned, part of it is state owned, part of it . . . the most part of it is federally owned. So a company negotiating for a plot of ground in order to mine out the minerals underneath it had to deal with three entities--pieces of state land, and the majority of it federal land--and lines running in all directions.

Well, the oldest mine there, the U. S. Potash Company, had by this time long tunnels. They had mined out an awful lot of potash, so they'd had to sink additional mine shafts. It wasn't profitable to take men and machinery down the original shafts and haul them three miles out through a tunnel to where they needed it. So they put down the additional shafts as they went out. There was a corner like the corner of a table where their lease ended. Now the company had put down an air shaft there. This was just to furnish air. It didn't have a lift in it or anything. It had a big fan.

Some smart cookie in the union side had figured out the prevailing winds. At that corner, the land next to it was private. They got permission from the private landowner who must have been in sympathy with the strike, and they took a couple of truckloads of old rubber tires in, and they set them on fire, and they hit it right, where the prevailing wind would carry that smoke over that air shaft.

Marcello: In other words, they set those tires on fire.

White: They set them on fire and that smoke just went up in the air, the old black smoke that comes off of rubber

tires, and went right down that air shaft. It just filled it full of black smoke. Now by this time . . . well, always the company kept supervisors and maintenance crews and so forth to keep the mine clean and so forth. But they'd also been hiring a few.

Marcello: In other words, these were what you would refer to as scabs.

White: They had a few workers down there, and they really brought them out.

Marcello: Was there ever any violence between the union members and the scabs that were brought out?

White: Oh, yes. On top of this it was aggravated by the old United Steel Workers sending in representatives. Mine, Mill was not in the CIO at this time. They had been withdrawn or got kicked out or something. And the AFL-CIO was not joined. They were separate. So the United Steel Workers were in there trying to organize those plants. The Stoneworkers union was in there, which is a rather small union, but they had quite a crew out there. So they were agitating the people also but with no evil intent towards hurting anybody. They did want to take the contracts away from the Mine, Mill people. The machinists were also in there trying to slice out a bigger cut.

This is another funny thing that occurred. The machinists representative was, oh, a little beyond middle-aged man by the name of Morrison. He was in pretty good shape physically, it appeared. The courthouse in Carlsbad, beautiful building, Indian pueblo-style architecture, sat in the middle of the square. The sheriff's office . . . you can walk in the door . . . it was at that time. You could walk in the door, and the first door opened into the sheriff's office. The entrance into the place was around the hall.

But in this case of Morrison and the machinists, he saw the goon squad coming at him. It apparently added wings to his feet. He took off down the street. He was about a block and a half from the courthouse. He beat them down to the courthouse. He ducked in there, went through the sheriff's office, and jumped right up in his lap right at his desk. These guys followed him right on in there. Everything was peaceful in there. But here was this man sitting in this other man's lap behind his desk (chuckle).

The final result of that thing was that these organization efforts, while the strike was going on, of other unions plus the legal necessities the

companies were actually forced to go through because the union was on an illegal strike, and this was the basis on which they refused to negotiate these other things. Otherwise, they would have been in trouble. They had to go through the courts.

That Mine, Mill completely lost everything they had there--that union. The building burned down--this nice hall that they'd moved in from the Army base and refurnished and rebuilt. I've always wondered, because of the insurance connections, how that happened to catch on fire. But it burned down. The young fellow who was president of the local, Smothermon . . . unless it's been lifted, he was placed under permanent federal injunction. He was indicted and then placed under this permanent injunction for several allegations of violence, leading an illegal strike, threats of murder, all of this sort of stuff that could lead up to that sort of thing. The last I heard of him he was back in Lubbock. He had to report to the FBI every so often. This is an awful thing to happen to a young man for being misled by people who are more knowledgeable.

What I sat out to illustrate was that it's terrific public pressure that can be generated,

and sometimes in the most unexpected places. You don't know the exact reason for it. In this case I did know the reason for it. I knew it was the use of fertilizers. I seem to have made myself a hero planning the method of settlement, which was not by negotiation. It was by removal of the person calling the meetings. That wasn't intentional either. It's just one of the things that you have to dream up something to do.

Marcello: Okay, so about 1952 you were transferred from San Antonio to Dallas. Now why the transfer?

White: Well, there were some good reasons, and I could see them myself. First, the area that you'd serve out of San Antonio, although they were long distances, was not heavily industrialized. Part of the reorganization effort in the beginning was to eliminate as many one-man stations as they could. Our region had originally started with the regional office in Houston, but to centralize it had been moved to Dallas. For the time that I spent in San Antonio I didn't service the cases that I had there anyhow because I was being used all over the region. I could see it coming that it was no longer logical to have a person headquartered in San Antonio when you could serve what came up in that area out of the Dallas office and where they would have more individual commissioners stationed than was actually

needed for the Dallas territory, the Rio Grande Valley, and what little stuff was down there-- Corpus Christi, Brownsville, McAllen, so forth-- could be serviced out of Houston. So I brought the thing up myself, I think, in conversation with the regional director. He said, "Well, it's coming and I'm glad you brought it up. I would have hated to move you out of there with the reasons you had for going there in the first place or wanting to go there.

Marcello: You're referring now to your son's health, of course.

White: Right. But he had improved a great deal. Well, anyhow, the combination of my not being used to the full extent, the travel in that area, and being used all over the region--Louisiana, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, East Texas, West Texas, New Mexico . . . very seldom did I get into Oklahoma for some reason. But anyhow I was being used all over the place. I might as well be where you could have greater access to transportation to any point that you want it. All of those things were taken into consideration. I was transferred with no particular objection other than that it was pleasant living in San Antonio.

Marcello: How big an operation was there in Dallas? How large was the office?

White: Well, of course, we had the regional office. By that time the regional offices were the main recipients of commissioners' reports. Travel orders were issued by the authority of the regional directors. Accounting was done in the regional office. Enumeration of cases, file count and all of this, was done in the regional office. Copies of this stuff . . . I mean, the commissioners' reports and so forth went into Washington, but the regional director was responsible for the consolidation of his area. Travel vouchers were audited and approved in the regional office.

Marcello: That was a pretty big setup in Dallas then.

White: Well, not compared to today. There's no longer a region in Dallas due to the same thing--thinking of economic matters. The national office, not at this time, but later, cut the regions from ten to seven. At this time was the beginning of an elimination of this assignment on the basis of the caseload and cross-purposes by having maybe two commissioners hitting the same town, same time, with different cases, of course, but then maybe both of them showing up clear across the state in another situation. It was the beginning of the time where they began to give individual territorial assignments, and you handled a caseload in your area. The boundaries there might be changed. If the caseload was too heavy in one or the other it became adjusted. This was also a great relief to most of the

commissioners. Long travel was cut down a great deal. The man in Albuquerque, New Mexico, still covered the State of New Mexico all by himself. But this, too, later was changed. This was a later deal.

Marcello: What sort of a labor-management climate did you find in Dallas when you arrived here in 1952?

White: Well, the only word I can use is mixed. At that time Dallas did not have a great deal of manufacturing. They did not have a great number of union contracts. It was financial, insurance . . . of course, the building trades were organized. The city transit . . . Dallas Transit Company was organized with private ownership at that time . . . some of the steel fabrication . . . a couple of battery plants. I couldn't enumerate them all, but for the size of the city Fort Worth had a lot more union organization and more manufacturing than did Dallas.

Marcello: Why was this? I think you usually think of Fort Worth perhaps as a blue-collar town, certainly more than one does Dallas.

White: I couldn't give a good reason for some of the things. The transportation for industry is about equal. I think at that time, before they . . . of course, the Santa Fe cut the line that now runs from Gainesville

down to Dallas. It used to go to Fort Worth, and you had to come back over to Dallas. Maybe some of this transportation was a little better into Fort Worth. Of course, that is where the big stockyards of the Southwest grew. You had Swift and Armour and Wilson--a big slaughtering operation, centralized. This gave impetus to other industry because labor was more available. But to go beyond that kind of thinking, I can't quite figure out . . . maybe it was the militancy of the people. Although Fort Worth is called "Cowtown," it doesn't quite fit with what I found. There was more unions over there and more militancy. Of course, during the war General Dynamics . . . the old Convair operation was built there, which caused a lot of subsidiary plants, supplier plants, to be developed from older plants or to be built just to supply this big aircraft manufacturer.

There was another plant which is an old plant there--American Steel. I'm not sure of the name. It was American something at that time. But they had a machine shop, foundry, job shop operation, and a manufacturing operation, also. During the war they were very heavily engaged in the manufacture of artillery shells. Several attempts had been made to organize

them by different unions. They all failed till one did succeed in winning an election. That's not the point I'm trying to make. The fact that they were in this heavy artillery business so heavily during the war also brought in suppliers to their end of the situation.

Fort Worth was also the direct gateway to the oilfields of West Texas and Northwest Texas. Several companies had regional office setups, particularly production offices, headquartered in Fort Worth at that time. Gulf maintained a big office in Fort Worth.

Dallas is a financial community--insurance. In reference to Fort Worth, after I got used to it being called "Cowntown," I referred to Dallas as the Yankee town. The mode of dress is different. When you'd go to a negotiating conference with management and labor, you usually had it up in your own office or in a hotel. In Dallas you usually wore a coat. Over in Fort Worth you went in your shirt sleeves. In fact, they looked at you kind of funny if you came all dressed up or stayed that way after you got there.

In connection with the oil industry there were three refineries all with union contracts in

Fort Worth at one time. Humble Oil Company had a small . . . yes, that was Humble. It wasn't Standard. Premier had a rather large plant. There was another one out on the north side. I can't even remember the name of it anymore. But they all had union contracts. There were a lot of branch plants of some of the major corporations over there-- American Cyanamid. It was a large operation there in Fort Worth. So transportation, availability of labor . . .

Marcello: How much resistance was there to unionization, if that's a good term to use, in the Dallas-Fort Worth area? In other words, did you find that most of the companies were basically anti-labor? Again, when I say anti-labor I mean to the extent that they fought tooth-and-nail against unionization.

White: Yes, I understand that terminology in use that way. Again, I'd have to say it was mixed. We have had in succeeding years since my first coming to this area the establishment of some national offices in Dallas. I can't name them at the time, but back in '52, '53, and '54 in this area most of what we had in manufacturing--the majority--were subsidiary companies. The attitude of the parent company had a great deal to do with the attitude of the local

people in the acceptance of an attempt to organize a plant here.

Collins Radio in Dallas started in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As a mediator there, I was in their first contract negotiations with the machinists union. Mr. Collins himself, the genius behind the whole thing, started out building sets in the basement of his own home for friends. He charged for them, yes. He was that kind of a genius that could do it. Before the war he had set up a little plant and had an operation going. The war just expanded him, so as one of the satellite plants he built a plant in Dallas. Now he'd gone through a bitter experience, strike. He was anti-employee organization. But he had gone through a bitter experience and ended up in contract in Cedar Rapids and eventually came to the point where he could accept it. So when they started organizing here we had . . . I say we. I wasn't in it. There was periods of pretty bitter discussion but nothing like they'd had in the Cedar Rapids plant, which was a manufacturing town and used to unions. It could be depended on in later years, when things got down to tight negotiations and after they'd had a contract for quite awhile, that if eventually this operation here

had to call to get the okay of the Cedar Rapids office and Mr. Collins might have gone trout fishing in Canada, he wouldn't come back. He'd tell them to go ahead and strike. But this wasn't his general attitude anymore. That was his first attitude.

The Ling-Temco . . . the old Temco company . . . the Chance-Vought and the eventual merging of the two . . . the acquisition became Ling-Temco-Vought and so forth. During the period of years they had organization. They were in the public contract business as well as some private operations. It was different from the Convair plant in Fort Worth. Probably a greater resistance was put up to organization there than there was over at the Convair plant in Fort Worth, but no great big troubles developed. Both plants had competent labor relations people. I think one of them, the former Chance-Vought man, is still probably their corporate labor relations director. It's George Scott. I don't know whether he's still in that position or not. He's not a kid any longer if he is. In the merging . . . they merged a whole situation, setup. It took a period of time. But offices, managers, and seniority lists--everything became merged.

I can't answer your question other than to say mixed. There were those that wanted unions, a few of them. There were those that definitely did not and would go to bat to keep from it. There were those that had to be pushed one way or the other.

Marcello: Again, I would assume that in cities like Dallas and Fort Worth that you would run across or find that agrarian attitude that we've referred to so many times in the course of our interviews. Dallas and Fort Worth were big cities, yes. But they were big cities in the process of development. A great many of the people who lived in Dallas and Fort Worth had come to those cities from rural areas of the state. In a sense, I think that we could say that they were probably recent immigrants to Dallas and Fort Worth.

White: In that sense, yes. You're right. The agrarian attitude showed up, but you didn't notice it as much in this metropolitan area as you would in San Angelo or Wichita Falls. I'm talking about fairly large towns but isolated . . . and West Texas or in Texarkana or particularly in Marshall, Texas, which is old South. It's deep South or was. The same is true of the other towns down in East Texas

where there were manufacturing plants. This agrarian attitude was much more noticeable with the influx of people from Texas than from other parts of adjacent . . . there was also a great influx of people from the North from manufacturing areas. We had an influx of shophands because of the high employment ratio, warmer climate, freer living conditions. Maybe along the line I'll give you another illustration, this one which I know definitely. I think there was a few people who came down here who were shophands to avoid unionization or continuing membership. We had independent people in every organization there is in these United States. I guess that's one reason that the American people get full of ideas. They've got all these other cross-purposes at work.

Marcello: During your stay or during your tenure in the Dallas office, what year would you perhaps pick out as being your most memorable one and why? Is there a particular year that sticks out in your mind for the activities and job that you had to perform?

White: You're speaking in job connection.

Marcello: Yes.

White: I don't know whether I can put my finger on any particular year or not. We had, of course, an awful lot of small cases. After Region Ten was eliminated . . . the regions in the United States were cut from ten to seven. We had at that time four commissioners in Dallas. Dallas by itself without the region was rated as a two-man office. A little seniority system worked. There were four commissioners. Two had to go. Well, Ted Morrow elected to remain in Dallas. He didn't want to go to Washington or anyplace else. He elected to remain in Dallas as a commissioner. He was the senior man. I was next in line. The other two men had to move. So I was very happy that I had seniority at that time.

Marcello: Now when did this occur?

White: I can't give you the year. It must have been . . . oh, it must have been around 1958, somewhere in that area. It might have been a little later. But anyhow, there were a few of us in Dallas.

Ted Morrow was raised in Texas, Bosque County, Weatherford, Cleburne. His father was a barber. He was a barber. While he was barbering he went to law school, a law college which used to be in Fort Worth, and passed the bar examinations. For a time he was

assistant state's attorney general. His brother was also an attorney under the same circumstances. The only thing different with J. C. and Ted was that J. C. was never with the state's attorney general's office. He had a private law practice in Fort Worth and Weatherford for awhile. He was also a commissioner of conciliation prior to World War II. They both went to work in 1939. Prior to World War II the Mediation Service in Dallas was four-man. Two of them were named Morrow, and they were both located in Dallas.

If you pick out a memorial year, and one rather frustrating, it would have to be in the Cold War build-up in the Kennedy years when atomic energy--the atomic bomb, hydrogen bomb--was here. Everybody knew it. Russia had them. Primarily, these were the Atlas, built by General Dynamics, and the long, slim Minuteman. I think there were twelve Atlas sites in the United States. How many of the Minuteman, I don't know, but these sites were all selected around an Army or Air Force installation or combination of the two in isolated areas, if they could be found. Most of them were located west of the Mississippi, the most of them. We had one in Texas. This is at Dyess Air Force Base outside of Abilene.

This thing of building these sites was controversial in the first place. A lot of political pressure was brought pro and con. Locally, areas brought pressure to have them built or not to have them built. Labor unions brought pressure to insist that they be all forced to be union.

The international pressures were building. A better political judge than I would have to say how much of those were real and how much were not real, or the historians such as yourself will live to take a better look at what went on. Of course, we were looking at Russia. They were looking at us. They were building their type of missile site.

Now the Atlas was usually built with twelve silos. These were miles apart. There were two phases in the construction. One was supervised by the Army. They were the contractor. This was what they called the brick-and-mortar phase. The second one was the installation of the "bird." This was supervised by the Air Force, and the contractor in that case was General Dynamics. Of course, they were the builder of the missile. The contractor of the installation was General Dynamics. They had on

the base under the first phase a so-called labor man with the Army in the Corps of Engineers office. His duty would have been about the same as a supervising personnel man who was supposed to keep check that the contractor lived up to all the laws and so forth of public contracts with the additional duty to detect any troubles, if he could, prior to its development.

Now at Dyess we had very little trouble in the brick-and-mortar phase. There was no really organized unions in that particular area. Brown and Root out of Houston, notoriously--I'm speaking of the union's attitude--notoriously anti-union, was the contractor for the brick-and-mortar phase. Someone anticipated that with the installation after the brick-and-mortar phase was over there would be the possibility of greater disturbance when all the electrical equipment, all the controls, both remote and natural, and the living quarters were wired and automatic controls put in--finally the bird was finally put in and tested--that this was the area where the greater amount of troubles would develop.

They selected from Washington . . . and since there were twelve sites, there were twelve commissioners

assigned to that as his primary duty during the phase of installation of that missile. I was assigned to Dyess Air Force Base. We were named chairman of a labor relations committee. We were all in Washington for about a week for an indoctrination and a visit or conference with General Dynamics officials, with Army, Air Force, and all the people that would be involved in the construction. We were, as I say, named chairmen of the labor relations committee or site committee.

However, we had to organize that committee. We called the parties together to determine who might or might not be involved. I'm talking about "who," meaning union, whether it might be the electricians, machinists, the operating engineers. All of these people may be directly involved in this installation . . . building of the insides of that silo. Of course, they selected their own representative to this committee. The commissioner, assigned as chairman of that site labor relations committee, had to make the decisions as to where they met, when they met, how often they would meet, who was the secretary for the committee, who on the site would be responsible to keep the commissioner informed when he was away from the site.

All of these things were directly the responsibility of the commissioner assigned to that particular job. Again, here was public pressure.

I reported, after what I thought was a very thorough investigation, that we would only have one phase of the installation whereby we could have trouble. That was in the electric line that went completely around connecting the individual sites and connecting the sites with the home base on Dyess so that each silo could communicate with each other or so they could communicate with the main control or command center on Dyess for the missiles or so that through the main center they could communicate directly with the Pentagon. This was in case any trouble developed. So definitely in all the other areas it was already known, with a possible exception of a North Dakota site and a Montana site, that these would be areas of trouble. The operating engineers wanted to run all of the digging equipment and the machines if machines were used to lay the cable. There are two methods of laying cable. One is the "plow-in" method where big cables were on big bands. A great big machine was built, high powered, that had a plow which is sort of like an old double shovel. But the cable

went up through that. It plowed it into the ground to a certain depth and covered it. Of course, they had to back trail it afterwards, but it covered it. They had to make splices and all this. This is where the electricians came in where they were fighting for also the operation of these machines. Well, this is the only area that I could report where we were going to have trouble as such. The machinists had an off-site contract--in case meaning off of General Dynamics' normal plants--covering all of these operations with General Dynamics--the machinists, one union.

They had very knowledgeable people assigned to service each area. I knew two of those people already with the machinists union. I knew some of the top people with General Dynamics. I was impressed with the young man they had assigned for their labor relations at Dyess Air Force Base. So I didn't think there would be anything outside of the family of General Dynamics and the machinists union. On the area of installation of that cable and the laying of cables to the different silos from the control, I could anticipate that we would have trouble there because it had been there in other places.

However, there were two situations which had gone to the War Manpower Commission and . . . I can't think of the name of the other agency which had the say-so. There were two situations which would be decided, which should be if you followed normal law, precedent-setting cases, that would be the guidelines for use on the sites where it hadn't come up yet. Well, I was overruled. They told me to set up a committee and accept into that committee those people who might get into the union activities. Well, this didn't seem right, but we did it.

I had subcommittee meetings in our first big meeting, where I'd call these representatives of these various unions and the management together, together with the Air Corps. We had worked out a subcommittee which was primarily local people--the business agent for the electricians in Abilene who had the assistance of the international representative, the operating engineers representative in that area, the plumbers representative in Abilene, the carpenters representative because there was quite a lot of carpenter work, plus the representative for the Air Corps to General Dynamics. One of these was the secretary of the committee. He was responsible

for reporting . . . plus this labor relations man in the Air Corps. We had subcommittee meetings at least once a week. I spent an awful lot of time in Abilene.

We had four or five full committee meetings. These were not good there because naturally when they called the assigned representative to come to a meeting at a certain place, he had no people there to represent. He had no contract. He was not likely to get one because he had already tried to organize. He didn't want to waste his time. Privately, they were pragmatic. But when they got out there they could raise a little hell. So the subcommittee meetings were fine. These were people who were pretty much involved. The big committee meetings, although we had some darn good people there, they were not too good.

I had one real pleasing experience. A Colonel Manson was the colonel in charge of operations at Dyess for the Air Force. Now he was not a Military Academy graduate. His assistant who was a lieutenant colonel was the same type of guy. Now I remember he graduated from Purdue. He was an engineer by training before he went into the Air Force. Colonel Manson was a man of decision. He

is now General Manson and has been for quite awhile.

We had a situation come up in which the machinists union accused General Dynamics of violating the contract. After you heard the situation as described and you read the contract, I think even an anti-union person in trying to be fair as a contract interpreter would say that if these facts are true then the company is in violation. It was getting pretty hot.

I went to Colonel Manson after I had determined that a violation was occurring. I had talked with the General Dynamics representative on the ground. He had talked to their office. He was told to go ahead with the present operation the way it was. I told him that we weren't going to have trouble. I was going to bring in Colonel Manson, who was just down the hall. I went down there and went over the thing. Of course, he had already heard about it. I went over the thing. He said, "Well, White, are you sure of your facts?" I said, "Now I am. I have the cooperation both from the union representative, whom you know, and the young man down the hall with General Dynamics, whom you know, and his home office

doesn't deny it." He said, "That's all I need to know." He got on the phone. He called General Dynamics and then telephoned the office. He said, "I have reported to me so-and-so. Is this a fact? Is this the way you're operating?" "Yes." "What's your opinion as to clause number so-and-so in the contract?" Well, that end of the conversation I didn't hear. He says, "Well, that's not my opinion. I think you're in violation of the contract. I'm giving your man here orders to follow the contract and what my interpretation is." Apparently, he wanted to argue over the phone. He said, "This is what is going to happen now! I'm going down the hall and do it now!" He hung up. Like I say, he was a man of decision. A great deal of his understanding of human beings was responsible for the peace we had on Dyess Air Force Base during that operation.

Now we had a four-hour strike. As the thing phased out we had two expert iron workers on the job who were union, but these were the only two at that time. They did a particular job that was in conjunction with the machinists' part of the duties which was sighting in these elevators and all of the optics that had to go into the situation. They did the construction with the machinists handling

the scope and so forth. They got a little disgusted about something one morning and just walked off the job--two men. They stayed off the job until after lunch, which amounted to about two hours. Putting two and two together with two men, that was a four-hour strike.

But that was a memorial year. It was a pleasure to work with men like Colonel Manson and his assistant. It was a pleasure to work with that young General Dynamics labor relations man. By the way, he resigned from that position when they wanted to ship him back to the plant in San Diego after the operation was over. The last I knew he was labor relations director for a plant in Oklahoma City. Again, it's a general contractor for some kind of government project. I lost track of him after he went there.

Of course, we had full clearance. But again, to me the thing that always held good was that if you didn't need to know, why push your weight around just because you happen to be cleared. I'd had experience enough. I was sure that if I just asked to go see some of that stuff that was none of my particular business they would say, "Do you need to know?" I couldn't honestly say, "Yes."

But by this time we were no longer Region Ten. We were operating in Texas out of the St. Louis office, Region Six. The regional director that I had originally worked for in Des Moines was the regional director. Well, Bill called one day and wanted to go down in one of those silos. Well, I hesitated. I'd never asked to go myself.

Marcello: Did he want to do this just out of personal curiosity, or did he have some professional reason for wanting to go?

White: He had no professional reason that I know of. But anyhow, he was the boss, and he kind of insisted. So I set up the thing. We went out to Abilene. We went down in the silo. We saw the things that he wanted to see. Curiosity, if that was the only thing, was satisfied.

But while I was in that particular silo site, I darn nearly got into negotiations with the plant guards. Of course, we had to tell the guard at the gate who we were in order to get into this particular site. The Air Force man that was driving the car had to do the same thing, of course. When we were going out one of these guys called me aside and said, "I understand you're a government man involved in labor." Well,

I said, "Yes." He said, "Have you got time to talk to us? We want to get organized." Of course, I had to tell him we were not organizers, that he ought to get in touch with such-and-such a union. Whether they ever did or not, I don't know. That was quite a year.

Marcello: According to some of the newspaper clippings that I read prior to the interview, you were predicting that 1968 and then later on that 1970 would be grim years so far as labor-management relations were concerned. Do you recall whether or not your predictions held true or not for 1968 and 1970? Maybe I should go back and ask first of all why were you predicting that 1968 and 1970 would be grim years?

White: That has to have a little explanation. Any commissioner of the Federal Mediation Service who has worked in a territory for so long and he's worth his salt or his pay should have a pretty good idea from his experience of what is likely to happen on down the line. Now the explanation comes into this--that when I first started working for the old U. S. Conciliation Service, a long term contract, even an eighteen-months contract, was almost unheard of. There were yearly contracts.

Now this doesn't mean that a mediator got in them every year. But if he was around one territory for awhile, he knew the approximate dates that these contracts in various places were coming open for negotiations. A pretty good pattern could be established as to when the busy season would be.

Marcello: How would you prepare or how could you prepare for the busy season as you put it?

White: Well, again, this came as an evaluation of what you were hearing now of what might happen in July. For instance, in my early years I was in an area where there was a heavy packing house industry on both rivers--Missouri and Mississippi Rivers--as well as in the hinterlands and other areas.

Now the packing house workers' contracts--CIO--eventually, before I left that area, came to expire all on the same date, August 19. I never will forget that date. You could depend on it that in these yearly contracts you were going to have a heavy influx of business--not all of them--but a heavy influx of business from the packing houses, primarily the big three--Swift, Armour, Cudahy. Anyhow, you can depend on it from those three--not all of them but some of them. This was also going to occur spottedly in smaller branches and in independent plants where the packing house workers--CIO--were, August 19.

Now historically there had been two dates for contract expiration--January 1, or close to that, or July 1. These seemed to fit back to company fiscal years as much as anything else.

There developed a third area besides the packing house workers and their August 19th date . . . a thing that you could depend on was an influx of business around May 1st in this, latter part of April or early May. So a regional director could look and see this concentration of CIO packing house worker contracts in Iowa, eastern Nebraska, western Illinois, Chicago, Minneapolis, and say that we were going to have to have so many people up here because there's going to be so many of those contracts all coming open on August 19. We didn't know who or where they were going to strike at this time, but you could anticipate that sort of thing. Building trades--you could almost invariably count on them wherever you were at that as a January 1 date or a July 1 date. The most of them were July 1 because this is hot weather. They didn't like going on strike with snow on the ground up north. They'd been at it long enough that they'd got this contract expiration date around to warm weather in the majority of cases. So these predictions in Dallas were not crystal ball gazing.

Even when I was in San Antonio I'd handle quite a number of cases in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and in the surrounding area. You would get on the phone and talk to those people who had learned to trust you and say, "John, your contract over at Marshall is going to come open July 1. What's the prospects?" He'd say, "Bob, I'm going to take them this year," hypothetically. Or maybe he'd say, "We're not going to have any trouble there this year. We already know for two reasons: we've lost a lot of membership; the company's orders are down." Things like that. You'd keep a little record on paper in anticipation of your future workload. Sure, here comes your prediction.

By that time we'd begun to have three-year contracts with wage reopeners. You could anticipate . . . you might have trouble on a wage reopener but not too much. It would all build, and when a bunch of contracts in the building trades all came open then on, say, July 1, the third year, a lot of things had built up. These are the years of trouble. Now back then they did not negotiate with the Association of General Contractors as a contractors' association and as a conglomeration, an organization of numerous unions. They may consult or might have

consulted back and forth, and did. But even though their contracts might all come open within a reasonably close time to this July 1 date, due to the contractor's tie-up with several unions, he might not be able to get to meeting with some union. So they weren't ready to go. They didn't even know what they'd be offered.

A lot of these facts you just pick up like osmosis. You absorbed them through the skin. You got into the game . . . facts dropped by a business agent when you were in his office, when he talked to his secretary. Words would be said that you understood that were telling you something. Maybe not intentionally but they were telling you something. So this wasn't crystal ball business. This was pretty factual. Any commissioner that has been in any particular office for a period of time should be able to do that same thing.

It happened to me at the Dallas Times Herald or Dallas Morning News, whichever newspaper it was . . . I guess I'd hit some correctly the first time they ever asked me to make these predictions and I was correct. They kept coming back year after year. But there's no secret about it. It's pretty easily

done. You've got all of these other facts of cost of living increases in advance and nationally known by, say, the automobile workers and their supplemental income deal. You put them all together, and they point to trouble.

Marcello: One of the bigger plants in Dallas that's developed in recent years had been Texas Instruments. I know pretty well that Texas Instruments does everything it possibly can to prevent unionization. Did you ever have any dealings with Texas Instruments at all?

White: Not in the field of dispute. I don't know how many unions have tried them, but the big ones have all tried them that are the that field at all--machinists, UAW, electricians. You name those that have some connection with the kind of work that Texas Instruments does, and they've tried it somewhere along the line. They never got to the place where they got beyond the National Labor Relations Board or the courts. They never did get an organization.

Marcello: Why is it that there is so much difficulty in trying to organize Texas Instruments?

White: I think there's probably numerous reasons that I was in no position to observe, but some I was. I think one of the reasons was the great number of

the female sex employed by Texas Instruments. Somebody charged that it was a matter of sexual discrimination because they hired so many women to do these very delicate jobs. But I don't think there's very many men that can argue successfully that some of those jobs just . . . a man's fingers are too big. He can't do them. Another thing was the wide area from which Texas Instruments' labor comes. Another reason was that after they became a rather large operation, a good target for a union that wanted a big number of people, was the wide area that they drew their employees from. At one time I had a count as to how many men and women went from here, Denton, to work in that plant in Dallas. Then, of course, they expanded to other areas. The same thing has occurred over a wide area that they draw their employees from.

Now you can't organize the Rotary Club and you can't organize a union without direct fact contact with people unless there is an awful lot of grievance, primarily poor pay, poor working conditions, poor health conditions, safety, something that really stirs a good number of people. Even then to organize them into an effective

group you have to have contact. You have to have personal contact either through group meetings or individuals. With this wide area they can't just throw the handbill away. Maybe some of them read it and say, "Well, that's fine. I hope they do." And that's the end of that. So this is not an intentional thing on the part of the company. This just happens in that kind of a situation.

They also had some real bright people. I can't remember the name of the man who headed up their labor relations department. I know we had him up here where we had a great debate on whether 14-B should be abolished. But he was a brilliant young man. He did his homework. He was respected enough in the company . . .

Marcello: Would this have been Joe Halbach?

White: That's Joe Halbach, yes. He had enough influence with the company that he had staff enough to keep an eye on trouble spots and determine in advance where trouble might develop and brains enough to study the situation with his staff and advise the company how to correct it before it happened or immediately after. I had a great deal of respect for him. I called at the plant occasionally just to drop in to say hello. If I'd hear there was an

organizational effort going on, I'd think, "Well, maybe we'll be in it someday." I'd go out and say hello to Joe.

Much of what I'm saying came from him, this thing of him spotting potential trouble spots. He wasn't looking for bad people. He was primarily looking at what management could do to eliminate this. How do we satisfy the employee? Along that line, since I've retired or a little bit before I retired, TI was a leader in this thing of relieving monotony on an assembly line, where they let . . . where the work would allow it, TI let a group take this thing from the beginning to its finality, to final inspections, till it would go to its customer. They'd let them see what they built. Before that type of thing a person had to be pretty diligent to get around a plant that size to find out where what he'd worked on went to. He probably wasn't able to see the final finished thing because these are highly complicated machines until they got into the small calculator, small transistor radios and that sort of thing. They were sophisticated computers, computer applications, computer components. By computer I'm talking about all automated things that they even put up in the airplanes to . . . automatic pilot and that sort of thing.

So having talked with Joe Halbach quite a bit and observing some of the union representatives who attempted to organize, the reasons I have stated or the only reason that I know that TI has not been organized . . . plenty of good people, good organizers, have tried it. So this is not necessarily an anti-labor attitude. If you satisfy your employees, you keep your employees happy and your turnover rate shows that they much be happy, then you are in a way kind of pro-labor anyhow. You're just not pro-organization. Jonsson, who built that company, former mayor of Dallas, is a highly intelligent individual and able to sit down and talk with you on your level or anybody else's level. I never met Mr. Jonsson out in the plant. I met him once when he was mayor. But I know from some of the things that he's done in public he's certainly a bright person. He is not anti-human. I can say that for him.

Marcello: Why don't we just stop at this point, and then tomorrow we'll go into some specific cases that you came across during your experiences in the Dallas office. In other words, we'll talk about some of the cases that you think would be important to broadening our understand of the practice of mediation and conciliation.

Oral History Collection

Walter White

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: May 21, 1975

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter White for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 21, 1975, in Denton, Texas. This is the tenth in a series of interviews concerning Mr. White's experiences with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. At this particular point in the interviews, we are talking about his experiences while working out of the Dallas office.

Now Mr. White, at this point, why don't we begin by talking about some of the specific cases in which you became involved and which you think are rather unique for one reason or another. For instance, you mentioned that there was a case involving the Gulf Oil Company that stands out in your mind. Why don't we start by discussing that particular case?

Mr. White: Well, that will be fine. The particular Gulf Oil situation you normally think about as oil company

contractual relationships, with the union being in refineries or petrochemical or plant setups or pipelines. This happened to have involved the operating engineers and three producing fields and the producing division of Gulf Oil with their regional office on Fort Worth. Now these fields were quite extensive, for Gulf was producing in the Permian Basin surrounding Midland-Odessa. The process of their negotiations evolved prior to my coming into this particular area. When I say the process of the negotiations, I mean the contracts had started out as separate negotiations for each separate field. Then they were drawn together into one negotiation. All three fields were still separated, but they signed the same contract, and the same conditions existed.

Marcello: What were the conditions that brought you in the picture? In other words, what were the grievances that the parties had that they had to call you in?

White: Again, this gets back to the time where still a great number of contracts were one-year contracts. Always there's the financial question--money, wages, health benefits, and the fringe benefits that we normally think of, vacations. Very often the demand for change in grievance procedures occurred. Somebody would hit

a snag somewhere and wanted that changed. Numerous things occurred through the years. But always there was the question of money in some form or other. And, of course, again, the war was over and restrictions had more or less kept wages on a level, and in my early experience there this was very much of a question.

And this wage thing was broken down. They had pumpers who were out in the field. They had gaugers who determined the amount of oil that was in the tanks. And the mechanics and . . . it was a pretty free life. They traveled on their own, and they had a pick up truck assigned. The gauger had one, and the pumpers all had their own trucks. They kept them at home. They didn't have to report them into the garages or a central place at all. So in a way it was a rather free life, but a man had so many wells he had to look after as a pumper. A man had so much territory and so many tanks he had to look after as a gauger where he was gauging the accumulation of oil in the tanks. So even the mechanics lived a rather free life in this respect, although if they had to go out and repair something at a well, there was two or three at the same time, usually two.

Now various items of the expenses were argued back and forth, even the free use of the trucks. There

were hints on the part of the company that the people were using the trucks for their own benefit. Well, they'd been doing that all the time. This was just one of those smoke screens thrown up as an argument.

The peculiar thing really that makes this a very interesting situation was the fact that the unions would like very much to have their negotiations take place in Odessa or Midland, in their area, where they had quick access to the people. For the very same reason the company wanted them in Fort Worth. This was prior to my time. They had agreed sometime before I knew anything about the situation that if they held the negotiations in Fort Worth, the company would furnish all the facilities as well as pay the expenses of the committeemen coming in. So this enlarged the committee a little bit. These people liked to make this trip into Fort Worth, although they would get tired before the negotiations were over. I never saw personally any of the expense accounts turned in by these individuals, but I understand there were some dillies.

Well, anyhow, we usually met in the Worth Hotel. The committee would usually put up that regular argument, that let's meet out in Midland, although they themselves

were very happy to be in Fort Worth each time. They could look forward to at least a week away from home, you see, at somebody else's expense. Well, they'd get that over with. They'd get down to their brass tacks and fall apart.

Well, of course, by this time we knew that negotiations were going on. Somebody would give us a call--one side or the other. Then we'd have to enter into negotiations. I had that assignment for quite a number of years, and we had changes in the personnel on both sides because other people wanted to make that free trip to Fort Worth from the union's angle. And the company had a training program that new men they hired, even a lawyer, would be sent to their various operations. So you might have a trainee lawyer working in the producing field to learn what it was all about and acting as a secretary to the company's committee here in the Fort Worth negotiations.

There were constants, of course. The regional director or regional manager for the Gulf Oil Company was the same man, and his assistant and the superintendent of the mechanical division. These three were generally always there, but the fluctuations would take place in the trainees primarily coming in. For

the company, I'm speaking about. Of course, the people felt that they ought to change some of the committeemen once in awhile because of the fact that they would get this free trip to Fort Worth and they had heard of the benefits derived from the people who had been there.

However, the international representative remained constant. This was a man by the name of D.A. Brazel. He spoke for the operating engineers, and he was quite a character. He lives in Big Springs. He's retired but he's still very active in politics and so forth now. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University. He is now in the Oklahoma Football Hall of Fame. He and I wore the same size coat, although he's only about 5'10" or 5'10¹/₂" and I'm 6'3". I mean we had the same breadth of shoulders and so forth. I say that for a little story that I'm going to tell.

The company had arrived at the conclusion that they should have an experienced regular labor-oriented attorney, I mean labor law attorney, on their staff, so they hired a young man. Now where he came from, what law school, I don't know. I can't even remember his name. Of course, he had been well-briefed by the company as to background and so forth before this particular negotiation took place in this particular year.

I had already been in two or three meetings, but I had a commitment during the period of these negotiations for at least one day with another company. This had been made prior to going to the Gulf negotiations. So I had to keep that commitment. I wasn't in the meeting this day. The room we generally had for a conference room in the Worth Hotel was probably twenty feet long and couldn't have been more than ten feet wide, with a long table down the middle. And by the time you got chairs, there was not much room to move around the edges. The company was on one side, and the union was on the other.

Brazel, representing the operating engineers, did an awful lot of homework. He was well-informed as to labor law, and he could snarl and slobber and get right on the verge of being completely nasty, slanderous, although away from the meeting he was the perfect gentleman. I never did quite determine if this was actually an act or whether he just got worked up and really was feeling that way at the time.

But anyhow, on this day that I was gone, Dave Brazel throws one of these snarling, slobbering fits there and raked the company over the coals very good and rather pointedly inferred that what the lawyer had just said, this young lawyer of the company, wasn't

true. Well, as I got the story directly from both sides, the young lawyer jumped up and said, "By God, you can't call me a damn liar!" And he starts around the table. Well, there's not too much room to go around. He went around the table, and Brazel sat there with his arms hanging down at the chair. He never got up. When the lawyer got close enough he coldcocked him. He smacked him right on the button, just knocked the socks out of him.

Marcello: Brazel smacked the lawyer.

White: He hit him. Well, that quieted things down and broke up the meeting. And they got hold of me out at the other meeting after that happened, pretty soon after it happened, and wanted to know when I could get back in there. Well, I told them the way things looked, I could be back tomorrow. So this changed a lot of conversation on the telephone. There was no reference the next day to the fight, except Brazel did ask the lawyer if he had any harm from the crack on the chin. And the young fellow kind of grinned kind of sheepishly and said, "No." He said, "I think I learned a lot." Brazel said, "Well, I didn't intend to call you a liar. What I was saying was that what you were saying wasn't true."

Well, anyhow, this thing evolved to the point where this particular portion of Gulf Oil and their negotiations for those producing fields wouldn't meet unless I was there. Even in the beginning, they wouldn't meet anymore with the union unless I was there, that is, when they came into Fort Worth meeting. So by the very necessity of a short brief fisti-cuff, I sat in those negotiations from beginning to end. Everyday I had to reserve the thing until we got it settled.

Marcello: How long did the negotiations last? I'm referring to a period of days.

White: For a particular contract?

Marcello: No, I'm referring now to this one now with the Gulf Oil Company.

White: Well, that's what I mean--that particular contract for that year. I usually had to figure on a week in Fort Worth. Sometimes we'd finish up a little bit before that. But because of the fact that the company was paying the expenses, the union committeemen wouldn't get down to brass tacks until they began to get tired. They'd see the sights. They'd eaten at the restaurants.

Marcello: How does the . . .

White: They'd spent company's money for whiskey and so forth.

Marcello: How does the length of time involved in negotiations affect the final settlement? In other words, as the negotiations drag out, is there more of a tendency for each side to toughen up? What role does time play in negotiations? And does the mediator use time to his advantage in a great many cases? Let's start with the first part of my question. What effect does time have on the outcome?

White: This is as varied as the industry and the personalities involved around the conference table, the ability of the union leadership to keep contact with the members of the union, I mean, the people who are not on the committee but the rank-and-file membership. It depends many times on the negotiations that are going on someplace else with this company or another company in the industry. There are so many variables that you could not lay down a rule. It's like the thing that they've never been able to contrive an examination to determine whether a man is going to be successful as a mediator or not. So many variables are involved, and so many people are involved. In a situation like this particular thing with the Gulf Oil producing deal . . . I'll give you a quick guess and say that if the negotiations after the committee came into

Fort Worth had lasted much longer than a week, we'd begin to have sporadic troubles--not called, but just sporadic troubles showing up in the producing field. I would guess again with a pretty good idea of accuracy that these were not aimed just at the company. They were aimed at that committee to get going. "Quit horsing around. Let's get a contract."

In your major oil negotiations . . . well, let's take a pipeline, for instance. There used to be a pipeline setup where three divisions went under a different name, but it was all coordinated and operated as one pipeline. And it ran from the deep Rio Grande Valley clear into Minneapolis, and eventually there was a branch that cut off to Chicago. But at this particular time I have in mind, it was three different negotiations, all in the same union. Three different negotiations, all the same union. Three different negotiating committees for the company--one here in Fort Worth, one in Kansas City, and one in Minneapolis.

Well, the time you knocked off negotiations in your particular meetings was very important because the three commissioners operating in these three different meetings kept in contact with each other.

The three committees for the union kept in contact with each other, and the international kept in contact with all three of their committees. So you had to call those meetings where you could be sure of making your contacts. Now the company representatives were doing the same thing. And we all knew this, but we didn't talk about it until the final moment when a commissioner would call the other two and say, "We have a tentative agreement, and the conditions are so-and-so and so-and-so." Well, at the same time, that union and company people were making contact with each other, so we came back into either separate meetings or joint meetings practically the same information. Then you could open up, and things could move pretty fast. But the break might come in Fort Worth negotiations, or it might come in Minneapolis. But almost immediately the information was passed to the three. So timing and time would be involved there.

In your major oil negotiations, the refineries I'm talking about particularly, this still happens. There was one time when I had three oil companies in negotiations in the Edson Hotel in Beaumont, all at the same time on three different floors. It's been closed up and made into an office building and no longer

is a hotel. But anyhow, I had three meetings going on, all at the same time on three different floors, and I was running up and down the stairway from one meeting to the other.

At that very same time commissioner Ray Majure was in Port Arthur, which is pretty close to Beaumont, Gulf Oil and Texaco. Over at Baytown the Humble Federation of Employees were also talking for a new agreement. Now this was a kind of company union, but they still had a contract open. Very often Humble led off, particularly in the area of wages. Well, although we didn't feel that we had to be in the Humble negotiations, we had a man in Baytown keeping in touch with us. He'd get in touch with the two of us in Port Arthur and Beaumont. We kept in touch with each other. We usually tried to arrange to have dinner in the evening either in Beaumont or Port Arthur. We'd go back and forth.

Now at the same time, there were negotiations in Chicago. I'm talking about the big Shell plant east of Chicago. There were negotiations in Houston. All over the place. And we all keeping in contact with each other. All of us were looking for a break.

Somebody else might provide the impetus like . . . we would get the information that Humble had made an

offer to their employees calling for a fifteen-cents-an-hour increase, which was maybe five cents more than any of the rest of us had at the time. Well, Humble was a big outfit. So even though they were not involved with the oil workers union or the craft unions, they were paying money for work. This was what the union people wanted. It might be Texaco that made the first break. In one case a little Sinclair plant down in Corpus Christi broke it wide open, and this was just a small plant.

So time and timing in those situations were often critical. I couldn't put my finger on why exactly, except this matter of information. Some of your smaller, single operations, of course, had a different rhythm.

Sometimes it would depend on the isolation of the plant. You might have pretty good-sized gypsum plant out here in northwest Texas. There are three or four. One was at Sweetwater, which is one company, and three or four were north of Sweetwater, which are all almost on a line. Apparently, there is a limestone formation that they all get into. And these are all separate companies, and three of them have the same union. The one down at Sweetwater was a different type of union.

The contracts were different, although the wages would remain fairly close. They sometimes were not comparable because of the different makeup of the plant operation itself.

Now here again was the proposition, where in those isolated areas people who worked there lived in the surrounding area, but there might be quite a distance. When their shift was over, they wanted to go home. If negotiations went on too long, they could get restless which could bring about a strike. That happened to me in a place where I swear there would never be a strike because of this isolation--in a gypsum plant, wallboard. This type of thing worried both management and the unions. The unions couldn't reach their people regularly either, and management didn't know what was happening because people were so scattered.

Again, the agrarian mind comes in because this is farming country and a lot of it--wheat, cotton, various of row crops. These people were farming.

We had a long negotiations one year in a plant, one of these three north of Sweetwater. I can't even think of the name of the town. It's a little town. It's right straight north of Sweetwater. But anyhow, the company wanted a change in the seniority clause

because in setting up a revision of the health and welfare part of their agreement, their insurance, they had found out that they had nineteen men working in that plant, all related. They were direct family relations. If they had one of those men die, the funeral leave clause could shut down the plant. If they had one worker or a wife of one of them or some other family member, and if they wanted to go that way and pull those eighteen men out of the plant, they couldn't operate. Some were skilled operators and so forth. That one went on for quite a long time, and it looked like it might come to a point of strike over this one question even though the people in the plant and the union were not in disagreement with the company that this couldn't happen. I think there was actually seven brothers who was part of this nineteen-man family. They didn't think it would ever happen. Not that one of them wouldn't die, but they didn't think all of them would go to the funeral. Why that came about, I don't know, but that went on quite a long time, and a lot of unrest was building up. Finally, the company said, "Well, okay, we'll try it again." And they resolved that situation. I made two or three trips out there before all of that was over--all over this one little thing.

And I have to repeat, you can't put your finger on time. You can put your finger a lot of times on timing. You have certain knowledge, and that knowledge dovetails from both parties, but there's difficulties of attitude that have to be overcome. When do you bring this out? How do you bring it out? And if you figure out how, when? You try to get the best results, from what you have. It's a matter of sometimes deliberately keeping the parties up all night. You have to have faith in your own abilities to stay awake, but you deliberately keep the people up.

Marcello: You're hoping that they'd get so tired and fatigued that they'll arrive at a settlement just to get some sleep or something.

White: What you're gambling on there is that you can outlast them and that they will become tired. I've done that, but I don't think it's too good of an idea because when you're tired and sleepy a lot of agreements can be made that you regret afterwards. They just didn't work out for either party, so changes had to be made the next time.

Referring back to what we talked about earlier concerning public transportation and so forth, this was an area, particularly in city transportation after

the public officials got in the situation, where very often you sat up all night. Thirty-six hours. I found in one case where they were changing committeemen on me in the union.

Marcello: In other words, they were bringing in a fresh crew?

White: They were bringing in a fresh crew in on me (chuckle). So that didn't work out too good there.

Marcello: Okay, now another interesting case that you mentioned in our pre-interview conference was one involving the Sid Richardson Carbon Company. You might talk a little about this particular case and the negotiations that took place.

White: Of course, everybody that has been in Texas for awhile has heard of Sid Richardson, along with H. L. Hunt and . . . what's the other family in Dallas?

Marcello: Murchison?

White: The Murchison family. The stories of those three and how they got started kind of became a conglomerate because they came from the same area in Texas. One is often confused from the same area in Texas. One is often confused with the other with the exception of probably Sid Richardson. He was the only bachelor of the group--of these three. I never met Sid Richardson. I talked to him one time on the telephone. But you could hear all kinds of stories, and I mention this

to give just a little bit of background of what happened in the carbon operations at the Sid Richardson Carbon Company.

If you've been here very long you've heard the story of how Sid Richardson came to own the Fort Worth Athletic Club, which was right next to the Worth Hotel. Being a bachelor, he didn't want to live in a house where he had to maintain servants and give them orders and so forth or hire somebody to do it. Not that he didn't have the money, but he just didn't want to be bothered. He proposed that he live in the Forth Worth Athletic Club, and they didn't think too much of that. But he found out that the club operation needed money, so he just bought it, he fixed one floor up as a home and continued to have the athletic club where it had been and . . . a good restaurant. Now this is the story. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. He also owned the Texas Hotel down at Fort Worth, which was the big hotel in Fort Worth and at various times was the outstanding hotel. At other times it was a Blackstone Hotel, which was up the street three or four blocks, or the Worth, as far as social events and so forth.

Well, the story about the Texas Hotel was this. There was no questions that Sid Richardson liked to

play poker as apparently did the elder Murchison and the elder Hunt. And they would play poker in various places. Not the three of them together, but they had their own poker cronies. They had a poker game going on down in the Texas Hotel. Sid Richardson was there. The manager found out about it and he went up there, and sure enough, here was the gentlemen playing poker. He informed them that there was a long standing rule that there was no gambling in the Texas Hotel. Well, they put up whatever arguments they had to put up about it, and he run them out of the room.

In a couple of days Sid Richardson came back and went to the manager's office, and he said, "Now I like to play poker, and I like to play poker in the Texas Hotel. But you said there was a rule against it, so I just bought the hotel, and here's the deed to it. And you're no longer the manager!" (Chuckle) They went ahead and played poker in Sid Richardson's hotel. And he owned it for quite a long time. This is just a little background about the man.

He had quite a number of operations and not all of them under the same name of Sid Richardson. They might be different little corporate setups usually skirting around oil. He acquired this carbon plant outside of Odessa by purchase of mortgage takeover or

something. I don't know. But he acquired it, and he continued to operate it and set up another division which he did call Sid Richardson Carbon Company. It had a carbon plant, had a manager.

Now a peculiar thing about that setup was that they had company houses. This plant was about twelve miles out of Odessa, but the company houses were all in Odessa in one particular area. It was set up just like an oil camp out in the country. These individual houses were rented at a nominal fee, and generally there were requirements of upkeep and so forth which were . . . I'm talking sewage and that sort of thing. But the renter had to keep it clean, keep the yard mowed, and that sort of thing. And along with that, I think the company furnished the gas and electricity at a very nominal fee. This all came about at sometime during negotiations, that I gained this knowledge of how this thing operated, because I didn't know they had this camp in the city of Odessa.

Well, anyhow, there was a local union there . . . and Odessa was not a city of a great number of union organizations when I first began to go to the carbon company. Outside of the Gulf field, the production fields were not organized. The oil drillers were not

organized. They were not organized due to the thing that involved so many other places. The people were mobile. There was a considerable turnover. A driller was here today and gone tomorrow. A roustabout was working for somebody else a hundred miles from there. So those areas of possible union activity just didn't come about.

Originally there had been a riggers union--pretty strong--but this was in the day of the old wooden rig where it took some time to build a rig. The rig was built from wood. These guys organized all over that area. But when the metal rigs came in, the mobile setup, they no longer needed the skills or the quickness of the people who were rig builders, so that union died out.

The little local . . . and I say little local because it probably had at the most 120 people involved on all shifts, and this was after an enlargement had been made.

This plant was what they called a channel carbon plant. I guess that came about by the fact of where they burnt the gas overhanging . . . looks like upside-down eave trough. The gas burned against that, and the carbon would drop down. As it burned, it was

scraped out at the bottom. It created an awful smoke. You worked a shift, and you came out of the plant almost black all over. We had arguments about change rooms; we had arguments about dust collectors; we had arguments about money; we had arguments about union security. The whole field or gamut the union demands.

There was one constant. The president of that local was a guy by the name of Anderson. He always went by the name of Andy. I think his name was W. H. Anderson, but it was just Andy Anderson. Andy was a persistent character. And also involved in this is the same David Brazel, the operating engineer. We met usually in the Lincoln Hotel. The plant manager was a knowledgeable negotiator, and he was usually there with the bookkeeper because he didn't keep all the fixtures in mind and so forth, and he didn't try to keep the rate structure in mind, so the bookkeeper took care of all and fed it to him as he needed it.

We'd come to a place in negotiations where maybe the union would lay down a kind of ultimatum. Brazel would have gone through one of his tirades. I was feeding him tranquilizer pills. I had had separate talks back and forth, so we were down to a spot where I'd move the union about as far as I thought I could

move them. The company maybe hadn't budged any by that time. But if I told the plant manager out there, "You're going to have to do something. I think I've gone as far as I can go. I think the union is going to stand where they are. Now they might move a little if you move some, but you're going to have to get pretty close to them." So he'd look at me and say, "Well, now is the time for me to go talk with God." The second time that he made that remark, it aroused my curiosity, and I said, "You have a straight line to God?" He kind of grinned, and he said, "Well, the god I'm talking about is Sid Richardson in Fort Worth," (chuckle). He said, "I couldn't give them a penny until it's okayed." So he would go talk with Richardson on the phone, and after that happened, why, generally we'd arrive at an agreement.

The situation changed when Sid Richardson died. The Richardson estate was under the charge of a board of directors. Maybe I'm going to get this a little mixed up because I'm not a financial man of that kind. First, there was a residual estate, then there were separate corporations, then there was a trust which also had other corporations which by virtue of the trust was separated from this thing over here.

Now our former governor, John Connally, had been with a firm of attorneys who did legal work for various parts of Richardson's empire. John Connally was named as a director of the trust, as a trustee of the parties who were to see to the disposal and distribution of the residual part of estate. What he had to do with the separate corporations, I don't know. But I know that he was directly the man who would then become "God" as far as the carbon plant was concerned.

Along about this time they started building another carbon plant in Big Spring right next to what's now the Gosden oil refinery. It's named after the man who built it. We were in negotiations the year following Sid Richardson's death, and we got to this place where I had to talk to the manager. "Can you move? Who do you talk to after Sid Richardson died?" He said, "Well, John Connally in Fort Worth is the man, but I can't talk to him. I don't have that authority. If any talking is done with John Connally, you'll have to do it first."

So it looked tight enough that I thought I had to take that chance to either get turned down by Connally or set up a meeting with him. So I talked to him on the phone from the hotel there. He understood immediately what I did, who I was, what I was calling him

for, after I told him we had reached this place out there, and that with the permission of his manager I had called him directly. Would he meet with me and the union? Well, at first he didn't want to. He said, "Try it again." And I said, "Well, you'll have to talk to the manager directly before we'll go back into a meeting because we're tight up against the wall." And after a little more conversation . . . and I don't know why he didn't want to talk to the manager or the manager didn't want to talk to him. Maybe it was personal; maybe it wasn't. I don't know what it was.

But after a little more conversation, he agreed to meet with me and the union representatives--not bring the committee in--if we would come into Fort Worth. So we went into Fort Worth and we met with Connally the next day.

Marcello: What sort of person was he? How did he come across?

White: I had two meetings with Connally on this thing, and as far as I'm concerned he came across strong.

Marcello: How do you mean that?

White: Well, he was knowledgeable. He'd done his homework. He knew about the carbon operation pretty doggone well. By the time we got in there, he had apparently made a quick survey of past contracts that had been with the

unions. Of course, in all his other involvement in places, he was familiar with the talk of the cost of living and price increases. He'd also briefed himself on the cost of gas and so forth that they burned to make the carbon black. He knew the company's position in the market which was a little peculiar because in most of the plants carbon black was made from oil at this time. This was one of the last channel black gas plants. But that channel black was a little finer quality than that that came from oil, so they had a market in certain places that the other companies didn't have. He knew all of this by this time. Maybe he had known it before, but he knew these things. So he came across strong as a knowledgeable person.

He also impressed me . . . and this impression came more later because in our second meeting . . . this was the second day . . . one meeting one day and one the next. He did change the company's offer, and he refused to change in certain spots. Whether he talked to the management in Odessa during that time, I don't know. But he said, "I will do certain things if that will get a contract, but these things I won't do." And he was straightforward about it, and blunt. Not belligerent, just . . . you felt that the man knew

what he was talking about and meant what he said. At least Brazel did. And the changes had brought gains to the union. They had gained a point or two. So we had an agreement. Well, the next year or two years . . . I think we had a two-year contract signed that time with a wage reopener.

Marcello: Was the two-year contract unusual?

White: No, they were becoming usual at this particular time. I won't say in this time frame (chuckle). They had to come more usual. So it was two years before I was back in these negotiations again. And although the corporate setup was very much the same and John Connally was still the actual final say, he had reorganized the things they had to operate out of this trust, he and others, so that they had a labor relations representative. He went directly into negotiations, and if anybody had to call Fort Worth, he did it. At this time also, they had a new resident manager there. The previous man had retired and gone into the real estate business. I understand that he got wealthy. He went in at the right time. But anyhow, he'd retired. We had a new manager to work with, but we also had a knowledgeable labor relations man.

But the thing that impressed me in this one negotiation--the two meetings with John Connally--was his

intelligence, his ability to say yes or no, period. So when this stuff came out about him accepting a bribe from the milk producers representative, whose reputation for truth was not too good a long time ago, I couldn't believe it and never did believe it. I think Connally would make probably a good President. I don't think they'd kick him around very often.

Marcello: Are there any other specific cases that kind of stand out in your mind for one reason or another while you were associated with the Dallas office?

White: I know of one that was settled in a rather funny manner. It seems I'm talking mostly in Fort Worth, but this one remains in my mind for a number of reasons. This was the Hobbs Trailer Company, which is now a division of Fruehauf. The president of Hobbs Trailer Company was a man who, again, had started out hauling cattle, driving cattle trucks into the stockyard. And I guess through disgust with the trailers they had, he got over into the trailer manufacturing operations.

Anyhow, this plant was organized by the UAW. And the representative handling that plant, later their regional director for the UAW here, was a man by the name of Hiram Moon. Hiram Moon was as Texas as could be--tall, slender man, quite a talkative, talked a lot in the vernacular--but he was a pretty good negotiator

and usually was in control of his committee.

Well, I had been in the Hobbs negotiations a couple of times. This particular situation . . . now we always met in the company's office, in the president's office. I'm not going to mention his name because he is now president of Fruehauf, and he's still operating. Well, anyhow, we met in the president's office which was in a brick building adjacent to the plant. And to get from the front door to the President's office, you had to turn one corner and walk down a real long hall. Well, this particular year we had set . . . now the president was usually there by himself, and he was 5'4" and surrounded by this big tall Moon and six or seven big guys out of the plant. But you never felt anything about this man's size, his physical size, because he knew his operation.

Well, anyhow, previously there had always been this threat of strike, and they hadn't had a strike, so the people hadn't had a chance to participate in one of these joyous occasions. They didn't know what it was all about, so there was always this threat of strike. We were able to head it off the two times I had been there.

This particular time we sat long hours. Again,

the war was over, and demands were heavy on the part of the union. And the UAW was trying to bring this trailer operation up to their Fruehauf contracts. It was not at that time a part of Fruehauf. And this was quite a jump for a company to make.

We finally reached a complete deadlock, and I could think of nothing else, no other approach. We were all tired. We'd been meeting for a number of days, and on this particular day we'd been there long hours. So I finally said, "I have nothing more to suggest other than it looks like we're in a deadlock, so let's adjourn." So everybody said, "Okay."

Well, the funny part of this thing was that the president of the company and I were walking down this long hall together. We were going towards the front door a long about seven o'clock in the evening and about this time of year--May or June--when we have a long daylight period left yet. We were going down this hall together, and I didn't know it but "Hi" Moon, the union representative, was right behind us. And I said to the president, "You know, the union is leaving here to organize their picket lines and so forth. I guess we'll have a picket line on here at midnight. But I think that if you'd offer two more

cents on the wage offer and adjust two classifications, we can get a settlement." I was just talking out loud. I didn't know that "Hi" Moon was behind me. The president turned around and said, "Hiram, did you hear what he said?" He said, "Yes, I heard him." He said, "Will that settle it?" He said, "Yes."

And that's the way we settled that contract-- walking down the hall going out to set up the picket line. But it happened so fast, and it was quick and was not a planned operation on my part. It was just one of those things that happened to you on occasion. I had the nicest letter from that little man after he became president of Freuhauf. I don't know what I've done with it.

Marcello: While we're on the subject of trucking and transportation and that sort of thing, I know that at one point in your activities as a federal mediator you did have some association with Jimmy Hoffa. Now from the standpoint of chronology, this more or less out of line with the period about which we're now talking. As I recall from my previous conversations off the tape, you did have some experiences with Hoffa while you were back in Des Moines. Is that correct?

White: Yes. I can't remember the exact year, but we'd all

heard a little of Jimmy Hoffa and his operations in his home local, his gaining of power, and his organization of the Teamsters Central Conference, which comprised all the teamster locals in eleven states. That's the north central states--Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, all through that area. There was eleven states involved. And wouldn't you know that in their first Central Conference negotiations with the trucking companies, they elected to have them in Des Moines, Iowa. Well, in their preliminary meetings they ironed out a lot of the difficulties of bringing contracts together and got acquainted with each other and so forth. They took up most of the Fort Des Moines Hotel, which is a pretty good-sized hotel, but there was people in there from every place.

Well, eventually they hit deadlock, and the negotiations were being handled by one of Hoffa's representatives. They hit this deadlock and . . . of course, the war was on. They threatened to strike, and the Mediation Service was drawn in to the setup, and I got the assignment. I'd gained some experience by that time, much more than I normally would have if the war hadn't been on, but I also still felt a lack of this

training period that I didn't really get. But I got the assignment.

Well, this turned into a geopolitical operation if there ever was one. Every local union wanted to send a representative in. Every management wanted a man there and many of them with an attorney. Although we had big rooms in the old federal building, we couldn't get them in the building, not in one place in their early negotiations. But the government was coming into the situation, so they all wanted to be there.

Now I think it took me three of four days of working back and forth between the parties and getting assistance from a few individuals on each side. And we finally broke the thing down where we had a workable committee on both sides. Now that worked out by virtue of the fact that . . . the teamsters in cutting down their group of people went through an election process to elect certain individuals to an eight-man committee . . . the only way they could get that going was a provision that the rest of them stay in Des Moines, and they would report to them twice a day.

Well, the management people did very much the same thing. Some of them gave power of attorney to

someone else to handle their negotiations, their part of it. They agreed in advance to whatever was agreed to and went on home to run their business. But an awful lot of them stayed. So, we still had an awful lot of truck owners, truck company operators, and union representatives in Des Moines.

But we finally got to the place where we could have a committee and talk back and forth across the table. Now we got down to an area of wages as being recognized on both sides as a major issue. In . . . say on a Wednesday, in our meeting the international teamsters man who was sitting there heading the negotiations for the teamsters made the proposal--now I remember the figure--he made the proposal to the management representatives, "If you people will raise your wage offer by six cents and make it sixteen cents an hour across the board with the adjustments we have talked about, we will settle for that. You'll have a contract." They'd been asking for around a thirty cents increase. Of course, both sides had to report.

Well, in the meantime Hoffa had come to town. Of course, the union people knew he was there, and I suppose some management. But I didn't.

Marcello: Now was he a fairly important person in the teamsters at this time?

White: He was the head man in this Central States Conference, yes, and the vice-president of the international. Dan Tobin was the teamsters president at that time. He had a lot of enemies, and Jimmy Hoffa was even then probably the most powerful man individually in the Teamsters Union. His base was this eleven-state Central Conference, which was the heaviest operation as far as the over the road trucking was concerned in the United States in that area. His setup had been done shrewdly and with knowledge.

Well, he had come to town. Now I'm sure that some of the management knew it. Of course, the union representatives did, but I didn't until he showed up at the meeting which had already been set up for the next day. Now remember that this teamsters representative had made a proposal--the sixteen cents an hour as opposed to their thirty cents. And the adjustments had already been agreed to in a good blunt statement, "Now you give us that, and you've got a contract." Well, this amounted to a considerable jump from what the trucking companies had been offering. So we sat down and got the meeting under way.

Hoffa was there, and, of course, I met him. He took the place . . . he just moved in where the

international man had been sitting--next to me at the head of the table and the spokesman for the management up there so we could talk closely. Because he was new and I didn't know he was as powerful an operator as he was, didn't know his strength in the union, to being up to date, I made a very brief resume of our conversation of the day before and asked for corroboration from the parties that this is what had happened. Management said, "Yes, as far as we know, this is what happened. This compares with our notes." And the international representative who had been heading the negotiations spoke up, "Yes, I made that offer yesterday. It doesn't stand today. You didn't take it." And somebody on the management side said, "Well, we didn't have a chance. You made the offer, so we had to go back and talk to our people. If we were going to have a contract, we wanted all in agreement. You've got the same problem over on your side."

Well, this kind of conversation went on a little bit, and Hoffa sat there and listened very intently. He turned around to this international man who was sitting right next to him, and he jabbed him with his finger in his chest, and he said, "Did you offer to settle this for sixteen cents yesterday?" The man

said, "Yes, I did." He said, "Well, by God, remember this, we keep our word. You offered sixteen cents yesterday, so we'll take sixteen cents today." He said, "Mr. So-and-So, the spokesman for the trucking union, can I see you out in the hall?" They went into the hall. This was around a big center wall with a balcony sort of thing.

They walked around out there, and pretty soon they came back in, and they asked for separate conferences. Well, we had the room, so the teamsters went in one room and the truckers in another room, and pretty soon they called me to call them back together. Now these were separate meetings. They were by themselves. Management announced that they were not only in agreement with the committee, but they had telephoned the hotel and reached the majority of other people, and we had an agreement on the basis set forth. Jimmy Hoffa said, "Well, we don't have to call the rest of our boys. I'm here. You've got an agreement. When are you going to write it up?" They went that fast.

Marcello: What sort of impression did Hoffa leave upon you as a result of this experience?

White: Well, judging by the things that he did in an organizational way and some of the speeches that he made

which involved, as you probably know, discussions of economics during the war and so forth, some of the positions that he took, and my personal meeting with him, he would have been a success in most any venture that he tried. It's really unfortunate that he got all mixed up with these court cases, and he had that weakness of whatever it was of trying to bribe witnesses and so forth which put him in the penitentiary. There's no question in my mind that if the restriction hadn't been put on Jimmy Hoffa regarding his union activities for a certain period, as part of his pardon, that he'd been back as president of that Teamsters Union within a month after he got out of prison. You don't find too many teamsters that won't admit to you probably that Jimmy did some things wrong, but they say, "Look at all he did for us." So I think Hoffa was human, sure, but he was a well-qualified, not by education certainly, but by experience and intelligence and whatever else goes into the makeup of an individual who could organize like he could organize and who could operate a divergent group from the East to the West, to the North and the South, and maintain unity and get a majority vote for the president of that organization from every section. That

takes quite a guy. I was much impressed with Hoffa.
I think anybody would who'd dealt with him.

Marcello: When did you retire from the Federal Mediation and
Conciliation Service?

White: It'll be four years come June 1.

Marcello: So in 1971 was when you retired?

White: Right.

Marcello: As you look back upon all those years of service, would
you do it over again? That's kind of a trite question,
I suppose, but I'll ask it anyhow.

White: Well, yes. Now I sound a little lackadaisical there,
but that's not true. We all have an ago. We all have
certain things we would like to do. We're all indivi-
dual in our likes and dislikes and so forth.

Well, first, I had a great admiration for the men
I had met in the old U. S. Conciliation Service as
individuals. The service had a wonderful reputation
as the old U.S. Conciliation Service. Those first
people must have done a terrific job to gain entry as
a part of the Department of Labor on a new thing as
far as government was concerned--federal government
in the United States.

You could go home when you got off one of these
situations--many of them--with the definite knowledge
that you had done a lot of good. I guess this

satisfied the social worker in me if you had prevented misery. During the war you could satisfy a patriotic urge that you had prevented, if you wanted to be that egotistical, a walk-out that might cause loss of life of some war front.

You had to live a pretty sober life because you couldn't get drunk one night and go into a meeting at nine o'clock the next morning and keep up with those people. So you had to live a pretty sober life. You had to do what you could do to take care of yourself. Very little of that kind of work is physical. It's a mental probing for some kind of crack to get a pry bar in to break these parties loose from their set positions. To do that you took the thing home with you. Sometimes you missed an awful lot of sleep just laying in bed. "What can I do now?" But if you did work out a solution, you went home with your ego satisfied.

Also, after the first three or four years, or maybe after I hit Texas, and didn't have all those medical bills to pay, the salary was livable in a decent manner. We could have a few of the pleasures.

I don't believe I could have found a job that was more satisfying for me than this thing of being a mediator. It satisfied your ego, if you have one, and

I do. It also gave you some satisfaction of having done some good things. Occasionally, you pulled a boo-boo, so you felt bad about that for awhile, but those things in my stage of the game you can easily forget. So all I remember is the good things, really.

I think I have had a reasonable amount of respect in every community we have lived in. I've had an awful lot of support at home. Yes, I'd do it over again. I think I might take a second view at that staying up all night with the people though.