

HOSPITAL  
ADMINISTRATION  
ORAL HISTORY  
COLLECTION

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Lewis E. Weeks Series

Nelson H. Cruikshank

**NELSON H. CRUIKSHANK**

**In First Person: An Oral History**

**Lewis E. Weeks  
Editor**

**HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION  
Lewis E. Weeks Series**

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Nelson H. Cruikshank

Nelson H. Cruikshank

CHRONOLOGY

- 1902                   born Bradford, Ohio, June 21
- 1920-1921             Oberlin College
- 1925                   Ohio Wesleyan University, A.B.
- 1929                   Union Theological Seminary, M. Div.
- 1931-1933             Brooklyn Federation of Churches, Director of  
                          Social Service Department
- 1933-1935             General Education Board (New Haven) part-time, also  
                          labor organizer
- 1935-1942             WPA, Workers Education, Farm Security  
                          Administration, New England Director
- 1943-1944             War Manpower Commission
- 1944-1950             American Federation of Labor, Director  
                          of Social Insurance Activities
- 1946                UNESCO, U.S. Delegation to First General  
                          Conference, Paris, Member
- 1946-1950          U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, Member  
                          of the Executive Committee
- 1946-1950          U.S. Public Health Service, National Hospital  
                          Advisory Council, Member
- 1947-1950          Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards,  
                          Advisory Committee of Safety in Industry, Member
- 1948                WHO, U.S. Delegation to First General Assembly,  
                          Geneva, Member
- 1948                United Nations, Economic and Social Council,  
                          Representing A.F. of L.
- 1948-1950          President's Council of Economic Advisers, A.F. of L.  
                          Advisers, Member

Nelson H. Cruikshank

CHRONOLOGY (continued)

1950-1952            ECA, European Labor Division, Director

    1952-1968        National Council of Churches of Christ in U.S.,  
                    Department of Church and Economic Life, Member

1953-1955            A.F. of L., Director of Social Insurance Activities

    1953-1960        Department of Labor, Federal Advisory Council, Member

1955-1965            AFL-CIO, Department of Social Security, Director

    1957-1958        Social Security Financing Statutory Advisory Council,  
                    Member

    1961-1969        HEW, Consulting Group to the Secretary, Member

    1962-1970        National Planning Association, Member

    1962-1970        ILO, Committee on Experts on Social Security, Member

    1965-1972        Health Insurance Benefits Advisory Council (Medicare),  
                    Member

1966                 Michigan State University, School of Labor and  
                    Industrial Relations, Visiting Professor

    1966-1971        Duke University, School of Divinity, Board of  
                    Visitors, Member

1967                 University of Michigan, School of Social Work, Lecturer

1969                 Pennsylvania State University, Visiting Professor  
                    in Social Science

1969-1977            National Council of Senior Citizens, President

    1974-1980        Federal Council on the Aging, Member, Chairman,  
                    (1977-1980)

1977-1980            Counselor on Aging to the President of the  
                    United States

Nelson H. Cruikshank

MEMBERSHIPS

Seafarers International Union

Nelson H. Cruikshank

AWARDS & HONORS

American Association of Homes for the Aging  
Presidential Citation

American College of Hospital Administrators  
Honorary Fellow

Group Health Association  
Merit Award, 1965

National Association of Mature People  
Evergreen Award

National Council of Senior Citizens  
Distinguished Service Award

National Consumer's League  
Distinguished Citizen Award

Ohio Senior Citizens  
Hall of Fame

Ohio State AFL-CIO  
Citation for Service in the field of Social Security



CRUIKSHANK:

I was born in the little town of Bradner, Ohio. My father was a grain dealer, had a grain elevator there. Very soon we moved to the town of Fostoria, moved there in 1908. I was six years old. That's where I went to grammar school and high school. Then after a year in Oberlin, I went to Ohio Wesleyan University where I graduated in 1925. Then I went to Union Seminary in New York. I graduated from there in 1929.

The year 1929 was a significant year. The Brooklyn Church and Mission Federation, which was the Brooklyn federation of churches, had to set up a relief program, and I directed that program. This was the fastest growing industry in the Borough of Brooklyn for a while. I realized that I was just putting shin plasters on the economy, just helping people out after disaster had overtaken them.

I had had some relationship with labor, I had worked my way through school by sailing on the Great Lakes. My father, a businessman, was a very socially minded person. Our town, Fostoria, was at that time a prominent labor town. I knew something about the labor movement. So, in 1933 with the coming of the New Deal there were opportunities to work with labor and I went up to

New Haven. I had a part-time church up there but my main work was organizing and working with the labor movement. Then I did some workers' education at New York University and went with the Farm Security Administration, a resettlement administration during that time of labor relations in the South. That worked into the Migratory Labor Camp program. It's easy to identify it with The Grapes of Wrath, everybody knows that. The program started on the West Coast and they decided to set up a national office. They asked me to direct the national office. It wasn't long before we had 200 of these camps operating over the United States.

That's where I got into the health field, because in these camps we had registered nurses resident. We made arrangements with the local physicians to provide services through the nurses. Actually the nurses provided the services. It was kind of a fiction: the doctor had to be technically in charge. The nurse was the one who gave the medical care.

We developed mobile doctors' offices and mobile dental clinics. It was quite innovative. What we did was...we had the services of other organizations, for example, in the design of the camps. Who knew how to set up camps in the middle of the country? The Army did. The Army engineers were the guys who designed the physical aspects of our camps. Then we drew on the Public Health Service. Between the Public Health Service, who were really dedicated doctors, and the Army engineers who designed these facilities which were very innovative, we had a complete mobile clinic that could be moved a couple of hundred miles over night, and a completely mobile dental service that could be moved and set up over night. The supreme compliment was paid to us, I guess, the day after Pearl Harbor when, under the War Powers Act, the

Navy requisitioned every one of them and took them to the South Pacific where they were used to provide medical care where there was no other kind of medical care.

Beyond the physical structure, the camp program developed out of a program that was set up by the Farm Security Administration. Farm Security was an agricultural program for low income farmers, tenant farmers, etc. Loans were made to families that would enable them, particularly in the South although it operated in the North and the Northeast also, but particularly in the South, to have a farm and family plan, they called it. They would study the family's economic situation, looking it over for a period of years. Instead of raising cotton right up to the cabin door, they taught them how to have a garden. Home supervisors, we called them, dedicated young women, taught farm wives how to can goods, which they didn't know. There would be a cooperative setup. There would be a cow. Ten families would go together and have a bull to improve the quality of the herd. There would be fresh milk in the family for the first time. All this kind of thing.

They also loaned them money to join a cooperative medical service, what we would call an HMO today. Dr. Davis from the Public Health Service, and his assistant was Dr. Fred Mott, a name which you probably have come across. That would be the son of John R. Mott, the great mover and shaker in the YMCA. Fred Mott was an M.D. and he had a small staff of people. They developed these plans. That extended into the Migratory Labor Program. We had a very minimum fee that these people paid, just enough so they had a sense of participation, and provided medical services for them. That was very essential for them. Anyway among the migrants particularly in the South there was a very high incidence of venereal disease. That was before penicillin. They

were put under treatment, and were required to come in for their regular treatments as part of their agreement to live in the camp. So there was a paternalistic atmosphere to it but also as democratic as we possibly could make it. That was my point of entry into medical service concerns.

As being director of that program--the direction of the program started with the camp director, the director of each camp. Some of them were big. One or two of them had as many as a thousand families, five thousand population, which we decided was too big. After we made some of the big ones we cut them down in size. He would be the director in charge, the administrative officer of the camp. Everything in the camp was under his direction. We would have these home supervisors, we would have these registered nurses, we would have an educational person on the camp, a large camp. They reported to him administratively. Functionally and programwise the nurses reported to the medical corps, the Public Health Service. Programwise the education person would report to the education office. That structure went on up to the top. As national director of the program I was administrative director, but Fred Mott and Davis didn't report to me, administratively they did, but functionally they didn't. I was not running a health program but I was running a program that had a health program in it. Sounds kind of complicated but it went pretty well. It went well because there were dedicated people.

WEEKS:

It reminds me a great deal of the Labrador experiment they did back around the turn of the century. Nurses were practitioners. Here you had nurse practitioners.

CRUIKSHANK:

Well, I saw some of the fakery in the medical profession at that time. We had doctors down there in Florida who had never served a black patient. I am sure they did it reluctantly. They were very strict about the law that nurses didn't prescribe, but we found out they were signing prescription forms by the hundreds and the nurse would write in what was needed. The doctor got his dollar; that was his concern. There was some supervision. As I say, all the nurses were registered nurses. They were competent people. While it wasn't ideal medical care, perhaps, it was far better than any of them had had before.

WEEKS:

Probably most of them had had none.

CRUIKSHANK:

Talk about the incidence of venereal disease, they didn't know what it was. A lot of them didn't know what caused it.

WEEKS:

I can remember back about that time reading in a popular magazine about a big black from the pine woods who came in proud that he was 4+. He probably didn't realize what syphilis was. From that did you go into War Manpower?

CRUIKSHANK:

The Migratory Program ceased to have the identity it did when the war came along. Our camps were dispersed into local control. The national aspect of it was dissipated pretty much. The camps became labor supply sources. The whole labor picture changed. The War Manpower Commission was along that line of interest. There was very little of the health aspect in the War Manpower thing.

WEEKS:

I wanted to ask you one question about War Manpower: Was this when Paul McNutt was there?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. He was the...

WEEKS:

I don't know whether it was in Harris's book\* or not that the statement was made that in 1940 Franklin Roosevelt's enthusiasm for a health insurance sort of faded about the time of election because he was afraid that if they did anything that McNutt would come into a more prominent position and, maybe, would be a rival to him for...

CRUIKSHANK:

He became a rival, but never a very serious threat. He wanted me at one time to take over the labor management of his campaign, but that's neither here nor there.

WEEKS:

Sometimes these little things make a great change in a movement. Somebody's personal fear or personal ambition...

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\*Richard Harris. A Sacred Trust. New York: The New American Library, 1966.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. It was generally thought that the War Manpower would be an unpopular job. It was to some extent. It would have been very unpopular had it not been for the nearly universal support for the war effort. It was common talk around Washington, and I think there was some truth to it, that Roosevelt gave McNutt that unpopular job as a way, you know... it was not a stepping stone to something else...he would make a lot of enemies on that job.

WEEKS:

Shortly after that is when you went with AFL?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, in 1944. The war was winding down. The constructive work in War Manpower was ending. That was the time, I think 1941, that the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill was introduced. The A.F. of L. was supporting it and actively working for it, and so was the CIO. There was an effort made to set up a joint A.F. of L. and CIO office just to promote the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill. But elements of division came between the AFL and CIO when, I guess, it was the A.F. of L. people primarily who thought they wouldn't work with the CIO in a joint effort at that time. So they decided to set up an office of their own with the primary purpose to work for the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill.

That was the American counterpart, in a way, of the Beveridge plan. They thought in the wartime there was a possibility of getting it, but it was much more than a health plan, you know. It was a nationalized employment service and...

WEEKS:

Something about workman's compensation?

CRUIKSHANK:

No, that was left to the states, but the employment service was to be nationalized and the unemployment compensation was to be nationalized. There was an overall comprehensive social insurance plan. There were quite a lot of changes in the survivor and retirement provisions of Social Security, too. So the jurisdiction that was given my little office by the A.F. of L. was that I was in charge of everything connected with Social Security and all the amendments attached to Social Security. Wagner-Murray-Dingell was a complicated set of amendments to the Social Security Act. The office was called the Director of Social Insurance Activities. This was a tiny, little office with no staff to begin with. It was a coordinating job. Of course, there was a legislative office, who did the direct lobbying, but I soon got into that aspect of it.

Later on I was able to convince the A.F. of L. people that we should work more with the CIO people in this effort. Then under a good bit of the effort provided by Doctor Davis we set up the Committee for the Nation's Health.

WEEKS:

Was that Michael Davis?

CRUIKSHANK:

Michael Davis, yes. Both the A.F. of L. and the CIO. contributed to it financially and otherwise, but we didn't set up an office. Well, the Committee for the Nation's Health had a small office. But it didn't mean an



organic combination of the A.F. of L. and the CIO. That's what the craft union people were afraid of. They didn't want an organic structural affiliation.

WEEKS:

Not with an industrial union?

CRUIKSHANK:

Well, that division...there were strong industrial unions within the A.F. of L. Some people forget that. The Garment Workers were industrial, the Mine Workers were industrial. After the Wagner National Labor Relations Act many of the old craft unions became industrial, like the Machinists. They went out and organized plants and factories. There was an ideological division between the A.F. of L. and the CIO. The old-line A.F. of L. people didn't want to have a structural relationship with the CIO, but they agreed, I got them to agree, we could work together in kind of a neutral area with Mike Davis and his small staff. They both supported it financially and otherwise.

WEEKS:

Truman was really supporting compulsory health insurance during this period, wasn't he, after he became president?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, it was one of the continuing motivations of Truman. He would often say where it came. When he was judge in Jackson County in Missouri, he saw how the poor people were not getting medical care. If they did, it put them into economic ruin. He decided that if he ever had a chance to correct that situation he would. It was a continuing motivation of his. There are some people who have written about this, saying he was lukewarm during critical

time but I never found him so. There were times when it was not advantageous to press the matter. He was a practical politician, but I don't think he ever gave up. As a matter of fact, in interviews he had after he left office, when he was asked what his major disappointments were, he said that he didn't get national health insurance.

WEEKS:

Had AMA started their opposition as early as this?

CRUIKSHANK:

Oh yes, yes. The funny thing, you know, going back into the history of this, as early as 1915 the AMA endorsed national health insurance. Ray Lyman Wilbur was president of AMA... and the A.F. of L. opposed it. Sam Gompers testified against it. The AMA as I observed it...I have often said there are two AMAs. There is the AMA that does a great deal of constructive work on medical standards, things like the specialty boards and the technical work they do in their laboratory, their journal and so forth. Then there is the political AMA. I think that was a great tragedy that the medical profession of the United States was pretty much turned around by Morris Fishbein. His polemics as editor of the journal...of course, that gave him the continuing office, the editor of the journal was more of a continuing office than the president of the AMA which changes from year to year. He had a tremendous influence. He convinced the medical profession that it was a business, and it was characterized by free enterprise and all of the other characteristics of a junk yard or an automobile dealership or anything else. I think it was a great tragedy and the AMA isn't over it yet. As a part of that it was his

continuing drive to oppose anything...you know he came out in the Journal about the Committee on the Nation's Health, and the one that reported in 1932, Mike Davis headed that. What was that famous committee?

WEEKS:

The Committee on the Cost of Medical Care?

CRUIKSHANK:

The Committee on the Cost of Medical Care. The recommendation of such a mild thing as Blue Cross, Fishbein thundered in the AMA journal that this was Communism, inciting to revolution, and so forth. Anything that even touched on the business relationship of the private practitioner was anathema to him. He had a great deal of influence in making that aspect of the medical profession in the United States what it was. They were fulminating against any kind of health insurance as mild as Blue Cross even before the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill was ever introduced.

WEEKS:

Don't I remember reading that you debated Fishbein about this time?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. I was given credit for annihilating him. I don't know whether that's true or not. I think the record kind of indicates it. I think it was kind of a pyrrhic victory if it was, because they got smarter after that. It was at "The Town Meeting of the Air." That was a very popular radio program. Everybody listened to it. Oscar Ewing and I debated Morris Fishbein and Senator Alexander Smith of New Jersey. I had debated Fishbein a number of times in different forums: Chicago "Round Table of the Air" and others. The one I am talking about was "The Town Meeting of the Air." "The American

Forum" was another, a lawyer here in Washington ran "The American Forum." I was on against Fishbein a number of times. I would write in and get these transcripts that people sell after these radio programs. I studied them very carefully. I saw what his technique was. He was a completely ruthless and unscrupulous guy. I saw that he would take advantage of the fact...

(I don't know how much you want to digress in this. This is a part of the philosophy of the thing and it's relevant to things that are going on today, that these forums, these so-called town meetings have the appearance of something like a judicial operation. There was one in New York that was actually called "The Court of the Air" and it was run like a court, one of the early television programs. They would have some guy dressed up like a judge and different people would appear as "witnesses," but they are really not like a judicial proceeding because it gives an advantage to the unscrupulous guy that has no sense of responsibility. In a court, if a guy just makes up a statistic, for example, the opposing lawyer can come the next day and challenge it and say it isn't true. On these programs you can't.)

I would take Fishbein's statistics he would quote--and he wouldn't say about a quarter of the people, he would say 23.6%. It sounded authentic. I would trace these down and find there wasn't any source at all. He was just making it up. Yet there was no chance to do that, check it, once on the air. So, I decided the only way to beat him was to discredit him. I looked for the handle.

Young Peg Stein who worked in the Committee for the Nation's Health said, "You have debated Fishbein a couple of times. Have you seen his latest 'Dr. Pepys' Diary'?"

He used to publish a little thing he thought was kind of cute in the Journal of the AMA called "Dr. Pepys' Diary" which would give an account of what he did. This clipping she gave me I saw was the real handle to destroy him because he told about being in England. He was a great guy to boast about his social connections. "Dr. Pepys' Diary" told about having dinner with the King's physician once, and how he dined with Lord so-and-so on Tuesday and all of this went right through the week. On Friday he told about going around to the headquarters of the National Health office in England picking up the papers and then reading a detective story on the plane on the way to Paris.

When this debate came off, I tried to lead him into this a couple of times, but he wouldn't tumble. This was on the Chicago "Roundtable of the Air." It was lucky for me he didn't jump on it.

A friend of mine, a lawyer from Chicago, was in New York the time this later debate took place on "The Town Meeting of the Air." Just as we filed on the platform he came up to me and said, "Nelson, there will be a question period. Is there any question that I could ask Doctor Fishbein?"

I said, "Yes." This was just as we filed up on the platform. "Ask him about his basis for his criticism of the British health service."

He said, "O.K."

The question period came. This guy got up, very well dressed, and said, "Doctor Fishbein, as a professional man also from your city of Chicago, I would like to ask you for the basis of your understanding of your study you made of the British health service."

Fishbein thought he was a doctor, and fell for it hook, line, and sinker.

I got up. I had already taken a little time. I told the moderator, I said, "I want five minutes here and I won't take any more time, if you give me five minutes now." It was a professor from Rutgers who was the moderator.

He said, "Cruikshank, you have talked a good bit."

I said, "I want five minutes right now, and that will be the end."

I read his diary. I said "My authority for this is the Journal of the American Medical Association."

The house was packed with doctors. It looked so silly, you know.

I said, "After wining and dining with all the aristocracy of Britain, he went out the last day and picked up the papers and he didn't even read them. He read a novel on the way to Paris. This is the basis of Doctor Fishbein's understanding of the British health service."

By the time I got through the doctors were booing him. I just bored in. I had been waiting for this. The next week the AMA board met and ordered Fishbein to stay off radio and television. Within a month they asked for his resignation at a very handsome retirement salary. This didn't bother him too much, I guess. As I said, this was a pyrrhic victory because they got smarter. It would have been easier, I think, if he had continued as a spokesman for AMA. It was easier to discredit him if he just worked at it. Another time before this I had challenged his statistics a couple of times.

I took a risk too, but having studied his technique and pored over the transcripts, when he came out with a statistic, I would say, "I happen to know there is no basis for that. Doctor Fishbein just made that up." That was a chance because he might have been able to pull out a statistical abstract and say, "Here!" But he didn't. The odds were in my favor.

It wasn't long after that that they got...it was a couple of years after that they got Doctor Annis who was a more skillful debater and who better knew how to demagogue in a sophisticated way. For example, when the Surgeon General's report came out on smoking, this was a period when we had almost enough votes on the Ways and Means Committee to report out the Medicare bill favorably. We lacked two votes.

Among the votes we didn't have was Wilbur Mills' who was Chairman of Ways and Means. We felt if we had Wilbur Mills' vote there would be a couple more coming along, and we would have had 13 or 14 against 11 or 12 on the Ways and Means Committee. We were also sure--there had been various polls and nose-counting--that if we got it out of committee we could pass it on the floor. Mills kind of kept playing games with us, but the Ways and Means Committee was structured, particularly the Democratic side of the Committee, so that there were men from different parts of the country. You see, that also was the Committee on Committees in the House. It had a lot of power, all the tax thing. If anybody wanted to be on the Agriculture Committee they had to go to the Ways and Means Committee, and be from a farm area. Or if they came from Wall Street and wanted a certain tax measure passed they had to go to the Ways and Means Committee to get it. So there was a lot of power registered in that committee.

They always had someone from the tobacco growing area. They had someone from the wheat growing area in the Middle West, and they had someone from the Far West. The committee was structured in that way. So it was a little Congress in itself, in a way. There was a Congressman from Kentucky who had given Wilbur Mills his proxy, so we knew that Wilbur Mills' vote was a powerful vote, but it was at least two votes on the committee.

After the Surgeon General's report came out against cigarette smoking, the Kentucky legislature had a joint session and Annis, working through the medical society in Kentucky got himself an invitation to address the joint legislature.

He announced that the American Medical Association was not against tobacco, it was against cancer. Which, you know, is demagoguery in the worst way. The result was that the legislature asked this Congressman to withdraw his proxy. That was the kind of sophisticated operation that the AMA went into at that time.

This goes back to my statement that there were two AMAs. The AMA journal over the years would not take an advertisement from the tobacco industry, would never take an advertisement from the big cigarette companies, although the cigarette manufacturers would have paid any price to have an ad in the journal. There the professionalism prevailed. Long before the Surgeon General's investigation and report, the AMA had laboratories testing out cigarettes and they knew they were dangerous. They took that position.

When it came to a vote regarding Medicare, touching what they thought was the economic interest of the doctor, they would have their president make a silly statement like, "The AMA is not against tobacco, it is again cancer." This was a complete departure from a professional attitude. As I say, Annis was a smooth operator.

WEEKS:

Annis helped Smathers defeat Senator Pepper in Florida didn't he?



CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, that's right. The AMA's operation was smart enough to know, as other people have learned too, there are certain elections that you not only defeat one person but you sent a message to all the members. Pepper was a cosponsor of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill. The AMA knew they couldn't beat Wagner in New York with all his sponsorship of labor legislation, housing, and his great liberal reputation. They picked Pepper as being vulnerable. They got this P.R. outfit on the West Coast, Whittaker and Baxter, a man and wife team out there, and paid them big chunks of money to develop a sophisticated campaign. Every doctor's office in Florida had this Fielding picture, "The Night Watch", the doctor, you know, holding the hand of the young child who should have been in the hospital. I used to say, "That kid ought to be in the hospital." The doctors handed out things to the patients which said, "I can't be your doctor any more if Pepper is re-elected." It was really a massive campaign, and Pepper was defeated, Smathers was put in. This message went in a ripple effect in the Senate that it didn't pay to support the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill. It was a sophisticated operation. It's what the New Right is doing today.

Smathers was elected and got a spot on the Senate Finance Committee and was influential. Smathers was friendly to Kennedy, which used to worry us sometimes but he apparently could never influence Jack Kennedy on this.

WEEKS:

Smathers mellowed a little bit, didn't he when he got to be 65?

CRUIKSHANK:

Not on the question of health. I remember when we were trying to add disability protection to the Social Security Act and we needed Smathers' vote on the Senate Finance Committee to get it reported out. I tried to call Smathers. One thing about George, he was frank and outspoken. He didn't play games with you, which made life easier in a way. Some of these guys will say, "Well, I'll think it over." They would give you a promise and then go back on it. Not Smathers. I chased him all over Florida by telephone one time trying to get in touch with him to support us. I finally caught up with him in Jacksonville.

He said, "Nelson, I know what you want. You want my vote on the disability bill. Let's stop wasting your time and mine. You know the AMA is against it. If it weren't for the AMA I wouldn't be in the Senate. How do you think I am going to vote? Stop worrying me."

I said, "Thanks, George, you are frank about it."

He said, "You might as well know it. There is no point in trying to kid you."

The AMA was against the disability bill because they said that was a foot in the door, that it would require doctors to make a determination on which the benefit was dependent, and doctors shouldn't be making that kind of determination. They tried to take a technical position that a doctor couldn't determine when a person was disabled. Of course they did it all the time.

WEEKS:

Regarding this influence which affected Pepper, was Oscar Ewing affected the same way? He, of course, had proposed hospital insurance for people on Social Security, because of that he never would have become Secretary of HEW when it was established, would he?

CRUIKSHANK:

That's true. There had been a move in government administration to set up a Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The AMA bitterly opposed it. They said they wouldn't oppose it if Ewing wouldn't be the Secretary. Neither Roosevelt or Truman would give such a pledge. Consequently the AMA was able to stop the establishment of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare--before it was the Federal Security Agency under McNutt--until the election of Eisenhower in 1952. Then very early on Eisenhower set up the thing. Of course, Eisenhower wouldn't have appointed Ewing anyway, he was a prominent Democrat. The AMA thought they had a right to claim that they have a doctor to head that program. The assignment was given to Senator Taft, a good, solid conservative, a friend of the AMA, to appease them on this and they held the first general, special meeting of the House of Delegates of the AMA that had been held in a hundred years. This was at Taft's behest. Taft went over and told them they would have to go along with the Department of HEW, that they were going to have it, but he promised them that there would be a man of their choice who would be the chief medical man. That kind of turned sour too in an odd sort of way.

They got the department, and the secretaryship was a payoff to Oveta Culp Hobby for having turned the Houston Post in favor of Eisenhower in the election, although she had been a life-long Democrat. Then the AMA began to make its nominations. They made a couple of tactical mistakes. They went into see Eisenhower. They had a fancy public relations book showing all their charts and things how they had seen the people who had elected him. That was the wrong way to approach Ike. Ike thought he elected himself, his popularity and all. He probably was much nearer the truth. The story is that when they went out, he told Adams, his chief assistant at that time he said, "I never want to see those guys again." He used some cuss word. He said, "Don't ever let them in again. I never want to talk to the AMA people again." He said, "They are impossible."

Then the AMA came up with a bunch of hacks. The top salary in government administration at that time was about ten or twelve thousand dollars a year. The AMA, making good on their promise that they could name the man, couldn't get anybody with professional standing. They came forward with a number of names, who were just hacks. Eisenhower wouldn't accept them. Secretary Hobby wouldn't accept them. Nelson Rockefeller, the Under Secretary of HEW, who had considerable connections in the respectable end of the medical profession through the Rockefeller Foundation and so forth, knew his way around. So finally HEW named their own man, Coggeshall from Chicago. He accepted it. He brought some respectability and some status to the department. He wasn't bitterly opposed to Medicare and health insurance. I talked to Coggeshall many times. He knew he couldn't go very far. He was not one of these hard-shelled reactionaries, by any means.

WEEKS:

He made quite a famous study of medical education a little later, didn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, he did. But it was an impossible job because he didn't have the medical profession back of him, although they should have been, because he was a man who brought considerable prestige and dignity to that office. If they had backed him up, that office would have had more influence than it had. But they didn't, they kind of played sour grapes on him.

WEEKS:

I was wondering if we could talk just a little bit about Oveta Culp Hobby. I haven't been able to get to her, by the way. She won't talk with anybody, I understand. You have given me the reason why she was chosen. I never knew. I thought possibly the fact that they were both military, a friendship, or acquaintanceship there...

CRUIKSHANK:

I think that possibly had something to do with it. The main thing was that the Houston Post, of which she was publisher, supported Ike. She married the head of the Post. They endorsed Eisenhower and Eisenhower carried Texas which was important to him. Particularly in the nomination, the Texas vote was crucial. He owed a big political debt to Oveta Culp Hobby.

WEEKS:

There was quite a lot of enmity between Sam Rayburn and her, wasn't there?

CRUIKSHANK:

Oh, yes. Sam could stand for all kinds of political opposition but he couldn't stand what he called being a traitor. I have heard him say in his office, "We made that little bitch, and I'm going to get her someday." And he did.

WEEKS:

He did get her?

CRUIKSHANK:

You want that story? We know that in the Eisenhower administration there was no chance, you know...he had pledged to oppose national health insurance and Medicare, although I am told by Arthur Flemming that he later regretted that, but he had made a pledge and he would hold to it. We tried other approaches to improve the means of medical care. Hubert Humphrey had a bill in to make funds available for the development of group practice prepayment plans. Experience had shown that unless you had some source that could get an organization over the first hump, like the HIP in New York, where LaGuardia furnished \$400,000 and put the city employees into the system. That got them over that first organizational hump. The Kaiser plan had the resources of the Kaiser industries back of them. So Hubert Humphrey had a bill in and we in the labor movement had supported the Humphrey bill. Then we approached Rockefeller who was sympathetic to this idea, but it would have to be their program and they would work it out. He had an assistant who came from the law firm that represented the Rockefellers in New York. A very proud and arrogant young man, a Harvard Law guy, a football player, and what not. I forget his name but I think it was Rod Perkins. You have to forgive, at my age names

slip. Rockefeller said work it out with whatever his name was. Andy Biemiller, the legislative director of the A.F. of L. and I had a number of conversations with this chap. We thought we were making some headway, but we had to negotiate inch by inch in order to get him to support it. Time went on and we were approaching an agreement something like the Humphrey bill which the Republicans would support, when all of a sudden Andy and I went over to see this chap and we just found that he was not interested any more. We couldn't quite penetrate what it was so we challenged him.

We said, "What's the matter? Come clean. We know that you are talking differently."

"Well," he said, "I'll tell you what. We've got a bill of our own. It's not along these lines, but Secretary Hobby is going to introduce it over national television. Eisenhower is going to introduce her to the national television audience. That will make it go over. We don't need this bill politically, and you might as well know it."

I said, "That's fine. Thanks for letting us know."

We walked out, and, going down the hall, Andy who had been a member of Congress and close to Mr. Sam, stopped short there in the middle of the hall. He said, "I remember Sam telling me that if he ever had a chance to get Hobby, he wanted to know. Let's go and see if Mr. Sam is in his office."

So we turned around and went back. Sure enough Mr. Sam was in and we told him the story.

He said, "That's it."

(I don't know how much of Mr. Sam's language you want on this tape.) He said, "We'll get that little \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\* right over national television." He was an earthy character, you know.

He said, "Just tell your friends in Congress to follow the leadership when this vote comes up."

So they put on their television show. It was kind of a dull show with charts and things and Madam Hobby explained they were going to do some things about the insurance industry and they were going to get insurance through private industry and this kind of junk, which had been tried before. There was nothing new and startling. They thought this big public relations gimmick...Eisenhower did present her over the national networks. She came out with her charts and her sex appeal.

So soon afterwards the vote came up. When you looked at that record of the way the vote went it was just overwhelmingly defeated. They got something like eighty votes in the House. Three hundred and something against it. When you looked at the people who were against it, it was a combination of all the liberals, and all the hardbacked conservatives. It was the funniest combination of people. We told our friends in Congress to just follow the leadership. Call Mr. Sam and follow his vote.

He was saying, "Kill it, boys!"

She went down in disgrace.

Not long after that--not having any big victories we had to survive on little victories--this guy, I can't think of his name, an arrogant guy, so cocksure. Finally we met in the hall one day.

He said, "What happened?"



I said, "Come around some time and I'll give you a lesson." That's all I said to him. I don't know if he ever did know what happened.

That was Sam's chance. In his office he said, "Look, that little \*\*\*\*\*  
we made her. She was the Secretary of the Democratic party in Texas. Without  
our backing her she would be a stenographer yet. To turn coat on us as she  
did...I'll get her."

Actually it undermined her influence in the Cabinet. She wasn't there  
long after that. It demonstrated she couldn't win a vote even on a private  
insurance thing in the House.

WEEKS:

I have often heard it said that Rockefeller as Under Secretary of HEW was  
a person who was sort of an acting secretary.

CRUIKSHANK:

Very definitely. He was smarter. He knew the score on things. You know  
he was brought up in the Roosevelt administration. He was director of Latin  
Admerican affairs under Roosevelt. We got along fine with Nelson Rockefeller.

When he first came in George Meany took me over and introduced me to him.  
He and Meany had had an excellent relationship in New York. Way back in 1931  
when the Rockefeller Center was first conceived, Nelson Rockefeller was named  
by the family as director of that. Meany at that time was the business agent  
for the plumbers in New York. They agreed that Meany would represent all  
labor on the development of Rockefeller Center. He and Nelson Rockefeller  
established a relationship at that time. Rockefeller Center was 100% union  
labor. Even to this day the maintenance--there isn't a window in Rockefeller  
Center that isn't done by union labor, or an elevator operated. It's still  
true.

So he took me over and introduced me to Nelson Rockefeller. We had an excellent relationship and cooperation. There were pledges, and I knew that their platform promises were such that we couldn't get national health insurance and we couldn't get Medicare under that regime but while the administration opposed them we got disability passed through the House. Marion Folsom was not, as Secretary of HEW, really opposed. He got through the first thing that froze an individual's wage record at the time he was declared disabled. That doesn't seem like a very important thing but it was important because Marion Folsom knew that this meant that the medical profession had to make a decision about the man's disability--man or woman, mostly men in the labor force then. This was the breakthrough. If you got over that hump, then you could get to a place where you could get benefits for disability. That was under Marion Folsom's leadership.

When Arthur Flemming came in--Arthur Flemming and I were old friends, going way back to school days in Ohio Wesleyan. He had a study made of the medical needs of older people. It was a curious study because all of the arguments for Medicare were in it. Everything supported Medicare except the last page, which was the conclusion that Medicare was not the answer. It was a useful document all except the last page. We knew the last page had to be written because that was the political reality.

WEEKS:

As I remember reading, this was done about the time of the Forand bill, wasn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, the Forand bill was introduced in August 1957.

WEEKS:

While we are talking there are a couple of things I would like to go back and ask you. It seems to me I remember hearing that the bill was in Ways and Means and wasn't getting anywhere...

CRUIKSHANK:

It had only eight sponsors when it went in, out of twenty-five.

WEEKS:

Did you suggest to Mills or Flemming or someone that HEW do this study?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. I think they would have done it anyway, but I can't pinpoint the...I was in close cooperative relationship with Flemming, but we had connections outside. He and Charles Taft, for example, -- and Charles was a completely different animal than Bob, completely different person, he was a gentleman for one thing and he wasn't a hard-shelled reactionary as Bob Taft was. Incidentally he is a very prominent churchman, and really a scholar. He is a theological scholar. I said that he could take the chair of Systematic Theology in any seminary in the country.

He and Flemming were instrumental in setting up in the National Council of Churches the Department of Church and Economic Life in which were laymen and labor people and others--Victor Reuther served with me on that. That was established in 1946, so I had a continuing relationship with Arthur Flemming in whatever job he was in.

While I can't pinpoint saying "Arthur, I think you ought to do this," we were in conversations over lunches and breakfasts almost all the time.

WEEKS:

I wondered if Mills might have welcomed this study as a way of stalling a little bit at the time.

CRUIKSHANK:

Probably, except at that stage Mills didn't need too much stalling for time. He knew it wouldn't pass in the Republican administration.

After Kennedy was elected I went into see Arthur to say goodbye to him and to ask him what he was going to do before he went out of Oregon to become president of Oregon University. We chatted in a friendly way and I said, "You know, I think if your candidate had endorsed Medicare, I think he probably would have been elected. It was that close."

He said, "Yes, I think that is true. We tried to get him to do it, but he wouldn't do it. He said it was going back on a position of the Republican party."

That indicated Flemming's personal attitude. I am sure that Flemming knew that the study made under the direction of Ida Merriam would help our cause, but he also knew that it wouldn't put it over the goal line at that time.

WEEKS:

This was a cumulative thing that took years to accomplish. I would like to go back just a little bit to the Hill-Burton days. This was shortly after you went to A.F. of L.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, that was the first bill I ever testified on, in 1946.

WEEKS:

Is that right? This is one of Bugbee's pet bills, you know. Did you know the principals: Hill and Burton?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. Oh, yes, particularly Hill. Hill was chairman of the Labor Committee in the Senate at that time. We had a relationship with Lister Hill.

WEEKS:

You talked about Bob Taft. He entered into this a little bit. According to Bugbee he wanted to rewrite the bill because he wanted a health bill because he was looking ahead to 1952 and the presidential nomination.

CRUIKSHANK:

He looked forward to '40 and '44 and '48 and '52.

WEEKS:

I was told an amusing thing which might be interesting to you being an Ohioan by birth. He said "I want to rewrite this thing so the administration of the bill is in the state rather than federally administered" because apparently something had happened in the past in some legislation that affected Ohio where it had been administered from Washington--whatever this was--there had been some dispute and some monies had been withheld.

CRUIKSHANK:

I know what that was. That was in Social Security and unemployment compensation that was administered by the state but the funds came out of the federal government. The federal government could declare the state out of compliance.

Arthur Altmeyer was then the chief administrator of the Social Security Act (unemployment insurance was then a part of Social Security). Davey, governor of Ohio, had introduced politics in the checks that went out to the unemployed. Altmeyer declared them out of compliance and shut off the funds to the state of Ohio, which was a risky thing to do but it was a thing which established the authority of the federal government in that whole area. Of course Taft didn't like that; Davey was one of his buddies.

Taft introduced several health bills that he put forward as some kind of compromise, but they were such serious compromises that we never could support them. There was a larger role for the insurance industry in them, an underwriting role which was not true in Medicare although the insurance companies have an administrative role. They don't have an underwriting role, which is crucial in our view. He was bitterly opposed to anything like national health insurance. When Eisenhower became President, Taft became chairman of the committee in the Senate which heard these bills. I have forgotten exactly what his role was but it was a very key role. He had a tremendous amount of influence, you know. He was known as "Mr. Republican." I think a very interesting symbolism here in Washington. If you don't mind a digression, the statue of Taft down there is the only statue of a man on the Capitol lawn, you know. I think the psychological symbolism of that is tremendous. The Republican party knew they owed Taft the nomination in 1952, but they didn't think he could be elected. So they wanted a popular man like Eisenhower. Instead of giving him the Presidency they erected a statue of him and put bells on it. The bells are to remind every member of Congress, every hour you don't get your statue on the lawn if you ever support a labor law.

WEEKS:

The Murray-Dingell bills continued after Wagner resigned. Then in 1955, I think it was, Dingell died. I haven't been able to find much about Congressman Dingell, What kind of man was he?

CRUIKSHANK:

He was a very interesting person. He had been a printer by trade. He came out of the working group, a union printer. He had tuberculosis. The printers' union had a printers' home out in Denver for tubercular patients. He went out there. His tuberculosis was arrested. He was always a frail man after that. He was out there several years. He saw the kind of health plan a working man could have if he didn't just have to pay for it out of current income. The dedicated doctors out there saved his life. He also had a lot of time for reflection and came back and went into politics. He was elected time after time from Michigan with labor backing. This was a great drive on his part. He was a natural, in a way, to sponsor the plan with two liberal Senators like Senator Wagner, and Senator Murray of Montana who was a very wealthy man. He had an independence from political life, it gave him stature. It was a great team, Murray and Dingell.

WEEKS:

I have never seen any reference to Dingell in the "literature" you read.

CRUIKSHANK:

I wonder why that is because he was an influence in the House and people respected him. I would say he was a fanatic, except that is kind of a derogatory word, but he was a dedicated, highly motivated man.

WEEKS:

I hope to speak to his son. I thought maybe he could tell me how he is carrying on in the House, and reminisce about his father.

CRUIKSHANK:

He probably would. His son, you know, was denied a place on the Ways and Means Committee. That's always burned him up. Part of that was that they didn't want the Dingell influence in Ways and Means. We tried to get him on the Ways and Means Committee after he succeeded his father but we didn't have the influence to do it at the time.

WEEKS:

In reading the transcript of the oral history you gave to Columbia University I noticed that in speaking of Mr. Meany who succeeded Mr. Green as President of the A.F. of L. in 1952 you refer to him as Mr. Meany with great deference and respect. Of course I didn't know what the tone was from reading the transcript. We have seen Mr. Means on television until recently. What kind of man was he to work with?

CRUIKSHANK:

A very splendid man to work with. You couldn't ask for a finer boss. In the first place, he was a highly intelligent man. The image he projected sometimes on television, or sometimes as the heavy-handed, short-fingered plumber was not accurate. It was misleading, I would say. He had a mind as sharp as a steel trap. A grasp of details as well as a grasp of principles. A man of high principle. A gentle person to work for.



I can hardly remember a time, I can't recall any, when Meany would call up and say: "Nelson, do this or do that," or "Go out and make this speech for me." He would say, "Can you come up and see me?" You would go up and he would say, "I have got this engagement out in Wyoming. How is your calendar? Could you take that for me?" It was a gentle approach.

I might say, "I have something else on that date, President Meany."

He might say, "See if you can work it out." You knew it was an order but it was always in a gentle and understanding way. He never bossed people around. Not only that but he would back you up.

If you want to know about Mr. Meany, let me give you an instance. After Kennedy was elected we had some unemployment compensation bills we wanted to get passed, some reforms in unemployment compensation. I worked with Leonard Lesser who was the social security man for the Industrial Department of AFL-CIO. We worked these out. We had both wings of the labor movement supporting these. Bill Wirtz, the Secretary of Labor, was a friend of ours. This isn't a story about Bill Wirtz, this is a story about Mr. Meany. We told Mr. Wirtz we wanted to see him and discuss our legislative program with him, to see if we could get administrative endorsement. When we got over there, to our surprise, he had all his staff and technicians around him. We thought we were just going to talk with Bill Wirtz. We didn't object to that.

In the middle of the discussion Wirtz said to me, "Nelson, are you speaking for the AFL-CIO, or are these just some ideas you cooked up yourself?"

I said, "Mr. Secretary, if there is any question in your mind about that, there is no use carrying on the discussion." I got up and walked out. I was infuriated to be challenged that way. Leonard Lesser got up and walked out with me. I was so mad. We got in the cab and went back to see Meany and tell him what had happened. Fortunately he was in.

He said, "That's outrageous." He punched the button for Miss Tehas and said, "Virginia, get Secretary Wirtz on the wire for me." When Wirtz came on, he said, "Bill, I understand a little disagreement has arisen. Can you come over and see me?"

He told me, "The Secretary is going to be over here in a little bit. You wait for him in your office. I'll let you know."

Pretty soon Virginia called me and said, "You know the back way into Mr. Meany's office."

I said, "Yes."

She said, "Stand by. Mr. Meany wants you on hand, the Secretary is coming in."

So directly I was ushered in and sat there with Mr. Meany. Secretary Wirtz came in.

Meany said to him, "Nelson tells me that you challenged his position this morning in a conference. What is the story?"

Wirtz kind of slithered around and it was clear that I was right there.

Meany said, "Bill, let's have an understanding. When Nelson is talking to you about issues in social security or unemployment compensation, he's talking for me. It's the same as if I was there. He has been a long-time staff

person here. He knows what our policies are. I have never known him to go off. I want you to understand that I don't want any member of my staff challenged on an issue of that kind."

Gee, to work for a boss like that!

Now, in fairness I think I must say this about Wirtz. He realized he had made a mistake. We got along after that.

At the time of the end of Lyndon Johnson's administration, he presented a plaque to the AFL-CIO--not a plaque but a big framed thing--in which there were some hundred pens of a hundred bills Johnson had signed during his administration. It hangs over in the AFL-CIO building now. There was a little celebration and different people were invited. The Secretary of Labor, and the former Secretary of Labor, Bill Wirtz, was there. I was there. Seats were arranged kind of V-shaped. I was in the second row on one side, and he was in the first row on the other.

In front of all those people Bill got up and came over and said, "Nelson," he said, "there is something I would like to straighten out. In the time that has passed, when I challenged you in my office I was wrong, it was a mistake, I should never have done it."

I said, "Bill, that's fine. It's big of you."

I didn't want to tell this story without saying that Bill was big enough man to do that.

When Meany took me over to see Nelson Rockefeller in the Eisenhower days, the early Eisenhower days, I didn't know this relationship he had had in New York although I was living in New York at the time, but I wasn't involved in that kind of thing.

I said, "Mr. Meany, I understand you know Mr. Rockefeller. I have never met him. I'll have a lot to do with him in this administration. I would appreciate it if you would introduce me to Nelson Rockefeller."

Mr. Meany said, "I'll be glad to."

He was a man of action. He picked up the telephone and said, "Virginia, see if you can get Nelson Rockefeller on the wire." Which she did.

Typically Meany turned to me and said, "Are you free Monday?"

I said "Yes."

"He wants us to come over for lunch."

I said, "Fine." Of course, I would have said that no matter what. This is the way he operated, "Are you free Monday?"

So driving over in Mr. Meany's car, he said, "Now, look, Nelson, we are not just going over there for a free lunch. What do we want out of this guy?"

I said, "Well, the first thing, we would like to keep Social Security out of politics as much as we can."

Secretary Hobby had already fired Altmeyer, which made everybody sore. Altmeyer was a great public servant. While he was a Democrat, he administered things in a nonpartisan way. Everybody had respect for Altmeyer. He was one of the best public servants in this country's history. She fired him offhand, not only fired him but fired him in kind of a cruel way. If he had been allowed to stay on two more months, he could have had a dependent's benefit under his retirement system which was worth about \$20,000 for his wife. But she wouldn't let him stay on even those two months. This people knew. A cruel, unnecessary thing. Probably with the enthusiasm of a new convert, newly Republican, she was more Catholic than the Pope.

So I said to Meany, "I think for the first thing, we want to protect this technical staff. Altmeyer is gone. Nothing we can do about that now but there's Ig Falk and Wilbur Cohen and there's Ida Merriam, and I named off four to five people. The agency can't run without these people. If she decides to clean house and make a political thing out of it, it not only will be bad but it will politicise Social Security which we don't want to have happen." Then there were a couple of other policy issues I brought up, but that was the most important.

Strangely enough, and I remember it, after we had a light lunch, Rockefeller said almost the same thing that Meany had said, "Well, I know you fellows didn't come over here for a free lunch. What is it you want?"

Meany said, "We are sorry that the Secretary moved Mr. Altmeyer out. We had great respect for him. That's gone, over the dam, but we would like to see the very excellent technical staff in Social Security maintained."

"Like who?" Rockefeller said.

Meany ticked off the names. Rockefeller jotted them down. We knew he had the power.

He said, "I'll talk to the Secretary about this." They were all kept on.

Then Meany said, "My main purpose in being here is I want to introduce our director of social security, Nelson Cruikshank. He speaks for us in this field. I hope you and he will get along--" he kind of kidded about you two Nelsons, here I was sitting with this multimillionaire with not more than a couple of nickels in my pocket. He said, "We would like to discuss with you the replacement of Mr. Altmeyer. We know this will be your appointment, and

will probably need to be from your party, but we would like to have a man that has some sympathy and understanding of the program in it. Will you discuss this with Cruikshank?"

Rockefeller said, "Yes."

Then he said, "On policy issues, if there is something that isn't clear, Nelson will bring it to me, but he represents us in this field."

That kind of delegation and that kind backing! What happened was that within ten days Rockefeller called me and said, "We have a replacement in mind for Altmeyer."

I said, "Who is it?"

He gave me the name of Carl -- I don't remember the name, a Swedish name. "He's the director of public welfare in Wisconsin."

I said, "I don't know him. I'll make a check."

I did. I called the boys in Wisconsin and they said he was a Republican and a fine public spirited man. You will be lucky if you get him. I made some other checks: The American Public Welfare Association, and so forth. They all spoke well of him.

I called back Rockefeller and said, "It's a clear signal as far as we are concerned."

He was appointed. He stayed on only for a year. He got a big promotion as head of the Welfare Department in New Jersey. The state paid more than the federal government. It was more to his liking, too. Rockefeller called me again.

He said, "We have a man out in California that we would like to have your attitude about. His name is Schottland."

I called our boys out in California. Neil Haggerty was head of the Federation of Labor in California at the time.

I said, "He's a Republican, isn't he?"

He said, "Well, he's a Warren Republican. That doesn't worry us. We have always gotten along fine with Charlie Schottland. You will be lucky if you can get him." The same kind of thing they said about Carl--what's his name. That name may come to me before we are through.

So I gave the green light and he was appointed. He made an excellent Commissioner of Social Security. This is the way we operated.

Now, this didn't happen because of Nelson Cruikshank, this happened because George Meany said I was representing him in this deal. I could always see Rockefeller, never had difficulty getting into his office and discussing issues. That period was not a period of hard reaction, in my opinion. Rockefeller changed a lot after he became governor of New York, and after his rebuff in 1964 at the Republican Convention when they booed him. My gracious, a man who had poured millions of his own money into the Republican party. It was kind of a repudiation. Apparently at that time he made up his mind that if he were going to have a future in public life, he had to be more conservative, which he did in New York. He was a different man after that. We got along fine.

WEEKS:

Some one has said that Nelson Rockefeller had his own kitchen cabinet, his own experts he hired with his own money who advised him in all the different positions he held. Is this true?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, that's true.

WEEKS:

Wasn't Kissinger supposed to have been one of that group at one time?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, he was, but at a later period, when Rockefeller became governor of New York. He was not in the picture at this time we are talking about. Rockefeller's main interests were in social legislation and health. Some of the people who knew him well said to me at one time that if you want to win an argument with Nelson Rockefeller, get it in chart form. He loves charts. I found that was true. There was a room at the HEW building where he had his office that got to be named the chart room. Every time he would appear at a Congressional committee hearing he would have all these charts.

Congress in a stupid way decided they were going to put a quietus on this and they put a rider on the HEW appropriations that none of the funds were to be used for cartographic materials. I don't know why these jerks thought that was going to stop Nelson Rockefeller. What he did was hire a whole floor over in the now-Esso Building which is just cater-corner across from Capitol Hill, the Standard Oil Building. He hired a whole floor and hired about three times as many guys as he had on the government payroll. They turned out more charts than ever. He still used them in his presentations. Whatever made the Congress think they were going to stop his charts by cutting off his appropriations, I don't know what was the matter.



Am I rambling on too much? There is nothing an old man likes to do better than reminisce. We'll probably tire the people who may listen to this.

I was on the advisory committee on unemployment compensation. The law requires an advisory board of labor, management, and the general public. The chairman of that committee incidentally was Fedele Fauri of Michigan. There was a chap on there who represented industry who was from Standard Oil of New Jersey. Soon after Eisenhower was elected, Secretary Hobby set up a conference on Social Security up at Arden House, the old Harriman estate at Harriman, N.Y. I went up there representing the A.F. of L., that was before the merger. This little guy, Walters was his name, from New Jersey representing Standard Oil of New Jersey in our commission had never met Rockefeller and had been a bitter opponent of mine in everything in unemployment compensation. All of a sudden he decided he wanted to meet Nelson Rockefeller and this would be a great feather in his cap, I guess. He wasn't very high up in the hierarchy of the Standard Oil Company. He was some kind of personnel director or something.

He showed up at this thing at Arden House and said, "Would you introduce me to Nelson Rockefeller?"

I said, "Sure. Why not?"

So I did and he thought this was his great moment.

There were subcommittees and Nelson Rockefeller was named the head of the subcommittee on financing of Social Security. This guy Walters was there not representing his New Jersey company but the Chamber of Commerce. They named him their representative which made him my opposite number on the committee up

at Arden House. Rockefeller was named chairman, as I said. I took the financing thing and put it on charts and graphs and projected our costs into the future with the best actuarial information I could get. I hope nobody looks at it now because time proved us wrong. Anyway it was the best information we had at the time. We each presented our case. The Chamber of Commerce had a financing program which we thought was cock-eyed. Walters presented it for them. He just rattled off some figures and read from a manuscript. I presented copies of my charts to everybody, having been tipped off as to how Rockefeller reacted. Besides I still think we had the merits of the argument. Of course that was questionable.

When we finished Rockefeller turned to him and said, "Walters is that your name, Walters?"

He said, "Yes, Mr. Rockefeller."

"Well," he said, "I have had some experience with finance, I am a trustee up at Dartmouth."

Everybody kind of smiled behind their hand.

"I am a trustee up at Dartmouth and I have had some experience in this (financing pensions). I have to say that the A.F. of L. has a sounder program than the Chamber of Commerce."

Poor Walters withered like...he wished he had never met him.

WEEKS:

That certainly illustrates the point. I want to go back and ask you about the Magnuson report, delivered as Truman was leaving office.

CRUIKSHANK:

I didn't participate in that.

WEEKS:

It apparently came out in favor of what later was Medicare.

CRUIKSHANK:

Not precisely as I recall, but it was pretty close to it. It was a useful report.

WEEKS:

I want to ask you about a thread I see through all of this from the Republican standpoint and I want to carry it forward and see if my imagination is anywhere near correct. It seems to me that in all the Republican bills that were presented to Congress involving health insurance--we know they were against compulsory--they seemed to have a clause which favored the insurance industry in that it was reinsurance or subsidy towards people's premiums, if they could not pay. This kind of thing, everyone of them seemed to have that, in some form or another in the bill. Then a little later you began to see something that says if this bill is passed, possibly some organization, insurance or otherwise, could administer it, or, they would say they could be the "Fiscal Intermediary." They didn't use that term then. So finally we end up with Medicare and the fiscal intermediaryship, Blue Cross principally, but legally it could be anybody. Was that a sop to the insurance industry?

CRUIKSHANK:

From the Republican point of view it probably wasn't a sop, because they probably shared the view that private industry was more efficient and could operate things better than the federal government. It was a philosophical point of view. Of course, it was also supported by the insurance industry.

The insurance industry people were strong supporters of the Republicans in their campaign expenses and all this kind of thing. Also, it tied in with the McCarran Resolution which was passed in 1940 that declared it was to be policy that the insurance industry was to be controlled by the states and not by the federal government. That is the thing that has stood in the way time and again. We used to say to the Republicans in office and the men on the Hill that the idea of the insurance industry being in an underwriting role in this is repugnant to us. Then they would say they were going to institute standards that would make the insurance industry behave itself. Then we would say that they were going to go back on the McCarran Act, and what were they going to do about the McCarran Act?

When we were discussing a little while ago and talked about working out the details of this proposed bill with this young assistant of Rockefeller's, that was the sticking point. We never got over that until the whole negotiations broke down. He knew that any kind of standards imposed on the insurance industry would be in violation of the McCarran Act which was the bible. McCarran was a Democrat, but it was the bible of the insurance industry. That was the stumbling block even for those Republicans who were trying to get some kind of viable compromise. They would come up against that every time.

Are you asking me how the carriers and intermediaries got into the act? In 1962 Mills said to us, "Take your bill over to the Senate." At that time we were within one vote of it in the Ways and Means Committee. Mills didn't

want to give his vote which would have broken the deadlock in the House. Of course, under the constitution this kind of act must originate in the House, it was technically a revenue tax act. "Take it over to the Senate and hook it on to something over there. Come back and we'll see what we can do."

We knew Wilbur Mills pretty well. This wasn't a definite promise, it was worth trying, so we hooked it on to something over the in the Senate.

WEEKS:

Was this the Anderson-Javits amendment?

CRUIKSHANK:

The Anderson-Javits gambit, it was the Anderson-King bill that was up.

WEEKS:

I mean the amendment.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. The amendment we tried to work out. Javits came to us and said if there would be a role for the insurance companies there were eight Republicans he had who would support it. We knew who a couple of them were. We weren't sure of Javits' comment, but he was an honest man. We also knew his brother was in the insurance industry in New York, pretty heavily. We didn't know just what he meant by the role of insurance.

I was called up one night. We had just moved, I remember.

I went out to the new place. My wife was sitting there among all the packing boxes and everything, waiting for me to come home.

She said, "You are to call Wilbur Cohen, right away."

So I called him.

He said, "We are having a night session down here with Javits and Ribicoff." (He was then Secretary of HEW.) "We think we may have a deal working. Can you come right down?"

I said, "Yes." I told my wife.

She said, "I thought that was true. I made a sandwich for you. You can eat on the way." She had it all ready. "When Wilbur Cohen calls, I know something is up."

I got in the car and drove down. On the way down I got to thinking I don't want to be in with those cookies alone, I don't know what kind of a deal is up. I stopped at a phone booth at a filling station on the way down and called up my colleague Leonard Lesser who I mentioned before as with the IUD, the Industrial Union Department."

I said, "Leonard, have you had a call?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Can you join me down in Secretary Ribicoff's office?"

Fortunately he said he could, and he was waiting for me when I got there. So I had a colleague with me.

We said we couldn't make a deal about insurance companies. Ribicoff was inclined to go along. He's from Connecticut, you know.

We said, "What is it?"

Well, it must just be a role for the insurance companies. Those eight votes would have made the difference. He knew we were short four or five votes in the Senate.

I came back the next day and talked with Andy Biemiller, our legislative representative. Meany had left the country to go to a meeting of the ILO in Europe. Just before he had left, Andy and I had had a meeting with Mr. Meany in his office saying that the Medicare thing was coming to a head and we were going to take it over to the Senate. We told him what Wilbur Mills had said and all that. We said we wanted to know what the limits were on compromise.

He said, "We have got a good bill. Let's stick by the major principles. There may have to be some give and take. There is only one thing: Don't let the insurance companies in."

We certainly agreed, you know. When the insurance companies are in an underwriting role, every claim for benefits becomes in competition with profits. We had seen that in worker's compensation. We had seen the corrosive effect of commercial insurance. Meany knew the score on that.

We said "O.K." We went out with our policy clear.

When this came up I went back to Andy and said, "You remember what Meany said? Let's find out what it is Javits wants."

We got in touch with Javits and he was unclear.

He said, "I want a role for insurance companies."

So we came back and cooked up this thing about...we met out at my house the following Sunday afternoon. Jim Brindle was there, who is the director of the insurance department for the UAW, and Leonard Lesser, and Lee Bamberger (now Lee Bamberger Schorr) and Andy. We met out at the house I had just moved into. We said, "Let's cook up a package and present it to Javits, one that we think would not be any harm. They will just be transmission belts and not be in an underwriting role."

"I know", Andy said. "Remember what Meany said."

I said, "Well, he hasn't bought it yet, we haven't bought it yet. Let's try it out."

So we wrote that up and presented it to Javits and he said, "That's fine. It will go along."

We didn't think he would. We thought the influence of his brother and the insurance industry would...but Javits was always a different kind of Republican, always has been. He had supported a lot of liberal legislation and he had not been involved in these other Republican gambits. He kind of came in new in the field.

So then we said, "We were just trying this on for size. We are not even sure we have approval on it."

We got back and tried to get Meany over the phone. He was in Germany by this time. The difference in time...it was quite late. He'd been out to dinner. When he finally got back, we had kind of a poor connection. We talked to him and told him roughly what we had in mind. He said that if they were not in an underwriting role, do the best we could. He wouldn't consider it a violation if we made...the best we could understand, we had a clearance on this thing.

Andy was on an extension of my phone, and I said, "Andy, do you get what I get?"

He said, "Yes, I think we are in the clear!"

So then we went back and said that with some refinements we can buy this.



And Javits delivered his votes, but there were not enough to get it through the Senate. Bob Kerr killed it by some fancy footwork. I don't know whether it was crooked or not. We do know that the Secretary of the Senate, at that time, was Bobby Baker. When there is a close vote and members of the Senate are called in by the bell, the Secretary gives them a clue as to which is an administrative vote, a "yes" or a "no." Bobby Baker gave them the wrong clue. Enough of them knew the issue so we only lost it by three or four votes, but there was enough to make the difference (against it). The next day Bobby Baker got a big loan from the Kerr-McGee Oil Company, the Kerr-McGee bank, which enabled him to build the Carousel outfit on the Eastern Shore. I am not saying he was bought off, I just say that was the sequence of events.

WEEKS:

I think it was after the merger of the A.F. of L. and CIO that you were able to pass the Social Security amendments for the disabled, wasn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

That was in 1956.

WEEKS:

The merger was in 1955 according to my figures.

CRUIKSHANK:

That is correct.

WEEKS:

Did your position change with this merger?

CRUIKSHANK:

No. In the field of Social Security there had not been any policy differences between the A.F. of L. and the CIO. On health insurance there had not been any differences in policy. The old line people of A.F. of L. didn't

want any organic, structural coalition of any kind but, in part, we overcame that by setting up the Committee for the Nation's Health. There are in the AFL-CIO structure, as there had been partly in the CIO but it was carried to a refined point in the AFL-CIO, departments--Department of Housing, Department of Social Security, Department of Research, Department of Legislation--staff departments. Each of them is backed up by an advisory group made up of elected officials. So the staff group, while they have a role in developing policy--we could make suggestions to them and all, and, if we had the confidence of our members we could be persuasive as staff people--but staff people didn't make policy on their own. We would have meetings and make recommendations and out of the discussions of our committees, like the committee of Social Security, they would make recommendations to the Executive Council. When their report was adopted by the Executive Council, it became policy. The Executive Council or the convention. The Executive Council serves for the convention between conventions.

In the Department of Social Security, when the merger took place, I was proud of the fact that when they began to divide up the staff positions, Walter Reuther said, "George, there is one we can clear right away, there is no question about it. The Social Security thing, Nelson will direct that. It's agreeable to us and we'll move on to some of the others."

Nobody objected, and that was it. I was kind of proud of that, because I had worked with the CIO people in various things. Kitty Ellison, their Social Security expert, came over as a member of my staff.

In the disability thing we in a way made that a test of the first thing we could do in our field following merger. I convened our Social Security Committee early on. The chairman of the committee was Morris Hutchison, who was considered a very conservative president of the Carpenters' Union. His father, Big Bill Hutchison, had been violently opposed to health insurance of any kind. But the son was quite different. He asked to be chairman of the Social Security Committee.

We put on the agenda what would be the first piece of legislation the merged organization would try to enact. We decided that disability insurance would be our test. The disability insurance idea had been around for a long time. It was first reported in 1938 by the advisory committee that made changes in the old age thing and added survivors. They had tried to get disability adopted then. That was in '38, now this was in '56. As I said, the steps like freezing the benefits thing, that had passed, so we thought we could add the disability thing. That was a tactical move. We knew we couldn't get Medicare or national health insurance. We thought that (disability) was the test. Of course AMA opposed it with all the vigor and enthusiasm and venom that they had directed toward other policy things. They said, and we agreed, that it was a foot in the door for health insurance.

WEEKS:

It's pretty hard to argue against someone who is disabled or crippled, isn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, but they did for seventeen years, they held it off. From 1939 to 1956.

WEEKS:

Was that a part of the original Wagner bill?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, there was a disability provision in that, too. Let me give you a little tidbit, if I can. On the Medicare bill we had both supported it, the idea, the CIO and the A.F. of L., but after disability was passed then in '57 we got Forand to introduce the Medicare bill. The question was the policies that go into that. Now, bit by bit it was taken up in several meetings of my Social Security Committee: Now what do we do on this and what do we do on that, what kind of benefits, how do we finance it? All of the factors in the Medicare bill were thrashed out in the committee. There developed a difference not between A.F. of L. and CIO primarily but it became a CIO issue. Both the Steelworkers and the Autoworkers wanted to have surgeons' benefits in Medicare. You see, the Forand bill only provided hospital benefits. It did not provide the services of doctors at all. It was kind of a Blue Cross not a Blue Shield concept. We thought we could bite that off first and then move on to the other, which I still think was a good tactic. Meanwhile I, with the very considerable help of Lee Bamberger, had developed an advisory group of physicians because many of these were technical issues that we needed the knowledge of medical men. It also gave us a certain protection so that we could say that we didn't just dream this up with a bunch of labor guys. We had the best advice of prominent men in the medical profession. When the C.I.O. group wanted to add surgeons' benefits, I was leery about that. I went back to my medical advisers and they said don't do

that at all. Dr. Esselstyn, who was a surgeon himself, said, "You are going to carve up every old lady in the United States. You will have a million hysterectomies of women over 65. Whatever you do, if you are going to add medical benefits, add anything but surgeons."

The Steelworkers and Autoworkers said, "We have surgical benefits in our plans and we can't support in Congress something that is less than we have negotiated with our employers."

I could understand this position technically and legislatively, but I didn't like it. Now here is where I make a confession. I tried to stay clear of policy, because staff people didn't make policy. I believe in that. I believe in the democratic process. I think I hewed pretty close to the line on that, but I felt very strongly on this issue. So then John Kennedy wanted to put in a bill when he still was in the Senate. He had his legislative assistant, Mike Feldman. Mike came to me and Leonard Lesser and said, "Will you help draft a Kennedy bill?"

We said, "Sure. We will be glad to sit with you."

So we went over and, I remember, Jack Kennedy would come in late at night in his shirt sleeves and say, "How are you guys getting along? Are there any issues?"

This issue of the surgeons' benefits came up. One night over in Kennedy's office he said, "How are you going to resolve that?" He said to me, "What do you think?"

I said, "Do you want the position of my organization or do you want my own position?"

He said, "Give me both."

I said, "My organization is for the surgeons' benefits, but personally I don't agree with it."

"Well," he said, "you are advising me personally. What are the grounds?"

I told him the fact that I had discussed this with physicians. I said, "Why don't you check it out with people up at Massachusetts General and with some of your well-respected physicians up at Harvard." I knew John Knowles at Massachusetts General. He was on my advisory committee. I knew how he felt.

I said, "Check it out with them. Just don't take my idea, but personally I am against it, Mr. Kennedy, if you want my personal advice."

Back came the word a couple of days later that he had checked it out: leave the surgeons out. So a Kennedy bill went in without the surgeons.

Then there was a meeting of the Executive Council. A strong supporter of Kennedy politically was Joe Keenan, a wonderful guy, represented the Electrical Workers. He was not a member of my Social Security Committee, but a long-time friend and a great labor man. I went to Joe and said, "The Executive Council is going to have before it the endorsement of health bills. Why don't you move that we adopt the Kennedy bill as policy."

He said, "What's the idea, where does it differ, and what is the issue?"

I told him.

"All right," he said.

He moved that we adopt the Kennedy bill and so we had support for a bill despite my committee's recommendation--without surgeons. I say it was a little bit of an underhanded trick. That's the only time I ever broke the line. In a way I didn't break it, Joe knew what he was doing. If anybody had

raised any questions...but I didn't think they would because they had such confidence in Keenan that it kind of went through on his sayso. He knew what the issue was, I explained it to him.

WEEKS:

This would be early in 1960, before the election?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes.

WEEKS:

The original Forand bill had surgery in it, didn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes.

WEEKS:

They dropped it but it didn't make such difference.

CRUIKSHANK:

They didn't drop the Forand bill.

WEEKS:

I don't mean they dropped the Forand bill but the surgery benefits from the Forand bill.

CRUIKSHANK:

That's right, and it didn't make much difference.

WEEKS:

This period we have been talking about, going back to 1957 and 1958, that is about the time Mills came in as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, wasn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. We tried to get Mills to introduce the bill, There was a chap from Tennessee, a Congressman, who was in only for a couple of years, I can't think of his name...

WEEKS:

Cooper? Jere Cooper?

CRUIKSHANK:

Jere Cooper! That's right! From Cooksville, Tennessee. He was chairman of Ways and Means for a short time. He didn't want to touch it. Then we knew Mills was next in line. We tried to get him to introduce the Forand bill. He wouldn't do it. I don't want to say anything derogatory of Aime Forand, he was the president of the National Council of Senior Citizens who preceded me. Forand's main interests had been in the welfare, and not in the insurance aspects, of social security. The American Public Welfare Association had worked very closely over the years with Aime Forand. He was the next in line to the chairman and had the most prestige and standing and seniority on the Ways and Means Committee, so we went to him.

He said, "We'll look it over and see."

We kept going back to him. Well, he was busy, he hadn't had a chance to look at it yet. Meanwhile, there was chap by the name of Greenberg who was kind of a medical expert on the Providence Journal and had written a number of articles we thought were pretty good, he had some perception, better than most journalists. Most journalists don't know what they are talking about in this field. He was of a different stripe. He had written a series of articles for



the Providence Journal. I had met him at a couple of conferences. I called Greenberg and said, "Your Congressman is thinking about putting in a bill." I said, "If he gets some support in Rhode Island it will strengthen his hand. There is no reason I can't give you a scoop, if he does this."

He said, "Fine! Great!"

Then Forand, when we went back to him, said -- (this was at a certain stage, I don't know how long, there's no use stretching it out) -- he said to Andy Biemiller and me in the hall one time, he said, "Will you fellows guarantee me that this is a good, sound bill?"

We said, "We have worked it over. It's got the advice of the medical group. It's got the advice of our Social Security Committee. It's endorsed by the AFL-CIO, and now the combined organization. It's gone through several refinement procedures. We can tell you you don't need to be worried about this bill. Your people in Rhode Island will be happy about it too."

He said, "I haven't had time to look it over. Write me a speech of introduction, when I introduce it."

So we went back and wrote him a speech. He introduced the bill. I sent a copy of the speech up to Greenberg with a note on it that when Forand made the speech I would give him a call and that if there were any departures from the speech I would let him know.

He made the speech word for word. I called Greenberg and the next day the Providence Journal came out with banner headlines with everything in favor of it. Forand was absolutely delighted. From then on Aime Forand thought he invented the whole idea. We didn't bother to disillusion him. He was a great friend. That's the way it was done.

WEEKS:

You have mentioned Ig Falk and Wilbur Cohen. How did they work in? Sometimes I read that you or Cohen, or maybe Falk, or Bob Ball or all of you together...

CRUIKSHANK:

Sounds like you have read Martha Derthick's book from Brookings Institution. She has the thesis that the labor movement was just a bunch of patsies for this little brain trust who were putting something over on the American public. The bottom line on the chapter she devotes to me is that Cruikshank delivered the labor movement and got nothing for his members in return.

WEEKS:

This is Martha...

CRUIKSHANK:

Martha Derthick. She is a senior economist for the Brookings Institution. The book is one of the most documented set of errors I ever saw. It is beautifully documented with footnotes, but most of it is wrong. Her thesis was that I said labor people were a bunch of patsies for this little conniving brain trust over there.

Ig Falk was an extremely brilliant man. They tell a story about him when they first moved out of the old warehouse and they had their offices moved into the new Social Security Building which immediately became the War Manpower headquarters. Outside of the Commissioner's office and a few of his close staff it never became the Social Security Building. Somebody came in and said, "All this moving around, I can't find our encyclopedia. Where is our encyclopedia?"

Ig said, "I don't know where it is, but what is it you want to know?"

He probably could have answered it. He was a brilliant man. A massive set of facts and figures at his fingertips. A very dedicated person. Wilbur Cohen also was a scholar as was Altmeyer for whom he worked. Wilbur Cohen came down here as an assistant to Altmeyer when Fannie Perkins brought Altmeyer down. He (Altmeyer) was Labor Commissioner in the state of Wisconsin. In Wisconsin this whole idea of social insurance--it was called the Wisconsin idea for a long time. Ed Witte and John R. Commons, all that school up there at the university.

We did work together. The fact, of course, is that I had a small staff. At first I didn't have anybody but a secretary. Gradually it built up to a small technical staff. I relied a lot on the technical services of the Agency. I didn't see anything wrong with that. As long as our policies went through the channels of elected officials and finally had to be approved. You see, even when I did a little finagling I couldn't just go over and change our policy. I had to go through the Executive Council. The only one I short-circuited was my Social Security Committee. They didn't object when it came out that it was minus the surgeons. They had had their day and had got their point made. The Executive Council adopted it and then we were free to support the thing minus the surgeons. We did work very closely together.

WEEKS:

The story of the McNamara committee on the aged: Somewhere I have read that Senator John Kennedy would have liked to be chairman of that. But he did serve on that as a member, I believe.

CRUIKSHANK:

I think that is right, but McNamara sponsored the move. He had a staff man by the name of Bill Reidy who kicked up the idea. Since they had not been able to get hearings before the Senate Finance Committee the idea was of a special committee on aging, a nonlegislation committee that could hold hearings. Pat McNamara of Michigan sponsored the resolution, so, in the normal course of events, he became chairman.

WEEKS:

How did Reidy fit in?

CRUIKSHANK:

He was a staff person for the Labor Committee, not on Senator McNamara's personal staff.

WEEKS:

Reidy's name comes up two or three times.

CRUIKSHANK:

He was a colleague of mine from the old Farm Security days.

WEEKS:

When the election rolled around in 1960 I guess there was no question that all the Democratic candidates were in favor of some form of health insurance.

CRUIKSHANK:

There was no vocal opposition. It was a party policy. Now, they weren't all actively supporting it. When the vote came up in '62 (the vote on the proposed Anderson-Javits amendment), all the Democrats didn't stay hitched, like Bob Kerr and Jennings Randolph. Although his name was on as a sponsor, he voted against it.

WEEKS:

About this time the Governors' Conference voted in favor of health insurance, I believe. I also want to ask you about the Senior Citizens for Kennedy. They were formed, I suppose, in 1960. Did Lichtenstein form this, or did he just become a part of it?

CRUIKSHANK:

He became a part of it. Lichtenstein was a unique kind of character in New York. Zalmon Lichtenstein. It was formed down here as part of the operation of the Kennedy campaign. Bill Hutton, in whose office we are sitting, was a public relations man in New York. He had his own firm at that time. He was brought down. The spark plug for the Seniors for Kennedy was Jimmy O'Brien of the Steelworkers. Also the then director of the Seniors' program of the Autoworkers who had come out of the Labor Department, I can't think of his name right now, later he was the Commissioner on Aging in Connecticut. I knew him very well but I just can't think of his name. The Steelworkers and the Autoworkers, these two staff people, were active in the campaign. They set up the Seniors for Kennedy and brought Hutton down from New York to do the public relations work. All of us were more or less involved. At that time I was still at the AFL-CIO. Out of that grew the National Council for Senior Citizens. It happened in this way: The little skeleton organization that was set up for the election in November carried through.

The White House Conference on Aging was held in January 1961, just a few days before the Kennedy inauguration. That probably was one of the best wired operations we ever pulled off. We really had an apparatus going on that.

WEEKS:

The staff for the White House Conference on Aging was set up while the Republican administration was still in force?

CRUIKSHANK:

It was set up primarily operating out of my office at the AFL-CIO.

WEEKS:

This is the way you did the good work?

CRUIKSHANK:

That's right. We managed with all this manipulation to get an endorsement for Medicare out of the White House Conference on Aging. We pulled some fast ones on the AMA. This was with the help of the people in the Eisenhower Administration: Charles Schottland and others. I'll tell you about that. Then at the close of the conference--it was held at the Shoreham Hotel--at the close of that, Aime Forand, who was still in the Congress at the time, asked if we could get all the representatives of organizations that supported Medicare on that floor battle together. We passed the word around. The union people, the labor people, were there and some of the public welfare people and others organizations, churches--we had over 500 organizations that had endorsed Medicare. We worked on every kind--PTAs and everything that you could imagine. I've got a list here of organizations that supported Medicare--it won't go on your record. We had been working for years.

The delegates from the White House Conference on Aging met with Aime Forand. He had wanted to meet with us. He was the author of our bill.

He said, "You've got a victory here in a way and you have done a good job but that isn't going to pass the bill. What you need is an organization that will implement this and carry it through. I think you people ought to form some kind of a permanent organization that will allow these groups to work together actively in the legislative process." The Steelworkers put up some money, the Autoworkers put up some money. They came to me and I put the arm on Mr. Meany and he put up some money. We got a little nest egg to start what became the National Council of Senior Citizens. That's how it started.

It was an organization inspired primarily by Forand and primarily directed at the passage of Medicare.

WEEKS:

Did Forand become the first president?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, he was the first president. He soon after that retired from Congress. Yes, he did become the first president. He was followed by John Edelman. He died of a heart attack and I took over John's place.

WEEKS:

One thing you might like to speak about is how you picked the chairman of the White House Conference on Aging. If what I have read is correct, you were able to steer the health insurance problems into the right committee also.

CRUIKSHANK:

This is very interesting because it relates to something we talked about a little while before. The people in the Eisenhower administration like Arthur Flemming and Charles Schottland were really at heart for Medicare. They couldn't come out openly for it; it was against administration policy.

Schottland, as Social Security Commissioner, was on the small steering committee from the administration that set up the machinery of the White House Conference. The first thing was to get a chairman. We knew it had to be a Republican, because he was to be appointed by the President. There was a Congressman from New Jersey, Kean it was spelled but he pronounced it "Kane." He had been very friendly to us on a number of occasions. He was a very broad-gauged fellow. He was on the Ways and Means Committee. He had not sponsored Medicare legislation but he was on the Ways and Means Committee and he had given us several favorable votes on Social Security issues.

I went up to New Jersey and the New Jersey A.F. of L. and CIO both were strongly Democratic in their inclinations but I got them to endorse Kean for re-election. He also was the owner of a big newspaper that had wide circulation. A wealthy man, independent and all. He decided to run for the Senate and lost out in the Senate race. I had gotten labor endorsement for him, which he appreciated.

I think it was Flemming's suggestion that they could get Kean to chair the thing, and I said, "That would be great with us." He would not wield the power of the chair against us.

Then Schottland, on the planning committee, agreed with us that Medicare should be put in the income maintenance section, that it was a proposed amendment to Social Security and should be put in income maintenance and not referred to the health section. And that we would keep this quiet.

Meanwhile the AMA was getting all of its constituent bodies to sign up for the health section. We said that was fine, we encouraged that. We knew that Medicare wouldn't be assigned to that section.



Schottland, you see, was the guy that Nelson Rockefeller had suggested and with the approval of the California labor movement had put in as Social Security Commissioner.

By that time we had developed quite a coalition of organizations that were for Medicare. We sent letters to them all asking who were their delegates to the White House Conference. We asked them if they would mind checking in with us and telling us what their room was, and where they were and so forth. We had the girls at the AFL-CIO build up a cross index. We had a card for everyone so that we knew the organizations and what committees they were assigned to, or what subgroups they were assigned to, what their room number was, what their phone number was, and all that.

One of my assistants, Clinton Fair--by the way, he's from Michigan, I don't know whether you know him or not--Clinton Fair was on my staff at the time. Clint had all of these card things in the back of his car, and his car was stolen. All this cross index and all we had done...You know those girls went to work and worked most of the night calling up these organizations and practically reconstructed that file by morning. They did a marvelous job. That's the kind of dedication that went into the thing. Clint's car was found parked in a garage in Baltimore about six months later and those files were still in it. That's the kind of operation we had going.

Any time anyone tried to bring up Medicare in the health section or the education section or anywhere else, one of these delegates would phone this central office, then our girls would make a bunch of telephone calls and people would converge in and object that it was out of order. Finally the

doctors found out what was going on. They tried to object to the thing at the final plenary session at night. Kean was in the chair, of course. It was the final windup of the thing. The doctors all got together and were going to make an objection.

I went up to the platform and said to Kean, "These guys are trying."

He said, "Take it easy, Nelson. I know what I am doing. Don't worry!"

They went on and on. I thought he was letting them get away with murder and all. Finally he banged the gavel and said, "I find there isn't a quorum present and therefore the issue is out of order. Next question?"

He knew what he was doing all the time. They never got their objection before the body. The rules we had set up, the plenary session could not pass on policy issues. The policy issues were to be made within the different subsections. Our argument, which was not only a parliamentary trick, but had substantive soundness, was that in two or three days the only time you had to really discuss things was in the subsections. When it got to a great big meeting of four or five thousand people that was not time to take up a substantive issue. You know they couldn't do it. Also we presented a strong position to the planning conference of the White House Conference. If a substantive issue were to be brought up in the plenary session then we would insist that the delegates have votes commensurate with the size of their membership.

We said, "For instance, we in the AFL-CIO have 14 million members. Our vote will count 14 million. The AMA has 200,000 members and they can cast only that many no matter how many delegates they have got there."

That was so ridiculous, and we knew it. We then fell back to our position that there would be no policy decided before a plenary session. What the AMA people in the health panel did was to come up at the end and object to that procedure. They made their long argument and all on that procedure. Then Kean banged his gavel and said there wasn't a quorum present and that issue was not before the body and move on to the next.

WEEKS:

So the report was generally favorable to....

CRUIKSHANK:

To Medicare? Yes, but it was in the section that I can say now was loaded in favor. We passed the word quietly to all our friendly organizations, "Sign up in the income maintenance group and let the other guys have the health group."

WEEKS:

You were merely doing what the AMA was doing in the health group.

CRUIKSHANK:

That's right. The interesting thing about it was that we had the administration people with us right under Eisenhower's nose. Charlie Schottland, Arthur Flemming and Congressman Kean--they were all Republicans. This is the way they could be for Medicare without openly challenging the administration's position.

WEEKS:

You must have had a lot of satisfaction with that.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yeah. But we knew what Forand said afterward, that it didn't pass a bill. It was just a recommendation of the White House Conference. It was one of those things that appraised it. It didn't do an awful lot to forwarding the bill. However, had it gone the other way, it would have been an awful lot against the bill. It was kind of a holding action on our part. Had they been able to get the White House Conference to condemn Medicare...They tried. For instance, AMA wrangled around and got Mary Pickford as a delegate. Mary Pickford didn't know nothing from nothing about it. She was a multimillionaire and all. They arranged a press conference for her. She announced as how she had always been able to pay her medical bills and she thought everybody else ought to, and so forth. That kind of fell flat, because the public knew that she was a multimillionaire. But they thought they made a big thing out of that.

WEEKS:

Before we get into specifics on '62 and '65, I have run across two or three things that I would like to sound out with you about reasons for Mills' position against Medicare or against health insurance. I heard one that he didn't want to see it reported out of Ways and Means until they could win.

CRUIKSHANK:

I think that was a part of it at one stage. Mills was a very, very skillful tactician. He enhanced his power by knowing the limitations of his power.

WEEKS:

Then I have read some who say that possibly he was afraid this would endanger the security of the Social Security fund.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, I think that was part of his position.

WEEKS:

Then the thing that isn't mentioned much is the fact that he came from a very conservative district, that he may have had some important friends among the doctors, the AMA...

CRUIKSHANK:

He did. One of the men who had been one of his political sponsors, his campaign manager down there, was the president of the Arkansas Medical Association. A doctor who had considerable influence. I don't recall his name right now. The AMA worried him too, they had a channel to Mills. The AMA's tactics at that time depended a lot on the approach of Congressmen's personal physicians. They would encourage them...we saw the instructions they sent out. We had doctors who would send us copies of this, often unsigned.

They would send them to me and say, "I can't sign my name, but here are the instructions I got from the AMA."

The AMA would tell them how to write letters to their Congressman on their prescription pads, in longhand. The AMA knew the personal physician of every member of Congress and had a line to them. AMA would encourage the doctors to write to the Congressmen. This was an effective lobby for a long time.

With Mills I don't think it was his personal physician so much, but the doctor in Arkansas who had been one of his strong political backers. The story came to us from two or three channels, I think it must be true, that one of the counter influences on Mills at the end of the battle, not right at the very end, was that he was down in Little Rock one time and having breakfast in

the hotel with some of his political backers there and an older man who knew his father and his family walked up to him at the breakfast table and said, "Wilbur, you know we have all supported you and we are all friends of yours, but all the people here like myself want you to get off the dime and pass that Medicare bill. Don't believe what these damn doctors are telling you."

He was a man up in his eighties and he just kind of laid the law down to Wilbur. The story that came back to us was that Mills was affected by this. It wasn't anything we planned. We didn't know about it until after it happened. There were counter influences on Mills.

We didn't have any kind of counterpart. At one time we made a survey of the labor unions in the second district of Arkansas. There were very few until after the redistricting. There were just a few around Pine Bluff. The extent of organized labor in his district were a few scattered locals of carpenters with seven members. That was significant because it takes seven members to get a charter. What that meant actually in Arkansas was that there would be a live charter there so if there was a post office or some federal building going on they could claim and get union wages established. That was about all it meant. Plus railroad unions. Railroads were still running on those days. There would be a station master or right-of-way man or a little local chapter of the brotherhood of the conductors or the brakemen or the maintenance-of-way people. Those were pretty well organized in Arkansas but they were little, tiny unions scattered around in little towns. So there was practically no influence we could bring to bear on Wilbur.

WEEKS:

Somewhere I read about Kennedy's task force. Did you serve on that? It was formed after he was elected. Cohen, and Red Somers, and somebody by the name of Dean Clark.

CRUIKSHANK:

No I didn't serve on that directly. Dean Clark had been the head of the Massachusetts General Hospital. But he had moved from there at this time, I think, to the Public Health School at the University of Pittsburgh. He was not a dean, his name was "Dean" Clark. Kennedy knew him from the Massachusetts General. He had a Massachusetts background. No, I didn't serve on that committee.

WEEKS:

I wanted to ask you about Ribicoff as Secretary and about his Under Secretary Ivan Nestingen. He was from Milwaukee wasn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

No. Madison. He had been the mayor of Madison. He was the first mayor to endorse Kennedy. He had also organized a thing in Wisconsin against McCarthy called "Joe Must Go!" For this bit of courage he was recognized. He did it when it took courage to do it. But he made some--in my view, and I think time bore me out on this--he made some horrible mistakes when he came here.

Kennedy appointed him as Under Secretary of HEW as kind of a reward for this. He gave his candidacy a boost when it needed it, in the very early stages and campaigned for him in the Wisconsin primary. Ivan Nestingen. When

he came in here he was a total stranger in Washington. He got around him some people who thought they could ride his train to fame and glory. I met with him and he asked me about Wilbur Cohen.

I said, "Everybody in his town respects Wilbur Cohen; everybody on our side of the issue. He is an expert technician. You can use his expertise, and he'll strengthen your office." (I had some hints of what was going on.) I said, "Don't try to be in competition with Wilbur. You'll come out second best if you do."

He didn't listen. He listened to these guys that tried to push him ahead. Blue Carstenson was one. He came in a headon clash with Wilbur; he lost out. There were other machinations in connection with that too. It was a shame. There was no reason he should have fought Wilbur. They should have been on the same side. When the lines were drawn, the people who had known and worked with Wilbur for years weren't going to line up with this guy particularly when they saw the kind of opportunistic people he gathered around him that were really pushing for themselves.

WEEKS:

How was Ribicoff as a Secretary. Apparently he didn't see this then?

CRUIKSHANK:

If he saw it, I don't think there was anything he could do about it. Another thing, Ribicoff was the first governor to endorse Kennedy. He was governor of Connecticut. We were somewhat disappointed--I was going to say dismayed, but it isn't quite the word--when Kennedy made him Secretary of HEW because he hadn't been particularly interested in the field. We thought it was making a political plumb out of the thing. He wasn't a particularly good



secretary. He was on the right side of things on the issues because they were primarily political considerations, but I don't think it was much from conviction. He was not very effective. He was not an administrator, really. Of course he had been governor and had had a reasonably successful term as governor of Connecticut but that great, big jungle of HEW, he pronounced, you know, that it ought to be split up because nobody could administer it.

He was a pretty egotistic guy, Ribicoff was. He supported administration positions. He was loyal to the President.

WEEKS:

I wonder if we could jump ahead to 1962. I have been fascinated by the Madison Square rally of elderly people with the President speaking in support of Medicare.

CRUIKSHANK:

I think that was one of the Blue Carstenson public relations promotions. I guess it wasn't so bad. I had a very inglorious part in it. I was never so much impressed by the effect of rallies. They were more of a CIO tradition than an A.F. of L. tradition. I came out of the A.F. of L. side. I wasn't against them. If they weren't managed awfully well and subtly they could do more harm than good. If they are not a huge success, they are not a success at all.

I said "OK." The people wanted to do it. I was certainly not going to try to stop it. I would play my part and do what I was told to do. I wasn't in the managing end of the thing at all. The idea was to have Kennedy appear in Madison Square Garden. We would fill Madison Square Garden with labor

people and senior groups. Then we would have rallies around over the different cities. There would be a huge television screen and at the right time Kennedy would be wired in and we would fire up the whole thing.

WEEKS:

Was this closed television?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, closed television. I think it was.

WEEKS:

I was wondering whether the public in general could see it.

CRUIKSHANK:

I am not real certain. I think it was closed television. I wouldn't swear to it. The idea was that these big screens were large enough that it could be seen in an auditorium.

So I said "O.K. I won't stop it. I'll go along and take my assignment."

In the first place, Kennedy probably made the poorest speech he ever made. None of us ever quite knew why. He made a slip of the tongue, he said the dues of Medicare would be twelve dollars a month instead of twelve dollars a year. They did have the Madison Square Garden filled. Lichtenstein was quite an operator. Egotistical little guy and all. He never would join with other groups in doing things. He was an interesting character. He had been a lawyer in Poland. When the Nazis overran Poland he actually once was before a firing squad. Something saved his life at the last minute. He escaped from Poland and went to Liechtenstein where he picked up his name, that wasn't his real name. He started his profession there, and then had to run from there. He came to this country and had no professional credentials, but he was a

lawyer in his native country. The ILG (International Ladies Garment Workers) took him on and put him in charge of their senior program, their retired program called the Golden Ring Clubs. He was quite an organizer but he wouldn't play ball. He joined the National Council of Senior Citizens for a while, but he soon pulled out of that.

He was in charge of the thing up at Madison Square Garden. Kennedy people got very upset with him because he was a prima donna and he wanted to run everything. There are some memos I saw from Kennedy's top assistants in the White House saying don't ask us ever to work with him (Lichtenstein) again.

WEEKS:

O'Donnell?

CRUIKSHANK:

Not Kenny O'Donnell. Another part of the Irish Mafia, as it was called.

The thing at Madison Square Garden went over all right on that particular day. Then you know the AMA came in and bought time on television the next night to answer. Annis made his famous speech to the empty chairs in Madison Square Garden.

The meetings out over the country--there were about twenty of them set up. I was sent to Charleston, West Virginia. Bill Batt, young Bill Batt, and I were to go out and address this crowd. It was really something. The only time I made the front page of the AMA News, in a way I wasn't happy about. As soon as I got in town Saturday night, Bill flew in--this meeting was to be Sunday--Bill Batt came in at 11 o'clock Sunday, I got in the Saturday night before. I had been to a lot of meetings. I could smell defeat right away. There were no ads, no posters. The evening paper had no account of it. The

thing was going to be a flop. The woman who was supposed to be in charge had left town and turned it over to somebody else. The labor people had a luncheon. There were about fifteen or twenty at the luncheon, and then we went over to this huge hall. When we got there the AMA had doctors at every entrance of the hall handing out leaflets. Practically nobody showed up. We addressed this sea of empty chairs, whereupon the AMA had pictures of these empty chairs with me addressing them. They put that picture on the big front-page spread of the AMA News with the caption "This is the Kind of Support Cruikshank has for his Program." It was a large piece of humble pie I had to chew on.

There wasn't any of the other meetings that were that poor: I think that was really the low point. The meetings were not big bang successes anywhere. The one in San Francisco went over pretty well.

As I said, Kennedy didn't make a very good speech. Then Annis took it over and kind of doubled it back on us. The net result of it was negative, the whole thing.

WEEKS:

Nobody seemed to know why Kennedy put aside a speech he had prepared (so the story goes) and spoke from a few notes he made on his way to the Garden from the airport. Skipping ahead in my notes--we talked about the Anderson-Javits amendment...

CRUIKSHANK:

Talking about that Anderson-Javits amendment, when it came down to the end, we didn't need the Javits insurance thing. We would have had the votes without it when it came to the Senate. By that time we had committed

ourselves for a role for insurance. We couldn't very well go back on it, as long as they were kept out of an underwriting role.

WEEKS:

Was the failure of the Anderson-Javits amendment to pass a terrible disappointment?

CRUIKSHANK:

Not terribly.

WEEKS:

A few years ago Gary Filerman (now president of the Association of University Programs in Health Administration) made a study--he was a young man, a student really, with a part-time job over at Brookings. He wrote a monograph on this incident and the events that led up to the amendment defeat. I have often wondered what would have happened if the amendment had passed. What would have Mills done to it in the Joint Committee?

CRUIKSHANK:

We will never know. We had the feeling--we knew Mills pretty well--we had the feeling that if it had passed the Senate, he then would have been able to say to his objectors back in Arkansas, "Look, the thing is going to pass. I am getting the best out of it that I can." It would have given him an out.

This wasn't the only maneuver Mills made, you know. Mills would take the Forand bill, for example, and he would say, "I can't buy this, fellows. Give me a bill that gives older people something like a paid-up Blue Cross membership."

So we would take it back and work on it, revise it. But of course we kept to our basic principles. We would give it to Mills, the revised bill. Mills would say, "Well, I'll look it over, fellows. Thanks." He was always very

courteous. Either he would call us up or we would go to see him after a time that he had had to look at it. He would say, "Come on now. This is just the Forand bill warmed over. Don't try to kid me. Do like I told you. Give me..."

And so we would do it over again. We always had to retain our basic principles but we were working to give him an out. That was what we were trying to work for, but it didn't work. It was against that background, that when he said take it over to the Senate and I'll see what I can do when it comes back we felt that maybe this is the out he was looking for. So that was the reason we were willing to try it.

WEEKS:

We jumped right over the Kerr-Mills bill. There was a lot of maneuvering by Kerr, particularly, wasn't there?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. Yes. Yes. Not only what we suspected of the loan to Bobby Baker but there was a lot of maneuvering by Kerr. Kerr was a very, very peculiar person, a multimillionaire. Yet he was the only member of the Senate who was born in a log cabin. He liked to make a great deal out of that. He'd had come up from nothing. His wife was a Christian Scientist. He wanted desperately to be accepted in society in Oklahoma. Even though he was a big oil man and all that he was kind of crude in his personal relationships. He was a rough and ready kind of guy. Rough in his language, this kind of thing. He always felt that he wasn't really accepted in the Oklahoma upper set of society of which the doctors were an important part. He gave a lot of money to the medical school at the University of Oklahoma thinking this would

do something. Some people said that he felt that his wife being a Christian Scientist also kind of put him in the doghouse with the medical profession. I don't know whether that's true or not. I never met his wife, I don't know. She was often not with him in Washington. They had a magnificent ranch home down in Oklahoma. She stayed there a good bit of the time.

It was clear to us that a lot of his position was that he wanted to be the hero of the medical society. He also had ambitions, you know. He wanted to run for President. In fact there was a little boomer program for him. It didn't go very far but he was serious about it. He announced at the Press Club in a speech that he was available for the Presidency and would like to run. As I say, it never got anywhere. These were part of his ambitions. A tremendously ambitious man. Also a very smart person. One of the fastest working IQs I ever saw. He could play that Senate some times like an organist plays a four-manual pipe organ. I saw him one time take on Senator Byrd and had the whole Senate laughing at Byrd before Byrd knew what was happening. He just played him like a minnow on the end of a string. He was an extraordinary, smart guy. He was also ruthless. With his social ambition this in our view accounted for a lot of his wanting to go along with the AMA. When the AMA made the battlecry, "Help the needy, not the greedy," he thought some aid on the basis of need which resulted in Kerr-Mills was something that would take the steam out of the Medicare drive and at the same time do something with his name on it.

WEEKS:

The medically indigent. How did Mills and Kerr get together on this?

CRUIKSHANK:

They had a common affinity. While Byrd was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Kerr was the power and the brains, and, with his money, gave him a lot of power. His connection with the oil industry...Also, when you look at the Kerr-Mills formula and analyze it you see that Arkansas and Oklahoma came out way ahead of anybody else. He was just smart enough to work up a thing like this. Mills couldn't...It also was presented as something that would take care of people in need. Kerr-Mills was the ancestor of Medicaid.

Funny thing was that when Kerr-Mills passed Andy Biemiller and I were in Wilbur Mills' office. Andy said to him, "Wilbur, you have said a lot about socialized medicine. You know what you have got in the Kerr-Mills bill is really socialized medicine. It's paying the doctors directly out of the Treasury and all this kind of thing"--which we hadn't proposed in the Medicare bill at all--"and you are going to find a raid on the Treasury with the Kerr-Mills bill."

Mills looked at us and grinned, and said, "I know that, and you know that, Andy. You and I know it, but the public doesn't know it."

The thing is that they soon found out, because the smart boys in New York and California found out what a gold mine that was and they just rode the Kerr-Mills bill to death, you know.

WEEKS:

The only fortunate thing was that there were so few states that really put it into active use.



CRUIKSHANK:

Those that did! It was a pipeline into the federal treasury. And Andy, who had been a Congressman, told Mills, "This is going to be a giveaway program. This is really socialized medicine."

Mills said, "You know it and I know it, but the public doesn't know it." But the public found out, at least part of it.

WEEKS:

Kerr died in 1962, didn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

On New Year's Day.

WEEKS:

I don't know whether it means anything or not, but someone has suggested that the Cuban crisis weakened Kennedy's ability to get Medicare legislation passed because he needed bipartisan support on his foreign policy.

CRUIKSHANK:

I never sensed that. It may have been true, but I don't think that was true. As I observed it, I thought Kennedy's reaction to the Cuban crisis, his willingness to take the blame for it, his going up to see Hoover and Eisenhower, pulled the Presidency together. I think he came out ahead in terms of public respect for him. He didn't shun the responsibility for it at all. He said, "This was a mistake and a bad one. It's my fault."

The international repercussions of that, I don't know. They may have been there but I wasn't aware of them.

My analysis of it was, you see, the Catholic issue was raised in the campaign. This took away a lot of his strength that ordinarily would have been--particularly in the South, the Democrats--so that his margin in the Congress was very narrow. When you look at the history of social legislation, we have made our major advances at the times when you had enough Democrats from the North so that you could ignore the Democrats from the South. Whenever there was a narrow margin of Democrats you really didn't have a working majority. Jack Kennedy never had a working majority in the House.

WEEKS:

It wasn't until '65...

CRUIKSHANK:

It wasn't until '64, until after the inauguration in '65 and the landslide of '64. Then you had enough Northern Democrats so that you could override the Southern Democrats.

WEEKS:

Maybe this was what Mills was looking at, that some day the majority would be so great that it wouldn't make much difference whether he objected or not.

CRUIKSHANK:

It may be. You see, when '65 came around, Johnson ordered him to enlarge the Ways and Means Committee and told him who to put on the committee because he said, "We are going to have a majority of your committee for Medicare." So the committee was enlarged from twenty-five to thirty, wasn't it? Anyway, Martha Griffiths and others who had pledged themselves for Medicare came on. Then Mills turned around, endorsed it, and supported it, added the third layer to the three layer cake (Medicaid).

I opposed Medicaid. I opposed that part of the act. I also was against Part B in Medicare, the second layer. Not on principle but on tactics. Leonard Lesser and I again teamed up and appeared before the committees and talked to our friends in the Ways and Means Committee, saying that our experience with negotiated health plans was that these doctors' services are the things that give us the most trouble. Pass the hospital part, run that for a few years and digest it. Sure the older people need the doctors' thing that's set up in Part B, but let's not choke the machinery. Let's take this a bite at a time.

Our strongest friends on the Ways and Means said, "Aw, come on, fellows, you have got what you want. Let's not be picayune. The hell with it. This is going to ride through. Don't try to stop it." So we had to roll with the punch. The fact is that our trouble with Medicare is in Part B to this day.

WEEKS:

Medicaid has never been a success in the sense that the states that need it the most haven't given it.

CRUIKSHANK:

They have it in all states except Arizona.

WEEKS:

They don't all have it in the same degree.

CRUIKSHANK:

Not at all. The eligibility standards are different. Limited number of services.

WEEKS:

I asked Wilbur Cohen about possible improvements in Medicaid. He didn't want to speak to it because evidently he is advising somebody down here about it. Some changes need to be made.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes.

WEEKS:

Were you in on any of that hassle that was going on about raising Social Security. One, they wanted to raise benefits. Two, if they raised benefits too high, the costs of Medicare, if it were added on, would make the total cost to over ten percent....

CRUIKSHANK:

Over the ten percent arbitrary limit. Yes, ten percent was kind of pulled out of the air from somewhere, I don't know quite where. That was kind of a limit of the tax that could be imposed. The question was: Ten percent of what? Ribicoff was led without proper coaching or care on his part to say that ten percent was the limit that could be imposed, when testifying before a Senate committee. Again, we had to try to correct what he said as to ten percent of what. The ceiling at that time was around \$6,000 (the top earnings on which Social Security tax was imposed). I have forgotten exactly what the figure was. That was an arbitrary figure. Many countries devote a much larger part of the total wage bill to social insurance than we do. That was always an issue. The base in Social Security was a live issue up until 1972 when they tied it to the cost of living. It's now an automatic increase. The first time we ever broke it was about 1946, I think, or 1948. About that time

I spoke of Senator George. The A.F. of L. had passed a resolution to raise the wage base from \$3,000 which it was in 1935 to \$4,800 which was about keeping pace with wage increases. I testified on the \$4,800. Senator George called me up and asked if I would come over and see him. I did.

He said, "I sounded out my committee. I think it ought to be raised but we can't go to \$4,800. I can't get a majority on the committee to go to \$4,800, but I can get a majority for \$3,600."

I said, "That's not very far, Senator."

He said, "I know but you will establish the principle that it can be moved. Don't you think that is important?"

I said, "Personally I do, but I am not in a position to go against the resolution of the Federation. I am bound by that; that is our policy."

"Well," he said, "if I could tell the members of my committee that a vote for \$3,600 would not be considered a negative vote on the voting record, I can pass it."

I said, "I will see what I can do."

Meany was not yet president of the A.F. of L. but he was chairman of the Social Security Committee and Secretary-Treasurer. So I went back to Meany and told him exactly what had happened. He said, "You won't testify that that is our policy. You can say that we will not consider it a negative vote."

I went back and told Senator George this and he got it through.

WEEKS:

At lunch you were talking about Senator George supporting you. This was on the...back in '56 on...

CRUIKSHANK:

Back in '56 on the disability.

WEEKS:

Would you care to relate that?

CRUIKSHANK:

In 1956 Senator George was up for reelection and he felt that under the unit rule in Georgia he couldn't win against Herman Talmadge because it was badly weighted against him. So he withdrew. He announced he was not going to run again. Then at that time he announced he didn't want to see any people. The disability thing was very tight. It had passed the House by a narrow majority. It had been turned down by the Senate Finance Committee. We knew we needed somebody of great prestige on the floor, particularly with Southern colleagues. There were a number of people, Senators from the South that would be able to say to their constituents, "Look, I went along with Senator George."

There was a Congressman by the name of Page whose son was an assistant to Senator George, on his staff. Andy said to me, "I think we can see Senator George and get him to make this his kind of swan song. I think I can get to see him."

I said, "He isn't seeing anybody."

Andy said, "We can see him on a Saturday morning, if we are going to be willing to go down there and wait and hang around."

"Well," I said, "I usually go over to the Bay on Saturday."

I remember my wife and I packed up the car. I told her we probably would have to wait around a while. So I parked on the Capitol grounds and went into George's outer office. He had somebody in there: somebody from the sugar interests or Coca Cola from Georgia. Anyway we saw them file out.

We heard him say to young Page, "You mean to say these men have stayed here all morning?"

Hour after hour went by; my poor wife was sitting out in the car.

We heard Senator George say, "Tell them I'll see them for five minutes."

So he came out and ushered Andy and me in. We made our pitch. He saw us for about a half an hour. He went over the bill for us, and he agreed. He would lead the battle to override the Senate Finance Committee of which he was a member. He was in a clear position because he had voted for us but he was not in the majority. So he was not reversing his personal position, but to take on the Senate Finance Committee was a major job. They had a lot of influence on the whole Senate. We knew it was important to have him enrolled as a leader of the amendment on the floor to restore the disability provisions of a House-passed bill. So he carried on that battle.

In the first place we met in Lyndon Johnson's office. He was the Senate Majority Leader at the time. We counted noses and Clements of Kentucky was the Majority Whip and we went down every member of the Senate and where we thought they were. We had a bare majority.

Clements then said, "Look, you have counted me with you. I can't be with you. I am up for reelection and the AMA in Kentucky has vowed to defeat me if I vote for disability." Lyndon Johnson was pretty much upset.

He said, "This is a party position. You are the Majority Whip, you can't go against us." He argued with him. Finally Johnson said, "I'll tell you. If we need your vote, if it's that close, can we have your vote?"

Clements said, "Yes. If my vote makes the difference, you can have my vote. Please don't call me. Let me get out of this if I can. I'll not vote one way or the other unless my vote is critical."

It came up on the floor in August. I was in the gallery. The debate was started. Senator George was speaking. I saw Lyndon Johnson searching around the gallery. He caught my eye and pointed down. I knew he wanted me to meet him down in his little private office off the floor. I rushed down.

He said, "How many votes have you got, Cruikshank?"

I said, "We've got a bare majority."

He said, "You have like hell! You are six votes short right now."

I said, "I can't believe that."

He showed me a list that he had of guys that had gone back on what we had thought was their position. So I went out in the hall and gathered together all the labor and welfare people, all the do-gooders I could round up. We divided up those names and started working on them.

Johnson said, "I'll pass a note to George to keep talking for an hour. He'll have the floor for an hour. You've got an hour to get those six votes."

One of the peculiar votes that we rounded up was Joe McCarthy. Now Joe McCarthy was a very conservative guy of course. Joe McCarthy had been taken to task by Nixon. Eisenhower sent Nixon, who was then Vice President, to McCarthy to ask him to slow down on his Communist drives. He was sore at Nixon for having done this. Nixon was in the chair as Vice President. Very seldom the Vice President occupies the chair, but he came over that day knowing that it was going to be close and he might have to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie.



The Machinists' representative said, "I know how to get Joe McCarthy. Tell him that he will embarrass Nixon." So he worked on him and McCarthy voted with us. Then when he saw his vote wasn't needed he called up to the clerk and reserved his vote which then make it a tie. You see, it carried the first time, then when he reversed his vote, it made it a tie.

At that point I saw Lyndon Johnson stride up the aisle in six foot strides, came down, and holding up the arm the reluctant Clements who cast his vote then, and it wasn't a tie. We carried it in the end by two votes. At that moment Clements' vote was the vote that was needed to break it.

Incidentally, that was in August, and in November the AMA defeated Clements. It cost him his seat in the Senate to put disability on the rolls. But today there are seven million people in their wheel chairs in hospitals and so forth that benefit because of that vote. I don't think Clements would regret it. It cost him his Senate seat.

Meanwhile George was carrying on Southern oratory at its best saying the medical profession if they could determine when a Senator--or as he would always say, a member of the Senate of the United States--if they could declare when he was disabled, they ought to be able to find out when a poor working man was disabled. He rolled this, and rang the changes on this. Senator George was one of the few Senators who, when the word got passed out through the halls and corridors that he was going to speak, you would just see them filter in and every seat was full. Every seat on the floor was occupied. Usually, you know, they make their speech for the record and there will be five or six people sitting around with their feet on the desk reading the newspaper. Not when Senator George was speaking.

WEEKS:

Is there anybody like that now that will draw...

CRUIKSHANK:

I don't know anybody like that now in the Senate that can pull the crowd in like George could. There were a few others who could do it on crucial issues. I suppose on some crucial issue of foreign policy there is somebody, but right at the moment I don't know anybody who has the kind of universal respect that George had. He was a generally conservative person but he was a man of great integrity. Oh, he had his favorites. All during the war Coca Cola got enough sugar. We all knew that. That was Georgia and Atlanta and Coca Cola. He never tried to deny it. But I am sure that George never got a nickel from Coca Cola. I am just as sure of that as I can be of anything. He did it because they were his constituents. He was taking care of them.

WEEKS:

When we get down to Medicare...you talked about the three layer cake, Mills putting together what they called Eldercare, Medicare, and...

CRUIKSHANK:

The AMA had what they called Eldercare. They made a last dying gasp to get something that was not Medicare. It didn't give in on any important point.

WEEKS:

It was still an insurance subsidy, wasn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yeah. It relied on the private insurance industry to both administer it...and it had an implied means test in it. That is it would take care of people who could prove their need.

WEEKS:

That was kind of a complicated income tax return proof of need wasn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

That's right.

WEEKS:

The interesting thing to me is how Mills put this together. Did he really surprise people? Was this a surprise when he came up with this compromise?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, I think it must have. It surprised me in a way. As soon as Mills knew it was inevitable. The Anderson-King bill never passed. As Medicare went through it was the Mills bill. We always said that would be true whenever it came through--when he saw it was inevitable, whenever there was a majority on the Ways and Means Committee. But you see that was a kind of Catch 22, there would have been a majority any time that Mills would have supported it. But at the same time, while that was the positive side of the coin for us, it was the negative side for him because he knew he would be blamed. He would have to take the responsibility. He knew that his vote was not just one vote. He knew that it would make the difference. To us that meant that we put all the pressure we could on Mills. To him it was an argument for further resistance, I suppose. But as soon as Lyndon Johnson put the other members on the committee and there was a majority then he was going to put his stamp on it, and see that it was a Mills bill, and that it was not just the Forand bill. He worked out this compromise with the AMA. He didn't give the AMA very much actually. He kind of took them at their word. He took their propanganda as their word. He said that you talk about aid to the needy

not the greedy. O.K., we'll take care of the needy. We'll have a Medicaid bill and do that on a means test basis. The other people we'll handle on an insurance basis. You see, the AMA didn't want that part of it at all. He was able to kind of turn their propaganda against them and say that he was doing what they were asking. Of course, he was doing a lot more. How could they object to that? They did object but it didn't get anywhere.

WEEKS:

I have been guilty myself in referring to Medicare, it almost seems that once you have heard of Mills' three layer cake the thing is over, but actually that was only the beginning of the end, wasn't it? When it got to the Senate, Senator Long with his amendments... What motivated that man?

CRUIKSHANK:

It was awfully hard to tell whatever motivated him. Long was joined by Ribicoff. The Long-Ribicoff amendments would have made the whole Medicare a catastrophic insurance thing rather than a basic underwriting protection. There again emerges in the picture another conservative, Byrd, who was on the Senate Finance Committee. When Long and Ribicoff came up with their amendments, Douglas supported it. Then his conscience started working on him, not only his conscience but his brain; he was a trained economist you know.

WEEKS:

Is is true that you came to him and explained what he had done?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. I didn't have the full responsibility. He called me over and he said here's what I have done and I feel unsure of myself.

I said, "I am glad you do because I think you have undercut the whole thing. Our whole long battle is lost. We can't support that kind of thing."

"Well," he said, "how can we reverse it?"

I said, "You voted for it, didn't you?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "That puts you in a parliamentary position to ask for a reconsideration in the committee."

"But that's very hard to do. That's never done," he said.

"Well, Senator, it's a matter of principle." You could talk principle to Paul Douglas.

Then in that milieu emerged Senator Hartke of Indiana who also was a member of the Senate Finance Committee. He came up with a compromise. I forget just what it was but Long and Ribicoff could support it. It went a long way toward the Long-Ribicoff proposal.

WEEKS:

May I ask you a point here? Did you and some of your colleagues say, "What can we allow as far as a compromise?" Didn't you have a meeting? Wasn't there a leak from that meeting that Hartke got...

CRUIKSHANK:

That Hartke got? I don't recall that specifically, but we did consider: Can we buy any of this without selling it down the river? We concluded that we couldn't. Then Hartke came up with a proposal, a compromise proposal. He called me over to his office.

He said, "I can pass this. I have got enough assurance that I can pass this compromise. You can't pass the House version in this committee."

I said, "I don't know whether we can or not."

At that point I didn't want to close the door entirely. I said we would think it over. I went to Senator Anderson. That was the Anderson bill in the Senate, you know. I said, "Where do we stand on this?"

Now Anderson was an insurance man himself. He made his money in insurance. He ran a big insurance company in New Mexico--workman's compensation. He knew the insurance business. He used to tell his insurance colleagues, "You are crazy to oppose this. This is sound insurance."

Also Anderson was not well. He was sick half the time. It was a heroic thing for him to even be on the floor during these battles. Anderson said that he would sound out the committee to see how many would stand by the vote to reconsider the Douglas one. Then, if they passed the vote to reconsider, he would put his original forward for endorsement again by the Senate Finance Committee.

I said, "O.K. See where you land, count your noses."

The meeting of the committee was to be held on Monday morning at 10 o'clock. I was in Anderson's office at 9 o'clock. He came out. He had worked over the weekend with his colleagues. There were seventeen members on the committee.

I said, "Where do we stand, Senator?"

He said, "We've got nine people in favor of the original bill."

I said, "That's a majority of one."

He said, "That's right."

I said, "Who are they?"

He read them off. One was Senator Byrd of Virginia, a conservative, reactionary old character, you know.

I said, "My God, Clint, that's a weak reed to lean on. Maybe we've got to think of the Hartke proposal."

"Well," he said, "Senator Byrd said he would stand with me." And Anderson looked at me and said, "What do we do?"

I said, "Let's go for broke. We have compromised enough."

I'll never forget. He held on to my hand and said, "I hoped you would say that."

Later he told me...now here's this matter of integrity. Later he told me that Byrd voted with him and then in the committee he said, "I cast this vote this way, and I want to tell you why. I am going to vote against Medicare when it gets to the floor. I am against it on principle but I don't think the way to kill a bill is to load it up with ridiculous amendments. I think the bill ought to go before the Senate with a clean choice."

That was conservative old Byrd from Virginia. But that was touch and go. Years and years of work hung on that one vote.

WEEKS:

Then when did the extra thirty days come in? Was that in the Joint Conference?

CRUIKSHANK:

The extra thirty days of care? I think it was but my memory fails me on that.

WEEKS:

I have read a little about the Joint Committee. That was chaired by Mills, wasn't it?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, it would be because that kind of bill has to originate in the House.

WEEKS:

He used his influence in the Joint Conference Committee to have that bill come out the way he wanted, didn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

He usually did.

WEEKS:

To me that was an indication of the power of the man, that even over his colleagues in the Senate he had...

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. He had a tremendous amount of power. He knew every parliamentary trick there was to be known.

WEEKS:

He is a very interesting man.

CRUIKSHANK:

What a tragedy.

WEEKS:

I talked with him twice in Washington. The first time was to set up a meeting. He is a very cautious man. You could tell he wanted to look me over. I thought at least to see what my intentions were. He made the point at that time. He said something about leaving the House. He said, "After I



cracked up." He said, "I didn't know what I was doing." That was all that was said, and that's all that has ever been said since then. I also wanted to ask you about the proxy confusion. I don't know whether I like Senator Long or not. This would make me less likely to like him. His use of proxies. Didn't he question a proxy that Senator Anderson had from Fulbright, saying he had one from a later date?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, that's right.

WEEKS:

Then it turned out that the one Long had was for a different thing?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. Now that you remind me of that. I had forgotten about that. That's true.

WEEKS:

Ribicoff had one from Senator Gore. There was some misunderstanding.

CRUIKSHANK:

I have forgotten the details of that but what you say is correct about Long having a proxy, but Anderson couldn't challenge him in the committee because he didn't know until he got out and phoned Fulbright.

Fulbright said, "That's not true at all. I didn't give him my proxy on this issue." It was something else.

WEEKS:

That must have raised quite a lot of...

CRUIKSHANK:

People can get awful mad at Long. They hold it because he has such power.

WEEKS:

Representative Boggs and Senator Long, both from Louisiana, were on different sides of the fence quite often. I wondered why.

CRUIKSHANK:

Hale Boggs. Yes. Boggs was from a district that was mostly metropolitan, where Long depended on the red neck districts. And a different tradition and background. Long was from the old Kingfish, you know. That whole Long dynasty down there. Long has a different base from Hale Bogg. They were both Louisiana, but different sections of Louisiana.

I want to get on the record the incident that--I have talked in a kind of braggadocio way about some of my successful operations--let me tell you about a big failure. It involved AHA.

When Ed Crosby, God rest his soul, was the executive director of the AHA, he was smart enough to see, and compassionate enough to see, that Medicare was not all as bad as AMA was claiming it, and that there were certain advantages in it for the hospital. This was when it was a hospital payment mechanism, the Forand bill. Soon after the merger of the AFL-CIO he said, "Nelson, if you can get President Meany to address our convention, which is going to be in New York at the new convention center on Columbus Circle..."(that was about the first big convention that was held in that center.) He said, "It's in New York, home territory for you. If you can get him to address them, I think I can get the AHA, if not to endorse Medicare, not to oppose it." He said, "You've got to have the big name and the prestige to impress my members."

I said, "I understand completely, Ed."

So I went to Meany and told him. This would be immediately after a meeting of the executive council of the AFL-CIO that was scheduled to meet at Unity House. Unity House is the vacation center of the Garment Workers which is up in the Poconos. Meany loved Unity House. His wife was a Garment Worker and he was very close to Dave Dubinsky the president. He liked to go to Unity House and relax. He liked to have council meetings at Unity House. It was in August. I was elated that he agreed to do it.

He said, "You can put together a speech for me."

I said, "I think I know what these fellows want to hear."

He said, "I'll do it."

Then I made my big mistake. I was so elated that I forgot to tell his secretary, Virginia Tehas. I don't want anything on the record derogatory of Virginia because she was very protective of Mr. Meany. A very devoted secretary and in many ways a charming woman but she was so protective of him that sometimes she gave us problems. We used to call her the "Tehas of the august Meany." We liked Virginia, but she was somewhat of a prima donna. Her career with Mr. Meany was her whole life. She was never married. She was devoted. A wonderful secretary. A very able woman. But as I say, protective of her turf and her understanding.

As I say, I forgot to tell Virginia that Mr. Meany had agreed to do this. Whereupon she took umbrage that it hadn't been cleared through her and she started working on him up at Unity House telling him, "You don't want to go up there and talk to a bunch of these guys in the hot weather and all that. Just stay up here and relax." By gosh, she got him to renege on the date.

He told me, "You go down and make the speech."

I said, "It won't work, George. It's got to be you. It can't be just some staff guy. This is the politics of the thing. It's got to be you."

"Well," he said, "I think I'll go some other time."

Virginia really did a job on him. This was my big mistake. It's possible we could have had Medicare a couple of years earlier, if I hadn't made that mistake.

WEEKS:

You never know. I wanted to ask you about the "Johnson treatment." I often have heard that term used. According to my notes, after Medicare passed the House--no, just before it passed the House--Johnson went on television to explain the bill. Also, wasn't that the time he got Senator Byrd in the corner in front of millions of people and asked him if, when the bill came before the Senate Finance Committee if it would be handled expeditiously, or whatever term he used?

CRUIKSHANK:

That rings a faint bell in my memory, but I don't recall it accurately.

WEEKS:

What can you tell me about the Johnson treatment?

CRUIKSHANK:

Johnson was a very, very complex man. He could be brutal--he never was brutal to me. I never saw that rough side of him addressed to me. He had some people around him that I had difficulty working with. He had one person who was a good friend of mine, George Reedy, who later became Johnson's press secretary. He is now up at Marquette teaching journalism. George Reedy was

not of the Texas breed, but he worked with Johnson, and endured Johnson, I think in a way. He was one of our little coterie of fishing pals. I knew George very well. I could always approach Johnson through George Reedy and get an appointment to see him without any difficulty. I usually didn't have any trouble anyway when I was representing AFL-CIO. He was always a political animal.

Let's go back a minute to the disability thing. I told you how he marched Clements down the aisle, and how he marshaled the votes for us, and how he kept Senator George speaking. He managed the Senate.

After it was over I went back to the AFL-CIO office. It was late, around six o'clock. Meany was still in his office. By that time everyone had gone home, it was informal, I just wandered in. He had heard over the radio that it had passed. He congratulated me.

I said, "George, we are always quick to condemn the guy that votes against us that we don't always acknowledge the guys who help us out. There were four people in the Senate who were crucial to victory this afternoon. I suggest that you send each a personal note of appreciation. Maybe they will use it politically, we understand that, but send each a personal note."

He said, "That's fine, I agree. Go out and dictate to Virginia what you think I ought to say."

So I went out. One was Senator George, one was Senator Long on the disability thing. The other two were Johnson and Clements. The four people who were key. I knew that Clements was running at great risk. I didn't know what the outcome was going to be, but I knew he risked his seat.

He took the notes, each one was just a little different and directed personally. He had personal stationery he used, "AFL-CIO Headquarters, Office of the President." Very nice stuff. Virginia put these little notes on this. He looked at them, approved them, and signed them.

I said, "Let me deliver them, George."

He said, "Fine."

So I took them and stuck them in my pocket and jumped in a cab and went back over to the Senate. The only one that was around was Lyndon Johnson.

I walked in his office and said, "I have a note here from President Meany for you."

"Oh, is that so," he said.

I said, "I have it here," and I handed it to him.

He was very touched. I remember he sat down and his eyes kind of swelled up with tears. He wrote a handwritten note back to Meany. He said, "Will you take this back?"

He wrote it out by hand and said, "One of the reasons I always wanted to be in the Senate, and I wanted to be Majority Leader so I could do something for poor people. I have had a chance and I appreciate your help and support."

The guy was tender and soft and wrote this kind of compassionate note by hand and asked if I would take it back. I hope it still is in the files. That was a side of Johnson that the public doesn't talk about.

I have a friend, Elizabeth Wickenden, who was the head of the public welfare office here a long time, American Public Welfare Association. She goes by her professional name, Elizabeth Wickenden. She came out of the youth part of Roosevelt's--Lyndon Johnson was in it--Youth Administration--National

Youth Administration. Johnson was NYA director in Texas. Wickie as we called her...but her husband was Arthur Goldschmidt. We always called him Tex Goldschmidt because he was raised in the same town as Lyndon Johnson. They went to school together, they went to church together in Shepherdtown down there in Texas. It was just a little community, a small town. So he was very close. He became an agricultural expert. He was a graduate of the Texas A&M and was in the Department of Agriculture and later in the United Nations. Johnson called him to Washington--Wickie told me this story, I know them both very well, Tex and Wickie, but this youth association and the small town in Texas, growing up together--he called Arthur Goldschmidt into the White House, they spent the night there. Wickie told me how they sat in front of the fireplace. He kicked off his shoes and asked Tex if he wouldn't draw up something that would help the Vietnamese people. The Mekong Delta plan came out of that. Goldschmidt was a land use expert. He developed the Mekong Delta plan, which Johnson put forward at one time. The significant thing in this same aspect of his character came out because Wickie told me, he kicked off his shoes and sat in front of the fireplace and asked Tex to work out this plan.

He said, "I don't want to be like poor old Abe Lincoln and spend four years in here fighting a god-damned war."

The public never knew that was in Lyndon Johnson's heart. "I don't want to be like poor old Abe Lincoln fighting a god-damned war."

WEEKS

He felt uncomfortable with the Kennedys, didn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

I guess he did, but I never saw that part.

WEEKS:

You never know from what you read. He may have been more comfortable with the common man than with a sophisticated, intellectual--whatever that is. Having lived around an academic community a long time, I still don't know what it is.

CRUIKSHANK:

I just bought a copy of this Merle Miller's oral history of Johnson. I haven't read it yet. It is appearing serially in the Post. I read the first two sections of it. There is some of this complexity that comes out in these first two issues in the Post. I didn't think Merle Miller did too good a job on Truman. So I am hoping for a better job on Johnson.

WEEKS:

Ask your daughter some time what she thinks about Merle Miller.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. She has already told me.

WEEKS:

I have been to only one annual meeting of the Oral History Association. That was where Merle Miller appeared, that was when your daughter was President-elect. I took my wife with me. She came away, like I did, feeling that, if a man is different, why is it necessary for him to go around and brag about it. He could talk about Harry Truman and oral history--that was what we were there to hear.



CRUIKSHANK:

I was in Lyndon Johnson's office many times. I have seen him ring up on the phone and talk hard to a person--you've got to do this, we expect this of you, and all that--but I never saw him threaten anybody. I have heard that he did but I never saw it.

WEEKS:

A lot of legends grow up about these men. He was a strong man, a big man, I assume from what I have heard.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes. A towering man.

WEEKS:

Just like Mr. Carter is supposed to be smaller than you think.

CRUIKSHANK:

I have a picture taken with me shaking hands with Johnson. I just about come up to his shoulder. He overshadowed me. He had a way of kind of overshadowing people not only in size but in booming voice.

WEEKS:

There was something overpowering about him.

CRUIKSHANK:

He was bigger than life.

WEEKS:

I probably am wearing out my welcome here....

CRUIKSHANK:

It's my fault. I have rambled on.

WEEKS:

No! No! You can't say too much. I would like to have you say something about Paul Douglas if you feel like it.

CRUIKSHANK:

Paul Douglas was a personal friend as well as a Senator. Again, you know. Quaker background. A true Quaker, not a fake like Richard Nixon. But he eschewed his Quaker faith and volunteered, when he was 50 years old, got into active service, was wounded, because he felt the issue...

WEEKS:

Wounded quite badly too, wasn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, it crippled him, crippled his hand quite badly. I think he had a body wound too that affected him. He was in the hospital a long, long time recuperating--Veterans Hospital, after he came back. We knew him in Chicago first, when he was an academic. He wrote the first major intellectual analysis of the Social Security Act, after it was passed. Social Security in America it was called in which, incidentally, he differed on a couple of major points with Wilbur Cohen and Altmeyer. He differed on experience rating and it turned out that he was right. Wilbur Cohen and Altmeyer lived to regret their espousal of experience rating in unemployment compensation. He never felt quite at home with Wilbur. He had a certain kind of distrust which I tried to dispel.

I would say, "Now come on, Paul.."

He would say, "Well..." He was not a vindictive guy, but that early battle on Social Security...he was an economist, he was a trained, professional economist. He saw these issues and he was quite positive about them. He felt he had been defeated by the Wisconsin plan as against the Ohio plan that he had espoused for funding unemployment compensation. Then you know, he became a councilman in the city of Chicago. Here he was an academic but active in politics, and then on into the Senate. In his early days in the Senate we had some difficulties with him because he was kind of a purist and a little bit inclined to be a bit preachy. Those of us that knew him well enough would say, "Stop listening to your conscience and listen to the voters. Who elected you? Who sent you here?"

We knew him well enough to say that and he was man enough to take it. He wouldn't throw you out when you talked to him that way.

He settled down and realized a little bit like Hubert Humphrey. Hubert Humphrey was a maverick when he first was in the Senate. Then he knew that you had to play with the club and by the club's rules or you didn't have any influence. Paul Douglas learned something of the same lesson, perhaps not in as dramatic a way as Hubert Humphrey. He did settle down and played by the rules, but he didn't give up his idealism and his battles for people's welfare. He worried about some things when we first had a disability issue up and were defeated; it was partly Paul's fault in a way.

He would say, "Well, you know, you are going to pay some guy disability--some guy goes out and gets a case of syphilis or something. I am not against giving him benefits, but just imagine what the press would say.

This guy in his peccadilloes becomes diseased and we pay him benefits all his life. Or a guy gets shot holding up a filling station."

He said some of these things and then Taft--the only time I think Taft ever paid his respects to Paul Douglas as an economist--then Taft quoted him extensively on the subject. In the early stages it went down in defeat, but partly because of Paul's puritanical approach to things, and impatience. Some of the eligibility provisions which are pretty stiff, and some of them still remain, in the disability provision were Paul's doing and it may have been a contribution in the long run. The fact that you had to have a long record of work and recent employment.

You would say, "Nobody is going to hold up a filling station and get shot that is employed and working hard in a shop somewhere. This is not the kind of guy that holds up a filling station."

"Have it he was 'recently employed'."

So we put in those qualifying provisions. Some of them are still there. It may be something of a protection to the system. Paul didn't do these things because he was against them. He had kind of a purist approach to things. Then he became a battler in a situation I mentioned before. When the critical, final issue came up when he was willing to vote for reconsideration of the Long-Ribicoff amendment.

He said, "I remember the prayer of Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from me." It apparently was humiliating for a Senator to ask to reverse his position, but he was willing to do it because it was the only chance to get the thing reconsidered.

In contrast I want to say something about...if any young people were ever led astray it was by the Pied Piper of Minnesota, namely Gene McCarthy. Nobody ever asked us what kind of guy he was. He was no good to us particularly. His voting record wasn't so bad, but he wouldn't fight for anything. He was busy writing poetry when he should have been fighting.

I remember in a particular incident in the Medicare struggle, Manton Eddy of the Connecticut Life Insurance Company, which also wrote health insurance, was chairman of the Health Insurance Institute, which was a conglomerate of commercial insurance companies. Manton Eddy was an articulate, able actuary himself. They knew who they were sending as a spokesman, an able person. He was coming in to testify against Medicare.

Some of us went to Paul and said, "This fellow is going to be before your committee in a couple of days. We have some questions prepared, and you can think of some yourself, that ought to be asked to pin him down on some of these things."

He said, "I don't mind. I've been carrying the battle. They get tired of hearing my voice. Somebody else ought to take on this thing. It would be better strategy."

We agreed it might be true because he had been in there every day battling. You can wear out your welcome. We said, "O.K. Who?"

He said, "Gene McCarthy. Gene's a university man. He can handle these issues."

We said, "Yes, but we don't have much luck getting Gene to work."

He said, "I'll give him a call." He said, "Our friends from the labor

movement are in here and would like to talk with you. I would appreciate it if you would see them."

McCarthy said, "Come over."

So we went over and went down the questions--what will I say if the answer is this--coached him, as we often did a member of the committee.

"Well," he said, "I'll see what I can do."

The next morning the committee met, Manton Eddy was there, McCarthy wasn't present. That kind of thing happened over and over again. Some of us were just heartbroken when we saw young people thinking this faker was a great liberal. Gene McCarthy wanted to be Secretary of State. He was sore because he wasn't appointed. All these people led astray! The academic community thought he was Jesus Christ come back to earth. He was no good to us on liberal causes.

Just think! A seat in the United States Senate: Out of 220 million people there are only 100 in the Senate. Out of that 100 there are only 17 who sit on the Senate Finance Committee. They write all the welfare legislation, all the Social Security legislation, all the tax legislation, the things that affect people most. A guy who has that kind of seat has the responsibility to be there and to use it. No, Gene McCarthy was writing poetry and playing as Pied Piper and leading the youth down the primrose path. Now I've got it on the record what I think of Gene McCarthy.

WEEKS:

It's frightening, isn't it? Do you think Medicare was sort of a high water mark as far as national health insurance is concerned?

CRUIKSHANK:

Apparently it turned out to be at least up to the present time. I don't think the issue is dead because here people are spending close to nine percent of the Gross National Product for medical care and not getting very good care in many instances. We see people going up to Canada--I have friends going up to Canada and getting excellent care and their total bill will be four or five hundred dollars or something like that. The same thing here would cost them five thousand.

WEEKS:

It's shameful the prices that are being charged. I know that hospitals, supposedly, are paid on cost plus...

CRUIKSHANK:

The doctors are paid on charges. In a way that vindicates our position. Medicare...you often hear it said that Medicare only pays 38% of the total health bill. That average conceals a lot of things, because it takes in account the people who pay their premiums and don't use the service in any year that they are perfectly healthy and all this kind of thing. Take a serious hospitalized illness and Medicare will pay a very large part of it. I have often said I have been talking about hospitals and health care all my life and never been in one except to visit a friend. But last winter I had sixteen days in the hospital. I had a \$12,000 hospital bill. Medicare paid all but about eleven hundred dollars of it. You see it is a damned good bill in a case like that. Now if I had a bad nosebleed or an ingrown toenail or something like that, Medicare probably wouldn't even cover it. Those things

go into the average. That also says something about the nature of a health program. The health program ought to take care of minor things as well as major things. Medicare is a better program than people give it credit for. Fourteen or fifteen billion dollars worth of health bills for older people are paid for out of the system. As I say, the big bills are pretty well taken care of.

WEEKS:

You and I are both doing what I think is the right thing to do, that is: keeping on working. Working is in quotes; it can be any kind of work that takes up your time. I often think of some of my friends who are not doing anything but who will tell you about the yellow pill, the pink pill and so on. I am wondering if there isn't some way we can make people more interested in doing things, whatever they are, so they won't have too much time to think about themselves.

CRUIKSHANK:

Yes, I think that's important.

WEEKS:

I do want to ask you about one thing and that's the Health Security Program which is the Committee for National Health Insurance sponsored plan.

CRUIKSHANK:

Max Fine. Over here on Fifteenth Street. I guess he has moved his office now.

WEEKS:

I was reading that over again the other day. I think I heard Ted Kennedy refer to it during his campaign that the providers, the doctors and the



hospitals, will be paid from a fund set up and apportioned regionally. Out of this fund the hospitals, I presume, will be paid on a cost basis, and physicians will be paid either 1) fee-for-service; 2) salary; or 3) as part of a group practice, but, if the funds are not sufficient to meet the claims, they will be prorated in some way. Do you think the medical profession is going to buy that?

CRUIKSHANK:

No.

Of course they wouldn't buy that. They wouldn't buy anything reasonable at all. The thing they stumble over is the negotiated fee, that this is to be negotiated. You decide how big the pie is and then how you are going to divide it up. In the Kennedy proposal there is provision for the medical profession and the consumers--consumers today have nothing to say about the cost of the services--with the government serving as kind of a referee, a mediating factor between the two forces. The medical profession buys these things after the fact.

There are a number of plans now in effect with negotiated fee schedules. The big California plan, what do they call it, the Joaquin Valley plan, they negotiate fees. Why are they willing to do it? The medical profession there endorses the plan. The simple reason is that Kaiser is breathing down their neck. They are able to say to the doctors, "You had better take this or Kaiser will get you." Kaiser is the big, boogeyman in their view. That threat not existing generally, then the medical profession opposes it on principle. The principle is easily forgotten when it is the second line of defense.

WEEKS:

I have seen the English system work, and, while it probably wouldn't satisfy our people as far as some of the trimming is concerned, it seems to work for them.

CRUIKSHANK:

No government in England is proposing to do away with it other than Mrs. Thatcher.

WEEKS:

I once sat in the home of an English general practitioner who worked with his panel of so many people. He worked on a per capita basis. I said, "Can you tell me how this is working out?" He had been a physician like this for ten or twelve years.

He said, "The only difference I can see is that it used to be that when I had my surgery here at night and I was ready to go home and the last patient was still here I would ask if I could give him a lift home. Now he says, 'No, thank you, I have my own car outside.' The people are changing but the practice of medicine isn't changing."

I talked to another English doctor, a general practitioner, one time who came to Ann Arbor. He had been sent there by a person I had met in England. I invited a general practitioner to come from a little town near Ann Arbor so they could talk together. We had lunch, four or five of us had lunch. The physician from the little town of Howell--at that time \$40,000 was a lot of money--said to the English physician, "Come and join us and I will guarantee you \$40,000 a year."

The English doctor thanked the American but declined the offer.

"Isn't that enough?" the American asked.

"That's more than enough."

"How much do you make?" This was a brash man. "How much do you make in England?"

He said, "I make the equivalent of seven or eight thousand dollars a year." This was about fifteen years ago. He said, "The important thing is that I make about the same amount of money as the engineers, the attorneys--the people I meet socially. We are all about par on earnings. Relatively I am well off. I am happy. There are four of us who work together so we can take time off for vacations, and so on." He wanted no part of \$40,000 in the United States. Probably today the American would offer \$120,000 or \$150,000.

I wonder why our medical education, some way, can't get people to work as they do in the Indian Medical Service or the Public Health Service for a salary for two or three years and find out it's nice to work a certain number of hours a week for a regular salary. I wonder...

CRUIKSHANK:

I belong to the Group Health Association, the original one that won the Supreme Court case against the AMA. I joined it when I thought I would never need any medical service. I joined it because I wanted to help them out. They were looking for members at that time. That was way back in 1938. I have one of the three or four lowest numbers in enrollment over there. I'll stick with it. Sometimes I get impatient with it but then I have to remind myself that if I were going to a private practitioner that I would get

impatient with him too. I'd probably have to wait in his office. They all belong to the Group Health plan, all our staff here. That is, unless they choose to elect out. There are forty of them.

Seniority in the plan helps some. I had Doctor Rosenbaum, a great doctor. He's retired now. They are on salary. I got to know him pretty well. I went in for my regular checkups. He also was Chief of Medical Practice so I dealt with him in some of these group plans. I was instrumental in bringing in all the employees of our bus system here into Group Health. There are several thousand workers in this plan.

I said to him one time--I knew his reputation over the city, not just in Group Health. He had presented papers in all the medical societies, he was an honored physician throughout the city--I said, "Doctor, why do you stay with Group Health? You could make three times as much money if you hung out your shingle."

"Oh," he said, "Maybe I could. You know we have a pension plan here, and we have regular hours, I don't have to keep the books and things like that. There are advantages."

"Come on, doctor, it isn't just that."

"And a regular salary."

I said, "There must be more than that."

"Well, the fact is I can practice good medicine here."

Now there are still some doctors around like that. We have a fairly rapid turnover in Group Health, we have a staff now of over a hundred doctors. There are something like 200,000 members of Group Health in the area here. There is a core of those dedicated people that stays on and on until their

retirement. But outside that solid core there are a lot of them that come in and out. Some young doctors come in and make enough money to set up their own practice and then move out. So it doesn't have that universal sense of dedication that it started with.

When it first started we had one doctor, Doctor Scandifio, who came from Johns Hopkins. He was Chief of the Pediatric Center at Johns Hopkins and came down here and took the chance with Group Health when the AMA kept them from having staff privileges in any hospital. An antitrust suit was brought against the AMA on that deal that they couldn't keep the doctors from having staff privileges in the hospital if they joined Group Health. Doctor Scandifio, who had a very successful practice at Johns Hopkins was willing to take that risk to be the first medical director. I joined Group Health back in those days. There aren't many Scandifios or Rosenbaums around, but there is a core of them that carry on the tradition of Group Health. It's going with moderate success.

WEEKS:

Didn't you mention something about Wilbur Mills and Ted Kennedy having a plan of some kind?

CRUIKSHANK:

There was a period when Mills and Kennedy got together on a health bill. It was about 1973 or 1974. It was about six or eight months before Mills' breakdown. I had retired by that time from AFL-CIO. I had been retired several years, in fact, I was here at the National Council. I thought Mills gave up a lot more than Kennedy did in the bill which I thought was important. I went over to my old colleagues at the AFL-CIO, and tried to get

them to endorse it. I sat in Andy Biemiller's office, my old colleague. Andy is a wonderful friend, I don't want to say anything negative about him, except he can be kind of gruff sometimes. I understand him. I have known him for forty years, so I don't worry about it. Andy at the close of his office day kind of holds court. He pulls out the bottle and passes it around.

So I broached the subject.

"No, we can't have any part of it."

So I backed off and had another drink and eased up to it again. I did this three or four times. I had more drinks than I usually do. I ran into a pillar in my garage at home because of it. I said the trim on my car was sacrifice to the effort, which was unsuccessful. They were giving up some things but I thought they had the best chance to get it passed they ever would have. It would be a long time before they would have that good a chance again. With Mills and Kennedy both supporting the thing.

There were a few details...and the labor people were sore at Kennedy for developing it without much consultation with them. They were a little bit miffed that he kind of announced he had this new plan. I don't know how far gone Mills was at this time, if he really knew what he was doing. I attended the joint press conference they held and Mills seemed to be his old self. He spoke to me and said, "Nelson, your AFL-CIO people aren't here."

I said, "No."

He said, "Do you think you can swing them?"

I said, "I don't know. I'll try."

He seemed to be in perfect control of himself, but Kennedy kind of led the thing.

The AFL-CIO--I don't want to be unfair to them--their point at that time, this was during the Nixon administration, was why should they try to get a bill passed that Nixon would veto anyway. They might have been right.

WEEKS:

Shortly before this, wasn't it in 1968, Mills was mentioned as a possible presidential candidate?

CRUIKSHANK:

That was another thing I just happened to get in on. We had a bill to increase Social Security benefits by, I think, 20% across the board, at that time. It was getting very near the end of the session and they were getting ready to go to the Democratic convention. There was really just about one day to get it passed through the House, to get the conference report passed by the House. It was going to go by default. We tagged it on the debt ceiling thing, so it was an amendment to the debt ceiling thing. It had to go through because there was very little time. It could have been knocked out under a rule in the House as not germane unless Mills was in complete control. So when it passed in the Senate, I rushed over from the Senate to the House to see Mills to tell him that we had just this amount of time, that we got it through the Senate, and that the conference report would be up. I happened in his office just by chance. I went in his outer office, his assistant was there. It was full of a whole bunch, thirty or forty people from Arkansas, in there to see him.

I said to his assistant, "Look, Jack, I don't often do this but I am going to ask you to get me in first before you let these people in. I think the Congressman will agree that I should come in. This is a matter of the utmost

priority. You know I don't ask that unless it is."

He said, "O.K., Nelson."

He went in and pretty soon the motion was for me to go on in and see Mills. He opened the door and Mills was on the phone. I kind of made motions of is this private but he motioned to me to sit down. He was on the phone with Kennedy. Just by chance I overheard this conversation.

"Ted, we've got to save the Democratic party. The McGovern thing is going to go down to defeat." He said, "I can swing the South and you can be elected President. I'll go on with you in a joint thing." Kennedy turned him down.

Mills, in a way, got kind of tired of being the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He was a man of great ability. He knew that he had a lot of ability. He had his eye on the Supreme Court, but the Democrats could not put a man on the Supreme Court who had signed the Southern Manifesto. He also wanted to be Speaker of the House, but kind of the same thing blocked him. So the route as Vice President was something that fulfilled his ambition at that time. He also had a sense of loyalty to the Democratic party. He had enough political prescience to know that the McGovern thing would go down to disaster. He was convinced that the combination of Ted Kennedy from Massachusetts and Wilbur Mills from Arkansas would make a team that could win. Why Kennedy turned him down, I don't know. We all have surmises. I never talked to Kennedy about it.

I overheard this conversation. I said to Mills at the time, "Am I in on something private?"

He said, "Oh, no. It isn't anything you shouldn't know. I am serious about it. I think the party is in desperate shape."



WEEKS:

Two or three things I have wondered about Kennedy. Did the Kennedys have their own Kitchen Cabinet such as we were discussing about Nelson Rockefeller? Because they are wealthy, did they hire their own advisers?

CRUIKSHANK:

To some extent they did. Ted Kennedy's staff...some of his staff is beyond his office budget.

WEEKS:

Then I wondered how well he can speak extemporaneously without detailed briefing. The reason for that is...you probably saw the Mudd, the Roger Mudd interview.

CRUIKSHANK:

That was three hours of interview from which an hour was carefully picked out. Mudd did a job on Kennedy.

WEEKS:

I thought socially they were friends.

CRUIKSHANK:

It may be but Mudd got a four hundred thousand--a five hundred thousand dollar job as the anchor man here. I think big industry decided they didn't want Ted Kennedy and Mudd was named to kill him off. Out of the three hour interview or more the things that made Kennedy look worse were picked out. I can't prove that. It looks like that. On the other hand, Kennedy surely was not at his best. The hour that was picked certainly was the hour that he made. Somebody might have been able to make him look a lot better with a different kind of selection but certainly he is not home free from what he did

and what he said on that interview. Things taken out of context can be distorted an awful lot, which I understand they were on that interview.

WEEKS:

In other words, a man of prominence is taking a chance unless he has the right of review, isn't he?

CRUIKSHANK:

I have had that happen to me in my small way with people interviewing me. I have been caught. They interview you for an hour then they take out one thing.

WEEKS:

That's one thing here that you won't have to worry about because you can read the transcript and check it one way or the other. Have I asked all the questions I should have asked? I don't want you to give a bad report to your daughter.

CRUIKSHANK:

I asked my daughter who you were. She said, "He's a legitimate historian." She recommended that I talk to you.

WEEKS:

That was nice of her to do that. We never have really talked together. I have seen her and she may have seen me.

CRUIKSHANK:

She knew you by reputation.

WEEKS:

That's very nice. I hope that this...when I get through with this it's going to be a contribution to the health field. There's not too much written

outside of Harris's book.

CRUIKSHANK:

Lots of what is written is wrong. There are several accounts that are just completely distorted.

WEEKS:

When I interviewed Mills I would quote something or refer to something and he would say, "That man never talked with me." Somebody who quoted him directly.

CRUIKSHANK:

You know a lot of these writers...I have an anecdote, while it isn't a true story it is an illustrative story I tell my newspaper friends about the guy that was located on a remote army post and his job was to lower the flag and fire the cannon every night at six o'clock. True to Army use of manpower, that was his only job. Word began to filter back through channels to the Pentagon that he was off seven or eight minutes. Of course this was serious. They sent a man out to investigate. The investigator stayed around three or four days and timed him. Sure enough the flag wasn't lowered at exactly six o'clock. It was eight or nine minutes off. The investigator interviewed the man and asked, "How do you know it's six o'clock?"

"I looked at my watch."

"Is your watch railroad adjusted?"

"No, it's just an ordinary watch."

"How do you know it's correct?"

"Well, in the little village down here, right near the post, there is a jewelry store that has a chronometer in the window. I go by there and set my

watch and then walk a couple of hundred yards down to the flag post. I couldn't be more than a couple of seconds off."

The investigator made a note of all of this and then he went to the jeweler and said, "I notice you have a chronometer in your window here."

"Yes, I do, and it's a very excellent timekeeper."

"Do you adjust it by Naval Observatory time?"

"No, I don't need to. Every night down here at the fort they fire a cannon at six o'clock and it's always right on time."

Interview, Washington, D.C.

September 22, 1980

Nelson H. Cruikshank

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