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ORAL INTERVIEW

RAY HATCHER

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H - Ray Hatcher
K - Jim Keaney
M - Roberta McBride

M. We're interested in Mr. Hatcher's experiences in Detroit, particularly as they concern the problems of the Negroes. Will you tell us, Mr. Hatcher, of your coming to Detroit, and the reasons for that, your first job, and so forth?

H. I had worked for the League back in '29 at home. Of course, at that time, they had the Community Center as well as other centers in Waterbury. And I worked there in 1929 and in 1931; I had got a scholarship to Penderfield through the efforts of the League, and I finished college. So, I wasn't a stranger to it. I'd been the Executive Secretary of the League in Minneapolis as well as in St. Paul. Clarence Mitchell and I were classmates in colleges. We were both in the twin cities at the same times, So, I was in the Urban League program, and he was a good guy as a model. So, when Lester (Granger?) mentioned coming into the League, I was interested. But, there was nothing specific.

Well, then months later I got a call from _____, He called and asked if I would be interested in coming to work in Detroit. And, I said I would. Then about a month later I got a call from John Dancy. He asked if I remembered him. And I said I certainly did. This has significance to us because I had come down to an Urban League Conference at Green Pastures Camp, sometime earlier, '41 or so. I remember one night my wife and I were sitting in the Rec Room just enjoying the fire, for it was a chilly night, and John Dancy was sitting on the other side in this big sweater. We weren't talking; just the three of us were there. And then pretty soon we took to conversation, just casually and that's all there was to it. So,

when he called he said, "You remember me?" and I said, "Yes, I remember you." And then he said, "How would you like to work for me?" "Well, "I said", I think I would." He asked how about my coming down. He gave me about a day's notice to come down to see him, which I did. I filed an application and that was it. And over the years, we've always gone back to that. Guess what my wife tells me, "He liked the COUPLE and that was it!" It was during the war and it had meaning, at least, it sounded like it had meaning. And, I was working in the Settlement and about every week I'd seen my kids go to war and this kind of got to me. In fact, I guess that's my highest compliment when a group of kids came to me one day and said, "How about all of us going down and enlisting? We're going to enlist and get a commission for you as a NCO." I mean, I'm proud of that bunch.

M. You said that when you came to Detroit, it was the period immediately following the Sojourner Truth Riot?

H. The Riot was in February and I got my call in May and I came here and I met Mr. Dancy. He sent me over here and I talked with Mr. McKay and then I went down to see Kenny Moore and a couple other board members.

K. Did they hit you right away with these two projects, the one on interracial housing, "Victory Patterns in Public Housing," and the study of five plants? In other words, what I'm asking is when you came to Detroit, what did they want you to do? They were in trouble; the year before you came, almost to the day, Banner had been out here. Remember Mr. Banner who was from the national office to do that study on Detroit's problems? It was after the Northwestern High School incident.

H. Yes, he came back too, while I was here. He came back and also Julius Thomas.

K. I was going to ask you in relationship to this Victory Pattern in Public Housing which was the study of other cities. Right? The bi-racial housing...Why? What is your explanation? Now you came a little late on this, but what was the hang-up here? Why couldn't they get this going? I know it's a terrible question.

H. No, No, no. I don't care - I'm going to answer it. But people ask me questions now and when they get through, they think it was hell. But, it was this: when they had the Sojourner Truth hassle, your Negro leadership was fighting to have that project declared all black, all Negro. And then, when they built, they won and they got an awful lot of support. Then, less than a year later, they built a number of temporary housing projects in the city and they wanted them for, as they called it, bi-racial or open occupancy. And they got some support, but it wasn't as solid as before. And I couldn't get across to the people here why. I said, "The reason you got all that support the last time was that you were still following a pattern of segregation in asking for it. Now you're talking about a pattern of interracial housing, and you're wondering why some of the folks who supported you before don't want to support you now. And since it was public housing, I began to write around the country. In fact, Frank Hook had come through town. I did some work for him out in Romulus. I wasn't in housing - I was at the League. Then he said, "Why don't you write to so and so?" Thus he gave me a list. So, I just wrote around the country and I got these replies, letters from the executive directors.

The NAACP was appearing before the Housing Commission in a public hearing. Mr. Buffa (the 7-Mile and Fenelon Improvement Association)-was down for the hearing, too. So, I played a hunch - I went to Mr. Dancy and told him what I had. Then I said, "I think this should have an introduction signed

by you, not by me. You are the director of the League. But I don't know how this is going to be taken by some people." So, I prepared the introduction and he signed it.

K. Now when was this hearing? Before the Riot?

H. This is after the Sojourner Truth Riot, and before the 1943 Race Riot. I recall, when the meeting was over, Andy Brown, who is now with the UAW, was here at the time. He was the first one I met here because he was from _____, Connecticut.

I brought Andy, Sally, and Andy's mother and their first-born home from the hospital. Well, anyway, he was here and I had got him out here to do the monograph because my relationship with the League was such that the guy wouldn't even type for me. Well, Andy had a hunch. After the hearing, he, Frank, Gwen and I and some others, Gloster Current, for example, went by to lick our wounds over a beer because we got clobbered pretty badly. Andy said, "You know, I had better see Bob McKay first thing in the morning because if this thing hits the papers, I can see some of the Urban League Board members calling John Dancy and then - boy, you're really going to catch Hell." So the next morning he went to work, and the phone rang, and I heard somebody say, "No, Mr. Dancy isn't in yet." Then Dancy came in and took the other phone, and I heard him say, "Bob, well, I'm glad you liked it." And within another half hour there was another call and I heard him say, "But Kenny, Bob McKay thought it was a fine thing."

What had happened was this: Kenny Moore, a former president, had seen the news story and asked what the Hell was the League doing in getting involved in something like this. In the meantime, Bob McKay called and said he had read the news account, and he thought it was fine. So, it got him off

the hook. I mean this is why, when I had the opportunity I picked Dancy. And, I told him I'd never do anything to embarrass him. I said, "If I think it's going to embarrass you, I'll sign it, and you can say that it was done without your knowledge and you have the right to fire me." But he never insisted on that. So, I mean these are the things - these are the sides of that man folks don't know. And a lot of people thought that - K. Well, he wrote letters which are in the League papers pointing out that he felt they hadn't done very well; (this was just after the Riot) pressure was on from the New York office...He wrote and admitted that he felt that the League hadn't done very much in housing; and that he would do more. Actually, the papers themselves show that the League did more in their traditional work, that is, in hiring - seeing that hiring patterns were better. H. The only thing about it was that it was domestics. That's why I got in trouble with the staff, though not deliberately. When I went there the employment man spent 10% of his time referring domestic servants and practically all the forms were geared to personal domestics in the home. I went out to this Jewish location service and well, I got in to see the director at that time. The first form that I revised for them, I made more in line with male employment. And I suggested a way of setting up files. I was a new guy coming in and trying to change everything; of course, that helped.

Chester Culver was on the Board and I had to go and see him about the policies of the Employers Association and its work with the League because as I understood it, at one time the League handled the processing of all the Negroes who were to come into the factories, and the Employers Association, with their office on Howard, handled whites. And that was still the practice when I came here. We had Mr. Jones who was the Industrial Secretary. If

a Negro went into the office of the Employers Association on Howard, all they would do was give him a card without an address on it, and be told there was nothing. They didn't refer Negroes to plants. I had to go see Mr. Culver. I told him - well, the gist of it was I couldn't tell him he had to interview Negroes in his office. But it would save us embarrassment, and possibly save him from embarrassment too if, even though he didn't wish to interview them, at least to give them a list which contained all the places to go, the Michigan Employment Security Commission (under whatever name it was called then) other societies, and so forth. It was just a question of having the Urban League do your dirty work. I tried to say this to a respected member of the Board in a way which wouldn't get Mr. Dancy in trouble. That was something about Mr. Dancy - he was always honest. Lots of persons didn't understand this. He respected you. He had some regrets when I left. I told him why I was leaving.

But the second week I was here I knew I was in trouble. That was when I went to my first Board meeting. The President of the Board at that time was the Detroit Real Estate Board President. There was some discussion and I know he stated the Detroit Real Estate Board and the Negro Real Estate Brokers had come to an agreement. They decided the Negro brokers would try to buy and sell over here, and the white brokers buy and sell over there. Beulah Whitby was on the Board then. Even the Negro members of the Board either sided with him or said nothing. So I found myself alone arguing with the President of the Board. I was in it, so I saw it through.

Then, after the meeting I went back to the League and told Mr. Dancy I realized I had made a mistake, and I hoped I hadn't embarrassed him.

He made a statement in answer that from that time on was to apply, "You can say anything you want to say, any time you want to say it, any where you want to say it. I may not agree with you, but I'll back you up." I had only been there two weeks. But I never did anything to embarrass him without preparing him. And I said "If this boomerangs you are free to say this was done without your knowledge." I never took advantage of him.

But as to the Board meeting: before I left the Board meeting I got a call - the President had me come down to see him. We talked - and he was saying that Negroes should have 10% of the jobs, 10% of this and 10% of that. And then as I was leaving, he said, "You know, I'm sold on this matter of racial integration." And I said, "Mr. Moore, that can be your own personal opinion, but it certainly can't be the policy of the Urban League." I didn't say much - just that, So he _____.

Then we had the riot. Oddly enough, we had lots of calls that day. People were calling and asking, "Should we go to this meeting? Should we try to go there?" Now I didn't have the answers. After lunch, Mr. Shaeffer called, and said by virtue of the authority vested in him as president he wanted me to close the office, and so on. I told him the calls we were getting and it seemed to me we were performing a service. But he was insistent. I didn't tell him we were going to close. But about 3:00 o'clock we did close, chiefly because I was scared, I had taken my wife home at noon, with the help of a .38 caliber pistol.

And then the National Urban League President, William Baldwin, came out. Well, first, Bugas from the National Staff came, and then Baldwin came. So I took him around to see Louis Martin, and Colonel Strong, and got some material together. You may have seen it in the files, I was doing for him

what nobody else would - I was saying things about Ford and the UAW which no one else would say. This was part of the job. As to Colonel Strong, he had a map in his office. Every time there was a work stoppage he would get a head pin and put in. Well, there were so many pins in there that was almost all you could see. This was due to the fact that Ford, during the war, wanted to keep its machine together, so it brought in a lot of its dealers and sales people into Labor Relations at Ford and the union was expanding, so it got a lot of new guys in the shops-stewards and the like. It was one hell of a mess. But let me go back. Butzel said at one of the meetings "I'm glad to meet you. Everyone says you are the best thing that ever happened to the League." Well, that was it. That was the kiss of death. After July, when I took Baldwin around, Shaeffer at the next Board meeting made a remark - he gave me Hell indirectly when he said, "If you think you're going to get John in trouble you have another thing coming." Not a Board member said a thing. My reaction was to tell him to go to Hell. But I didn't.

There were two or three other Board members I had other contacts with. Mr. Winegar from the Chrysler Corporation was one. Anti-aircraft guns were found to be very effective against submarines, and they made them at the Chrysler Highland Park plant. At the time of this work stoppage, which I will explain, there were seventy-five Liberty ships waiting for delivery of these guns, and all the Negro workers at the Highland Park plant walked out. The issue upon which they walked out was that last straw, something about reels for those ships. Well, anyway, typical of the League's mode of operation, when these fellows walked off the job, Mr. Winegar who was the Personnel Director, called the League for Mr. Dancy who was out. Well, then, I heard a secretary

who wouldn't do my typing, say, "Our new man is here. Mr. Jones is out of the office today. Do you want our new man?" Mr. Winegar said, "Well, we know who the ring leaders are, and I was calling John to see if he wouldn't have someone go past their house tonight and talk to them." So I said, "Mr. Jones isn't here, and I don't think that's the answer. I would be glad to go up to the plant, with the permission of the Shop Committee to talk with the men in a union setting, but so far as telling the leaders, "You're bad boys," you'd better get someone else."

Well, surprisingly, he bought it - he arranged a meeting in the manager's office with the Shop Committee - not the people who were involved, but the Shop Committee. And once the meeting was organized, he said, "I can't afford to sit in on this," so he left. As a result of the meeting I went down to the union hall where all these folks were assembled. I didn't know what the Hell was going on, but the president of the Local introduced me, and when he said, "Urban League," boos began to bounce off the walls. Well, I had worked at a settlement near the Philadelphia waterfront a couple of years so it didn't bother me. It's embarrassing, but it didn't scare me, though I wasn't comfortable. After listening to all of this, I said, "I'm not down here to tell you 'don'ts', All I want to know is, what is it all about? What do you want? How do you think we can go about getting it?" Then I gave them this pitch, "You may be mad; but staying off the job this way may cost your brother a leg or his life." So there were about four hours of bitching. Finally, I got down to the two guys who were ring-leaders, and the young fellow who had led the walkout that night. They said the Union wasn't doing anything about their problems. Finally, it came out that there were two operations, and women were employed at men's jobs, And some of the operations were too heavy - moving chips.

K. They're just supposed to handle up to one hundred twenty-five pounds.

H. Well, it all depends. Let's say you have a bind or a cart the size of this basket. Now, if it's steel shavings, that won't add up to much weight, but if it's filled with, say, sawdust - you have these carts, and they have wheels not much larger than that and these rough floors. So I went out and pulled one - and it was hard! So I could see the validity in that. And they had another job where they had an item - I don't know what the item was for. It was about the size of this table top, and the women would put them on lifts. And when you got down toward the bottom of the pile, you were lifting them up quite a ways. So I told the manager. He said they had never mentioned these things to him. I said, "No, because there are so many other things they're angry about. This is just another one." So we talked about it. Mathias was the manager's name. The union officers and the Shop Committee would stop in. This went on for two days and part of a night.

Finally Addes and some international representatives came out. You see, it was complicated by the guys who tried to do a little politicking. They would get up and rabble-rouse like Hell. Then they would call me, and the fellows, reacting to the rabble-rousing would turn me off. Then they would caucus and come back. Anyway, there was a hearing to see if the walkout was justified.

And here again, there had been an established pattern. Prior to that incident, they would call Mr. Jones and have him talk to the trouble-makers. So when I talk about constraints, it was in terms of such matters as that.

Then again, you could never get a policy statement. Now, I blamed that on the Negro Board members more than I do on Mr. Dancy. He was playing it by

ear, as far as I was concerned. He said, "You know, I have never asked for anything for myself, only for the League."

Of course, I would not have responded to some of the things the Board said, in the manner he did because I'm not the gentleman he was.

K. Do you think there was a difference between Southerners, like John Dancy, and Northerners like yourself? You know, Bernie Smith - we went out and talked with him.

H. Smith - he was the guy who organized the thing, wasn't he?

K. Yes. He talked about the difficulty with John Dancy.

H. They were very good friends. You see, when I came here, I would go to see anybody in town. If he didn't like the League, I would ask why. I went out to 600. They were going to throw me out. "Are you from the National office?" they asked me, "Detroit? It can't be - Mr. Dancy will fire you." They just lambasted me.

K. Did you know Father Dade?

H. Yes. I found out we were from the same school and the same fraternity.

K. You talk about Dade - there was a letter in the Urban League files from Dade's father thanking John Dancy for helping him.

H. That's one thing he did. He helped a lot of guys.

K. Yes. Fred Butzel made a statement, about 1936, on the twentieth anniversary of the League; it was quoted later, in the 40's, I think, in the Chronicle, to the effect that Negroes weren't culturally high enough to move into the city. Now this was in front of the Board members.

H. Well, if you know Fred, he said it. But he said it because he believed in it.

K. Then, after you left the League -

H. I volunteered for Committees, everything you could imagine. But the Board would have no part of me. It was the Board, not Dancy. They didn't

even send me notices of annual meetings.

K. Well, you went into housing after that. You got involved with the situation up there at 8-Mile. You took a job as manager of Oakfield Gardens, was it called? Tell me something about the job. What kind of problems did you run up against, right away?

H. The government - their policies of segregation. I had to tell my immediate boss and the regional director I wasn't going to make segregation or discrimination work.

K. Now they knew, I'm sure, that you had written up that "Victory Patterns..."

H. I don't know whether they knew or not. They should have -

K. For it certainly got enough play in the black press, at least.

H. And it got a big play in Washington, They wanted to fire a guy I quoted, a guy, Bill Hill, who wrote a letter - I didn't realize that at first. I know that some of the guys in race relations kept sending me copies. I doubt if they knew - I don't know. My first problem was trying to convince those guys that - well, I just told them, "Look, I will not _____ to house anybody who is eligible, because he is not Negro." My advisors replied that the white people had their projects, the Negroes theirs. I should let them decide.

K. Did you get any white families?

H. Only in mixed marriages. And then I discouraged some who misunderstood. Gloster was going to have Emil Mazey find a couple of white families. I said, "Gloster, don't do that. This is a Hell of a place even for blacks." You see, we had no fire protection, we had no police protection, we had no school. The first school was in the community building with no partitions. It was just one mess. And the only reason people came here was that regardless, they had to have a place to live. "Look," I said, "the race problem is not going to be solved in Michigan. They don't want to come home from

work, and have to fight it out here. They're not going to stick it. When they come, they want a place to live, and this is it."

I had about five white persons come out to apply. I don't think they were prejudiced, but when they saw this they would be put off, and the kids! Hell, I don't blame them, To think of being out there nine months with a thousand families - and no police protection. They did have forty hours of police protection a week. We hired six men part time, Friday night through Sunday, and they divided 40 hours pay among six men. These guys were fire, health, safety, everything else. My description of the Housing agency was too many males and not enough men. I told one guy that -

K. This was the Detroit Housing Commission?

H. No, the federal government, and the thing there was, the way the book read, was that the manager was accountable - fire, health, safety, everything else. I even ran a gas distribution system, that was handed to me at ten minutes till five one evening. They finished installation, handed it to me, and said it was my system now.

K. Do you think the housing that went up there was inferior to that used for whites?

H. No, no. It wasn't that. It was war housing. The problems we had, I don't think you could say were by design. The inspectors were ok. You see, you had war production work restrictions - that was what complicated our problem. You had three projects being managed as one. I don't think it was discrimination. I think it was Uncle's idea in the first place. They admitted it, seven years later, after finally I convinced them. But it was too late. I said I was getting out. I had bosses who were dumber than I - I just couldn't stand it. It was three projects. If you could have seen them, you could tell how we were doing in the war. One project was

new; another was composed of buildings which were surplus - Willow Run, Midland, some place else here in Michigan. They were knocked down, and brought in here and rebuilt. The next section was brought in from Ohio - they were knocked down and brought in. We had 490 families living in an area on half the land area we felt was necessary, because they couldn't get the land they said they had to have for war workers. Now that could have been a judgement based solely on war needs. You should see the pictures - I have pictures where the excrement from private houses has so saturated the ground, you're hitting a hydrostatic head - it's coming up in surrounding sand boxes.

M. You have pictures of all this?

H. Yes, I wrote a memo in desperation. I wrote and got no response. So they couldn't call me a liar I used my own camera and my own money to buy the film for my own processing. I took pictures, then I wrote a memo to my boss, using the pictures and legend; and on this particular deal the state said I'd have to go to the county; I went to the county and they said they couldn't make the property owners build private outhouses right in front of our project. The township said unless we would give them a sewer system and had our own governors, they couldn't do any thing about it, so I just wrote a memo to my boss, and it went to the boss upstairs, and all Hell broke loose.

K. Why wouldn't they do anything?

H. The god-damned legal - you have to know the guy. First, I was a Negro, and they don't tell lawyers anything until they goof. So he sat there in a chair, and said, "Who told you that?" I wouldn't answer. He said, "Is he in the room?" I wouldn't answer. This guy just gave himself away. This happened over and over again in government. There was a continuous coffee break. I called - they were out of the office; I'd call back - they were out. If I went, you know what - they were downstairs drinking coffee, and

you're up there sweating it out.

You see they would compare Royal Oak Township with Willow Run, or Wayne, or Norwayne, which was permanent. And their maintenance superintendent made more than my accountant. And we had 1464 families and a five-million dollar investment. Then you had aides out at Willow Run who were making more than my assistants. I had to wait three years to get my grade.

But getting back, there were war production restrictions - even the size of pipe was controlled in the gas distribution system. When the tide of war began going in our favor, then it began to get worse. For instance I had five different makes of stove which I had to carry on inventory, which always made my budget items unmanageable. I never knew which stoves were going bad. Everything was used; we had shipments from other places. We had used plumbing. We inherited a gas heating system and in order to make repairs we had to use a trial and error system. We had to get in touch with the company which had installed one section of plumbing which had used a bastard size of pipe. The only guy who had any stock - you couldn't buy stock any place in Detroit at any supply house. We had to go to the contractor so that we could get pipe to make repairs. What this meant was that service which people should normally get they weren't getting, because they had a ceiling on the number of men you had. If it was a question of a stopped up toilet or a burst gas main, you fixed it. And the worst of it was that instead of having individual shut-offs on the gas, you would have two hundred families on one shut-off. So, if you got a gas leak at one o'clock in the morning, you shut off the gas and you started digging. The folks don't know that they won't have any hot water and gas in the morning and they can't cook breakfast. So the staff and I took it, -

rather I took it; it wasn't the staff's fault.

K. How big a staff did you have?

H. One time, when they got scared, we had 42. The reason they got scared, was fear of a gas explosion. Is this pertinent? Well some times I get mad thinking about it. I don't know whether you know how the system works. There's the surface of the ground: this is above ground and this is below ground. This is the frost line. Well, part of the project was built in cold weather, so you didn't have soft dirt. Let's say, you installed a gas main. Now, this is below the frost line. Here it is at the frost line. So, you get pressure of the frost going down, and if you have a weak union you're likely to have a break, And this happened. And the gas followed the line of the soft soil under the walk to a building; then it came up and it blew. It blew the siding out 190 feet from here, it blew out a kitchen wall, which was made of what we called hardboard at that time. Fortunately, the man in the house had gone upstairs - otherwise-

Then one night about dark, a family called up and said they were smelling gas. I went down there. One could smell gas, but couldn't hear anything. We stopped the motor, and then we could hear something - and see bubbles over an area about the size of this office. What had happened was the gas main was damaged, and the gas was coming up - there was moisture in the ground, and it had come up to the surface. When we dug down it looked like a flute.

And the reason for it was that during construction they had used a coating to protect the pipe. Because it was cold weather they backfilled, hard earth and rocks would pit this coating, and it would break. So water and soil in the pipes set up this action. So the rationale was, "Hell, if it's here, it's elsewhere." So we called in Consumers Power, and a consulting firm from Chicago and they tested the whole damn system for gas leaks. Well,

it was so bad I had a man around the clock testing - just taking samples of the air in all buildings. Here again, this kept us from doing the job. See, I wasn't allowed to pay for a cop. All right, this is the best I can do. This I got from talking with Detroit city housing projects. Maintenance men made more money than I could pay our superintendent.

K. Why was that? Why couldn't you pay them more?

H. The city paid more. You had all these government restrictions on pay, rates, that matter. Whenever they would give me permission to hire more or pay more, then there would be a ceiling on employees - this could be just a natural operation of bureaucracy. I know some of the other-

M. The other federal housing projects didn't have all these troubles?

H. Well, you see, at Willow Run they didn't have gas. Inkster did, but that was a permanent project. Wayne was permanent. Mine was temporary. Every temporary project must assume a life-expectancy of 7 years, because in 7 years we would either have won or lost the war. But that damned project was in operation for - let's see, I left in December 1961, and they had their last occupant out by July of 1961. Of course, the township bought it in 1953. There was no place for folks to go.

K. You were there over 15 years?

H. 18, half for the government and half for the township. I went with the township before Madison Heights separated - you're aware of that, aren't you? In fact, George Horkey who was supervisor, and I prepared the first draft of the legislation which permitted Michigan communities to purchase war-housing projects. George called himself a lawyer, but really was a farmer; he didn't practice law. His family - his grandfather - sold U of D land for their campus. Quite a guy! But he and I had hard times while I was with the township, because I guess we didn't understand each other - too much alike, I guess, because we both had the same philosophy: "the

Guy upstairs knows and I don't give a damn what anybody else thinks." I didn't know that till a reporter came down from the Royal Oak Daily Tribune. My philosophy now is the "the Guy upstairs knows; if my wife believes me, I don't give a damn what anyone else thinks." It makes it hard on your wife, though.

I'm getting off the subject now. But I can't get away from Uncle Sam because this was the part of the gutless bureaucracy we had. You take the Urban Renewal program - I've got about 4 feet of material on the Royal Oak Township Urban Renewal Program. We applied. We didn't know we weren't eligible - no one told us we weren't eligible. When they enacted the new legislation it was for slum clearance and urban redevelopment. We applied, and they told us we weren't eligible. But the people out there -

K. Were most of the people out there, as you mentioned in your master's essay, unable to get jobs after the war?

H. You don't know what Hell is, Jim. Eight-mile road is the county line between Wayne and Oakland. We had people who would move in today, and they would be laid off tomorrow. You see, we started when the war was over. And when they left Wayne County, they were no longer the responsibility of the Wayne County Welfare Department. And they weren't eligible yet in Oakland County. So, I could do one of two things - throw them out at the end of the month, or try to find some way to help them. Now because I had some social work background, I used to get my face washed with that. Now, that isn't social work, to treat a person like a human being - that's common sense. So they used to wash my face with that. So between the Oakland County and the Wayne County Welfare Departments - Oakland County would say they could pick up the guy, but that would take up to six weeks. Well, in six weeks a guy could owe a month's rent. You see, war housing projects had to maintain themselves. There was no subsidy. They're not

like the other kinds of projects where you get you annual contribution, and previous debt service. So I was getting it upstairs - I had the worst rent collection record in the country. But, you see, if you're strong, you can brush off such things. They could fire me! I told them to go ahead and fire me. I gave them three chances. I started to quit - I went home to visit my folks, because my father was having heart trouble, but I didn't know it. I came back resolved to roll with the punches and I said "To Hell with this damn place." The boss said, "Why are you going to quit?" He said, "If you do that we're going to catch Hell." "Why should I worry about you? Tell me, is it true or not -" But then when I thought of my father's problems, and I couldn't. If I failed on this job I would be in a Hell of a fix. Then you see, as other federal agencies began to retrench - as War Assets began to deprogram, their employees began to bump ours because ours came in new. I've got a list of the different bosses I had - You see, it's like you coming here as my boss. If you want to give me Hell, go ahead. I'll take it. Maybe you're right, and I'll respect you. But the minute you get out in left field, you're right out here with me. I'm not taking anything from you. Why, I had one boss who had run a little 200 unit project out in Nebraska. He was telling me how to run my maintenance shop and how he had run his. I said, "You had two hundred men. I've got near 1500." If you check with the Research Bureau of the News you'll find out that when they were giving estimates of the family size in the area and they were giving 4.3 and all that jazz - they were using that figure to justify some data - I said, "Look! You can use your 4.3, but on the basis of an analysis of every household we have here, and the number of persons in it, it's 5.8." They said, "The government brought them out here - let the government take care of them." And all I'm saying is that you know the problems of schools out here; I don't know whether you remember when Oak Park took over the schools, and

gave kids examinations from Carver school - 853 kids who had never had a physical examination in their life; they found all kinds of trouble with them, and on two occasions they found out there was low hemoglobin (did you pick up anywhere information on that first public health survey in 1954?) and then on in 1960 there was a big blood donation campaign, and the turnout wasn't great, but the Red Cross was amazed at the health problem revealed. If you knew their diet you would understand, though. Well, I know what diet is. I remember, back in the 30's in Philly I was allowed to make home visits with the nurses from Phipps Institute. At that time there had been research for TB as well as nurses' visit to children. I remember visiting places where they would have the john and the kitchen sink and the stove and the bed all in the same room. I remember going by some doors and seeing rooms in semi-darkness, regardless of whether it was 3:00 o'clock or noon, and seeing kids standing around feeding like dogs from one plate. Well, it wasn't quite that bad out there. The one I remember was the woman who was very neat. Her husband was alcoholic. The house was bare, but it was clean. But, you know, boiled potatoes and bread with no butter is a damned poor lunch.

K. Were most of these people long time residents of Detroit, or were they newcomers?

H. That's another thing; I got Hell for trying to find out. I have one breakdown of these people as to how long they had been in the project. We had people from every state but one. Half the families had been there five years or more. The other half had been there five years or less. We had it broken down by the number of years there.

K. Why would they give you Hell for that? After all, the Detroit Housing Commission had such breakdowns.

H. They didn't give a damn. That's what wrong with the outfit. They don't care about people. As late as 1965 when I was at the regional office,

they hadn't released the figures.

Of course, there are a few people who are sensitive. There was John Shirer who was on the staff. When he was bothered he would go down on the shore of Maryland, the east shore of Maryland and Delaware. There he would see where the migrants lived. The authorities would write us to come in and help them testify in the public hearings on low rent public housing programs, and we would drive out with them. When you would drive along you would see the crap over here and the crap over there, but every once in a while you'd see something that was even worse yet. "We ought to tear that down," we would say. "But we need that." "But that's worse than this." "Yeah, but that's just the migrants." Most of our guys just took this as part of things. But when John Shirer went down to Maryland, he was genuinely sick when he came back. There was a cannery down there; He said he went by a section where he saw these houses - there was water and it was swampy. But that's where they lived. The toilet was a hole in the floor. But the city fathers weren't worried about this. They knew that when the cannery opened the folks looking for work would go anywhere and live anywhere to make that buck. But we don't care about people.

We had no concept, no rationale, in terms of shelter for people. Come 1965, OEO, you would hear lip service - every program there was for the guy who owns something. What about the guy who doesn't own a damn thing? He still needs shelter. I backed into this, because I think that I had lived with more people in these twenty years, than anybody else. I'm not bragging, but by nature of the job I had and the authority I had as manager of the government it was my decision, it wasn't someone else's, whereas in the Housing Authority the manager brings these cases before the Housing

Commission once a week and it's a matter of commission decision. Up there it was mine. And it was the same for the Project, for the township. As I say, I was backed into this: I recall the first eviction. It was hard to come to, and I couldn't go home that night and sleep. It was cold, it was dark, the furniture was stacked up out in front of the house, there were two kids sitting there. Well, I know how low you can feel. I'll take that as against putting out gamblers and prostitutes. I still maintain everyone has a right to shelter, and if the government is not the landlord of the last resort -

K. Where would they go? (Tape ends)

H. Checking houses for safety? Here's a house, there's a house, the furniture is nice, the curtains are clean - but the floor is spread with newspapers. So he looked and he commented: "You know, if you could get these newspapers up - If this place does catch on fire, this place would go that fast." You can't tell me anything about housekeeping; now there are other places...

K. Now you worked alone on this? The Urban League used to have an office up there?

H. It wasn't worth a damn - and I was going to recommend that they get rid of it

K. The League - what made me think of the League was that the League did try to help, in the twenties, in this area. I'm not talking about the limitations - they certainly were there.

H. Yeah, but I'm talking about when I went there in '42. If the gal knew I was coming out there, she would be there. And you see, they had the center two blocks down from the city recreation center. And the Urban League tried to work with all the agencies, and tried to provide housing for the widows of John's friends. And a lot of the programming was determined by her

convenience. These are the realities.

K. Did you have any problems like those at Willow Village? A lot of the problems, Local 50 people felt, were with recreation. When they went out there, there was nothing to do.

H. Are you talking about black, or everyone?

K. I'm talking about your area, which was all black. Could they come over to the centers below 8 Mile, in the city?

H. They could, but we set up our own. But then, the Hell of it was they built this fine Carver school with the beautiful gym, and the ballfield; and then the school put this six foot wall around it, and locked it every night after school, and over every week end.

K. And there was no way of getting into it?

H. Oh, yes, knock the fence down. Then politics being what it was, when we finally sold them on a recreation program, they got a guy to run it who didn't know what end was up. He could walk in there, and it would be full of kids, two over here would have boxing gloves on, others smooching over there raising Hell, and others would be trying to play basketball - nothing like regular recreation, and he was getting a check from the school board. And then when I, in attempting to help the Superintendent - that was another deal. You had to be a property-owner to be on the school board. They only had twenty-five people who were eligible. Any five you got were dumber than Hell. Mix a little politics with it and you had a mess. The first superintendent made his brother the janitor. He walked in that door one day with the federal fire and safety inspector. Here were two furnaces going and here was a five-gallon can of gasoline sitting over there without a top on it. "Oh, I was just getting ready to move it," he said. So we went over and talked with the superintendent. And so I'm accused of trying to put the finger on him. But I had to because of the fact that the

can of gasoline was even in there. Again, you're supposed to post three public notices of your elections. This is the Oak Park line, this is the school, here's our building. They posted one notice on the building down here, they posted one on the bulletin board at school, they posted one on ours. The first legal election out there was held about '50. I tried to tell a friend that and - but in trying to help the Superintendent, I got in trouble with the School Board -

When that school opened it was part of the Oak Park District. I don't know whether you are aware of this - and those Negroes voted separately - those who, in the early days of the Project were eligible. In the winter of 1945 as I attended the meeting to consider separation, I pointed out they would be crushed; as long as they were part of the other district, they are safe. At that time that district had one one-room and one two-room school, both cut off at the eighth grade. When the Project came, this, of course, was swamped. The present National Guard Armory was at that time the Excello Plant, the biggest taxpayer in the district. So a few whites up in Oak Park with questionable motives talked to a few blacks down in Royal Oak Township with selfish motives. I could understand their reasoning. "Let's have our own - let's have our own." It's hard to argue against that. They would tell them, "If you have your own district, and you divide along these lines, you will get Excello, and some of the biggest taxpayers." Of course, you couldn't tell them that when the war ended, under the war assets disposal operation there would be no taxes. They had a meeting, and they went for it. "We don't need no white folk to tell us what we're going to do." So they got the district and they got a five-man Board and they tied themselves in knots. And the kids were butchered.

And that accounted for the fact that when we had the study by Lou Friedland,

the study which was the basis of our urban renewal program, we found there was a lot of mobility in the project, but the total population wasn't changing. You see the median age was 19. When I got to analyzing the school census it became apparent what was happening. When the intelligent parents' children came of school age, and they found out what conditions were in the Carver School District they left; they had a plateau of certain ages. I used to talk it over with Chuck Stewart, then superintendent of Grant School. We wanted to involve Grant School because it had a good image. The only place we could go to talk privately was behind the furnace, where we couldn't be interrupted, and over in front of the church.

K. Were there any groups that you could work with at all? You talk of the church. What church was it?

H. Not the church - there was only father, father? It was Hell out there, and I had to have someone to talk to. I had been to the FBI and the County Prosecutor, the state police. The FBI said they didn't have jurisdiction. We had contracts for fire and police protection. You see there was nothing out there. So in order to get what they thought was adequate fire and police protection we built the fire and police stations, paid the salaries of the men, bought the equipment on contract, and deducted the special assessments spread for those services. So, in a sense, it was assumed they were my cops. They weren't - I wouldn't have hired a damned one of them. You can go up to the morgue of the Royal Oak Daily Tribune and see this. In fact, a standing order to my staff was that if I got sick, don't leave me alone with a fireman or a policeman, and don't let them take me to the Hospital.

K. There was a lot of crime up there?

H. The crime was largely corruption - corruption among your fire and police

officials. The Pratt grand jury gives you an idea - with 25 indictments.

K. When was this?

H. Let's see - I came back to work in the Governor's office on the OEO program on Monday, May 21, 1965. Fred Davidson who is now the colonel in charge of state police is a personal friend of mine. He was a sergeant in the rackets squad back in the 50's. He was my protection man as well as Don Leonard. He was appointed Commissioner of State Police on Wednesday, May 23, 1965. Thursday, May 24, he announced an investigation of Royal Oak Township, which is purely coincidental, but there isn't a soul around here who doesn't believe it's tied to my coming back. Now, the first indictments came down in 1966, so the Grand Jury started in 1965. Pratt's been touted for the State Supreme Court. He really did a masterful job. I was never called to testify, but nobody believes that. All I ever did was to coach state police investigators. "If you want me to put the bite," I said, "I couldn't do that." I knew the township board. In anticipation, pressures were being put on them, so they built fences. What do I mean? We ran the Project for profit - we had to pay off a mortgage, maintain it and pay salaries, and we were building reserves. I knew if they saw a lot of money lying idle, they would get some ideas. We made them keep our money separate from the other accounts. We had Joe Miriani, at the National Bank of Detroit - he's retired now - as our financial consultant, and Gene McAffrey was our CPA - we had the best in town. These may not mean anything to you since you're outside the area, but if you lived here, you would know. We had the best bond attorneys in the midwest. There were associates, planners, and so forth, and Lou Friedland, from Wayne, consultant on urban affairs, but they wouldn't listen to him. Our fence would be this: we would say that all monies received from this phase of the operation would be committed to this fund for this purpose. All monies derived

from the sale of so and so were to go for this use.

Then we would do things like - we got this much coverage in the paper, but we paid the first three years' assessment for drains. We used to get money and we would do things like buy 25 to 30,000 dollars worth of Certificates of Deposit, Commonwealth Bank, Citizens' Bank of Pontiac, National Bank of Royal Oak, First Federal Savings and Loan, Federal Home Savings and Loan, Co-operative Services, Ferndale Branch of Detroit Bank and Trust - we would sock it away; and the rationale for that was - I used to tell them when I went in, "We're establishing an account so that, a year or two from now, if someone from this community comes in seeking loans for modernization, or building a home, you remember you have some of their dough." So we would do this and tie it up. After I left, the rationale of the new administration was, "These expenditures were put up by Township Board resolution - "They can be taken out by resolution -

You see, I don't blame these guys who got involved, though I don't hold them blameless, but you see, I know the pressures. I think I met every crooked operator in metropolitan Detroit from the day I got my first million and three-quarters loan. Up to that point it was, "just a bunch of 'niggers' - they aren't going to make it." But, assuming that we were the dumbest folks in town, we hired the smartest folks in the region, to get our program going. That's the only urban renewal project in the country where the community got federal funds on the basis of faith. We pledged the receipts from the sale of township-owned land to meet our share of the costs. And the land we had was well located - Homer Warren, Dodd, Bill Tanney, all appraised it anywhere from a million and a half upward - this is the land that the project was set on. I've got a list of over 200 names, and it includes every

crooked operator in the metropolitan area, because - I refined it down to about 70, because if you came in and said you were a real estate operator, and interested in knowing about urban renewal - I'm getting back to urban renewal - I had a stenographer. If you gave me a card I'd stick it on a page, and I would give the date. And then, after you had left I'd put a question mark or something right there by your name based on what you said, and I'd have it there in black and white. I had one guy come out there - I could never prove it, because three of them came. They walked away from the buildings, among the trees, talking to me - They didn't want anyone here in the city to hear what I didn't want to hear. Others would come - they asked me my favorite charity. I said my wife. I said, "But I suggest you don't talk or anything. If she doesn't kick, I will." They had their various means of apologizing - I had one guy come in who told me where my wife worked - and what our combined annual income was.

K. They had done a little research?

H. Yes, they knew my salary and her salary and where she worked. I said, "I don't mind this, but I resent your bringing my wife into it." Well, I can ramble on like this.

K. Well, what finally happened? Was this land bought, and houses put up on it?

H. Well, yes and no. Houses went up but not the houses we intended. When I say "we" I mean it this way. This was not a projected decision. But you had a density of 22,000 per square mile. And, figuring like a farmer does, if you have too much to plant, none of it is going to grow well. You figure that you've got an area that's seven-tenths of a square mile, and you have about 6500 people. You have a tax base, and you have school conditions which would be attractive to anybody. If you look at our master plan, we don't use the word "race," or "black" or "white" once. And it's not

by accident. I was not foolish enough to believe with a lot of folks things for which we are unjustly criticized. I wasn't trying to maintain a black community to make myself a job. Everybody who worked for me will tell you, that if they were paid for jobs which were needed there would be no need for jobs like mine. You had Negroes on the south side of eight, Negroes on the north side of eight, and I would talk to groups, always black groups, I would say, "Integration isn't a magic word. In and of itself it isn't bad. I'm not opposed to integration. I'm a realist, and - this I borrowed from a friend of mine. 'You know,' he says, 'You're not a dumb guy. If you build a gold mine out there you would have to sell it. If I can go anywhere in Detroit, and buy anything I want, and don't have to worry about it - until we get a good police department, until we get a good fire department, until we get a good school, until we get good service, if I can buy it in the city, why do I want to go out there? I have no desire to be a pioneer - I have my kids to raise, Number one.'" The other point is I don't know any where in the country where whites seek to become voluntarily minorities. I mean generally - Oh, I know people, I have friends, who don't want their kids to grow up untouched - But as a normal thing - So, with the reputation the township had, I couldn't see vast members of whites wanting to move in, although, we figured we would get our mix in the community by virtue of the shelter mix. According to the master plan we would have various types of housing within the means of the whole gamut of people, which disappointed one of our researchers. I don't know whether he says so in his study, but he saw this as an area where the great northwest in the suburbs would have an available pool of domestic housing. Then I had Negroes in the eight-mile area, whites, too, so we figured 6500 would be enough, but the master plan.....the land was sold for less than - see, we wouldn't sell to anybody who wouldn't tell us the use of the land. Well, that was interpreted

as discouraging the builders. But the builders I discouraged, a couple of them were indicted by the Grand Jury. This wasn't told to the community, so they ended up demonstrating against me, and a few other things. But all I can say is that of the guys who were later indicted, one is now serving, and the other is still appealing.

K. Who finally got it, black or white builders?

H. Well, I think there is some stuff out there that Negro builders were involved in.

K. Did they get FHA loans?

H. Sure, they did. But then there is some prime land and - I have an idea about that. The people out there didn't make the money. Turn it off and I'll tell you just exactly what I mean.

(TAPE IS CUT OFF)

H. Now, I was at the bottom of the list of progress - for which I make no apology, because that's the only program I know of in the whole country where we had the nerve to try to learn the people's opinion before we signed the contract. And you would have to have been there to see that and to believe it. And you see, this is no particular genius of mine, it is just a question of if people understand something they will believe in it - that's 90% of it. It took me three years - walking - and I made it my business to shop out there at the A & P, so they could pillory me and just beat my brains out, till it got to the point where folks would come to my defense. It was by accident - my wife was sick, so I went shopping. A guy asked me about urban renewal, and then he saw I was in the checkout line, it was on Friday. I learned a lesson to have the answers. So, I made it my business every other Friday, to do the big shopping there. Others would come; they would join in and they would give me Hell.

K. These were blacks? What was their big gripe against your plans?

H. You will remember, the whole township was urban renewal area. Some of these folks were naturally afraid. Where the hell were they going? Some, because of age, others had very positive motives - though some didn't. Some were folks I had evicted. There were some who just had honest reservations, who didn't believe in anything. But it paid off in three years. I learned from that. So, every week, I would take a day and a half to go for a walk through that area, so that they could stop me, give me Hell, ask questions. You know, you can just give a guy so much Hell. An old woman taught me that. She's a woman who wrote President Eisenhower that I had evicted her. She wrote him because she had voted for him. Now this taught me a lesson. She was one of the world's worst housekeepers. When we finally got her out, we found rats dead under her gas. When you would go in, there would be dishwater in her sink, which had been there for days. Anyway, I went down there one day. I used to send staff out, but sometimes I would go down to take some of the heat off them. I went down there this day and she had some visitors, and she gave me Hell. She could curse like a sailor. And I couldn't do anything but just stand there. And when she stopped I said, "Mrs. are you through giving me Hell?" She had to laugh herself. So we used to do this. We had open meetings, and one time we had McAffrey there to talk about the fiscal integrity of the operation. We had a guy from the regional office of HHFA. Joe Miriani of the National Bank was there telling how we were investing our reserves. We had Morris Marcus there, an attorney, who is up in Birmingham now - he used to be from Royal Oak. We had a township attorney; we had Lou Friedland who had done a little Hoover Study for the state. And then we had mikes all around the room. "Ask questions," we said, "until you get answers. You may not get the ones you want, but make sure your questions have been answered." We got some cranks but you know, sometimes you lose your cool,

and it is disastrous. Other times you lose it, and it is the only thing you could have done. We had one guy who was in the back and he was throwing these curves and he said, "How will I know how much Mrs. So and So is getting for her house if you're going to take it?" "Well, that's none of your damned business if she doesn't want to tell you." Boy, they just booed him, and clapped me, and from that time on we had clear sailing, despite the fact that one woman got up and said that her husband was retiring from Ford, his mother lived with them, and she was blind, and they didn't have much of an income. They knew their house wasn't a good house, "But what are you going to do with people like me?" I said, "I don't know. But it won't be what I'll do. Nothing will be done, in your case, until there is an answer that satisfies you." Now these things got us in some trouble because we only dealt with willing sellers when we started to acquire property. And it went along fairly well, because we started slow, and then it got down to the nitty-gritty, and we were supposed to go into condemnation. When they would come in to tell me they wanted special consideration - a justice of the peace for instance, I told him to go to Hell. If he couldn't be treated like anybody else, there would be no compensation. It would go to the Township Board. That's where it was when I left. That's why I had to go.

K. I wonder if you would do me a favor? Set this up chronologically. For instance, you came out to the eight-mile area in 1944. And you managed the government project until -

H. Until I would have had to lose my self-respect, and I resigned. They told me to organize that coop, and I couldn't.

K. Why not?

H. Because the coop was...See, at this time the coop was going to be composed of existing war housing - it was the worse damn housing in the area.

I told them it wasn't fit for persons to live in and I would quit first - and I did!

K. So that for nine years you worked for the government and tried to hold this ersatz housing together?

H. Well, I don't know. I don't know what you would say I was trying to do. Well, the best proof was when I quit on the 29th of December, 1953, effective January 14, 1954, the rest of the staff left, February 5. The fact was that anybody who was a friend of mine was in trouble.

K. Well, you quit in 1953; then what did you do?

H. Then the government sold the project to the township in 1953. And the township asked me if I would accept the job as manager. Well, that surprised me, because we had fought on issues - not personally. It surprised me like Hell when they asked me.

K. Now, the government wanted you to form a coop, that is, the people who lived there to buy their housing. Right? And instead they sold it to the township?

H. No. The War housing project comprised some 47 units on this side of Wyoming Avenue. And most of this, with the exception of some 30 scattered properties were government project. They owned the land. In order to get out of the business the government made it very easy. It was government - owned land. If you could give them what they paid for the land, you could have the housing free. This was three projects: one was over here, 20233; I know this by heart; I could almost draw you a map and show you where the gas shut-offs were. I had to find it in snow, rain, what-not. Then you had 20226, and you had 20237. Now, this housing had been knocked down and shipped in from Ohio, which had been designated as a permanent project. The fact that it came from a permanent project made Uncle Sam call it a permanent project, despite the fact that it was sitting on what

you could call a peat bed. This side over here was all dump. All the non-combustible rubbish from Detroit was dumped here. And the guy was selling fill to developers, and selling space for dumping at the same time. At that time, this was lower than the houses. I've got a picture of this - there was a county ditch running here, parallel to the project. And from the dump there is another one, coming into it. It smelled like Hell, and the flies come in like P-36's. So Uncle said this is going to be a coop. This is where we had most of our gas trouble, and the buildings were out of line, and we had condensation problems and the roofs leaked.

K. What were they planning to do with these other two housing sections?

H. They were temporary - get rid of them. These were two we bought and I managed. The idea behind that was five years. The state legislation gave them five years. Getting back to coops: Somebody goofed, because my bosses had me budget this as if it were a temporary, so that things I should have been doing over the years I wasn't able to do. This was discovered - the first time I have ever heard - well, this was seven years later. This was when I said I was going.....whom I was talking to. The Regional Director said, "You're the only clean man in the room."

So, it came out they were going to put concrete porches on these buildings which were out of line, asbestos siding to cover the rotted places, new roofs and gutters, and the new roofs were to have a "two-year guarantee" because we expected to have sold them.

Anyhow - they finally got a guy to come in to organize, to manage this part of the government project, and people came to me to ask what to do. I would say, "The down payment is \$234. If you figure you can spare that for two years, I'd go ahead, but I would start looking for another place to move." Then I was accused by the government and these people of trying to sabotage the coop.

K. Were there quite a few people who wanted the coop?

H. They had no place to go. It wasn't a matter of choice back in '53. But to answer your question right on the line, when we set up the urban renewal program, we had that for clearance, and the application was rejected. At the same time Urban Renewal, URA, was helping us set up urban renewal programs, PHA was trying to sell that as a coop. When that thing got to Washington, they rejected it and sent it back. Now, when we deleted this portion and sent it back, the application was approved.

Now, I'm going to wrap this up. In 1960 the coop was in existence. I appeared before the subcommittee of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee on behalf of a piece of private legislation which Senator Hart was trying to introduce to make this a private urban renewal area which was in the first and the tenth. But there was no Housing Act of 1960, so you don't see this any place except in the (Committee) Proceedings. I wasn't working for PHA, and I threw the book at them because they had correspondence I had written back in the 40's against making this a permanent project: it didn't lend itself to divisibility, it sat on wooden posts, it was in the least desirable part of the township, etc. Senator Sparkman chaired the Committee, Clark and Javits were there. Boy, when I got through Clark said, "When the administrator for HHFA comes through, he's going to hear something from me." Well, they had their stooges there in the hearing. When the hearings were over, we left with Hart's aide and went over to the Administrator's office. He was out, except that he forgot, when someone poked his head through the door he was standing right there. Anyway, there was no housing act, I mean, there was no bill. But, if you check my thesis, you'll find out that the government reduced the cost of this by some two hundred thousand dollars. And then, before I left, we had included

this....This is the Weaver Administration and they recognized this.

This housing is worse than this.

K. Where is Excello in relation to this?

H. You know where the National Guard Armory is? That's the old Excello plant. That's down here - going toward Northland. You see, this is a gold mine. When we went for renewal, we went all over town looking for people to throw rocks at us. Here's Northland, and here's Woodward Avenue. You see what's developing along there? Here's the township developing in here. Right here you've got WWJ, and Bendix is here. Right here is the Ethyl Corporation. That's our eastern boundary. They said, "If you could assure adequate public safety -" These are hard-nosed business people. They would just as soon build here as anywhere else. In fact, it's the Holiday Inn that's building now in the Township. And then you have other types of commercial which are building. You see, what we did, we had our master plan, and we checked this out with Paul Ried over at the Detroit Regional Planning Commission. We made this a part of our total plan so that all of our uses in the total urban renewal program were compatible with the uses on the other side of the street, either in Oak Park or in Ferndale. So, it looked like one. And to a degree they carried it out, except that they let some guys come in there, some time back and buy the land cheap. So that was the idea. And we could have done it.

That's why Don Leonard, former State Police Commissioner - we hired him to come out there and inject whatever we needed for an adequate public safety set up, on the theory that no one in his right mind is going to come out there for business or living if it is a crappy community. And the papers, in trying to help me, killed me. I asked Don to come out and meet the Township Supervisors. Instead, he came to my place, and reporters

must have known it, because they came and took a picture of Don Leonard with me. Then they said that Ray Hatcher, who doesn't claim a friend in the police or fire department...

K. After all's said and done, what's the future for this kind of an area?

H. Well, unfortunately, You know, when I was writing my thesis, I wasn't thinking of leaving, as I did, and the things I said about renewal being established to help people to a certain level of development were true; being an idealist, if we could have achieved any degree of shelter requirements, and if promising people weren't driven out, either by harrassment of by physical injury - and I did get some threats. They smeared me - and I got some threats.

K. Whom were they from? I don't mean the names of individuals.

H. The ones I got from individuals didn't bother me-

K. Organizations?

H. I was told after I came back - I didn't realize at the time - I was told this by Joe B. Beatty, Franklin Settlement, retired. Then I had a friend who was supposed to be a reacketeer and he said, "Ray, you're....," but I'll say this, the real friends I had in the township were folk who were supposed to be in the racket! They're the ones who told me when a guy says "Why do you always go home -" and he tells you the exact streets when you travel. And then one guy - I did a check on him, and he had spent time in Jackson. He had connections. This was in the '60's. The first time I laughed. And then I began to think. I might get hurt but I figured if they used local hoodlums, those guys were nuts. So I figured I'd better do something about this. So the next time someone stopped me I said, "You want to be damned sure I die a natural death, preferably in a hospital, because if anything happens to me you're one of six people of whom they will be asking some awfully tough questions."

K. What did they want? Did they want the land?

H. They wanted the chance to make the money that land could bring and that's how they fooled these dumb yokels. I read this deposition in Philadelphia, because before I went there I wrote URA I wasn't going to risk my life. Then I told them what I had surmised but I had to be careful - libel and a few other things. But apparently something happened, because they have been under investigation. And two investigators came to see me in Philadelphia. They came out of the New York office at the request of the Chicago office. Apparently they had talked to Fred Davidson, a friend of mine. It's been one of those things over the years. You have a Hell of a man for your state police commissioner - he's strictly man. I went over my deposition, and I knew there was something crooked about this deal. I had let a demolition contractor burn refuse on the site, and all of a sudden he stopped, and one of the Board members came in and he wanted to give me Hell, and asked by what authority I acted. I said "Well I'm with the Urban Renewal Program, and that's our decision." Then the guy starts up again. Then he came down to see me - well, his hired man came to see me. So one of our guys went out to talk with him. The conversation went like this:

"Have you been shaken down?" He said, "No. Why do you ask?" I said,

"You can't give me anything? Giving me a....question your job....In fact, I had a group you couldn't give me....the maintenance men....

So I read this deposition. These damned fools, for 4 fifths of Scotch and \$800 - Now I don't know if that is the same transaction which came up before the Grand Jury or not-these guys - a couple of them were slick. I know these guys - when the assistant prosecutor said "Crime..."

K. And all for this stretch on 8-mile?

H.....there were two bidders on this indictment. You may recall a few

months ago this guy who wanted to do something at one of these airports - army air bases. And they found out he was under indictment by the Pratt Grand Jury for his transactions at Royal Oak Township? The Township Attorney who was advising these poor guys, he's under indictment, and the supervisor - I think he's finished his term. I've got a picture of him leading a demonstration - I've got that in my desk ready to frame. He was some justice of the peace!

M. Is this typical of urban renewal programs in general? I realize there are great opportunities for corruption.

H. Let me put it this way. I wouldn't say it's typical of urban renewal projects, but the opportunities are there, and in bigger communities I guess it's easier. That was so small that you could afford to buy everybody - but they didn't. The man who did the work, who did the most, who was the lowest, didn't get a day in jail. I guess he turned state's evidence. He's the one who spent it. We organized the Housing Commission which resigned en masse, when they found they were subservient to the Township Board - and you're not going to carry it the people. You have the guy who became the assistant county prosecutor, you had a teacher who came into Detroit, you had a Reverend Price who was not the run-of-the-mill yak minister - he is in the Methodist denomination, you had one local housewife - they just weren't going to have any truck - oh, we had an attorney's wife - they just weren't going to have any of this. So the Township Board was just refusing to approve certain things, and to hire certain people. Now, you've heard of Meade-Kessler Architects? The year that they worked for us was the year they had won an award for the best designed public housing project in the country, and the best designed private housing - now we hired them to design our public housing. But because I hired them, they didn't want to pay them. They figured

there had to be a payoff. Where do you keep your Cadillac? - Crap like that.

K. The politics of Royal Oak Township -

H. They were a part of Oakland County.-I don't know if they are now. In fact, if you'd ask me about that, now, I'd have to plead honest ignorance, because a lot of the folks who were in politics, they're moved out.

K. The people who were in politics during this period you're talking about - were they older residents? Were they store owners? Going right back to the war, Horace White, you know, was very sympathetic toward the views of these people. And when the Sojourner Truth thing came up, you remember, there was a compromise which he would probably have accepted - that was to open Sojourner Truth to whites, and build the Negro housing at Eight-mile. White would have gone along with this.

H. That was part of my problem, too. I was supposed to take anybody he sent out. He was on the Housing Commission and he would call. And to hire people, also. On random occasions, you see, I had trouble with UAW, too. After I got there - you mentioned Willow Village. I helped UAW Local 50 open Willow Village. And they weren't allowed in there.

M. What troubles did you then have with them?

H. Because I worked with Bill Nicholson, he was going to own me. He wanted me to hire certain people. This may sound strange, but we didn't. We made exceptions for some people, but it wasn't because of whom they knew.

K. One gets a very vague picture around 1940 when they wanted to make this into a corporation town - there was a small number of people -

H. They wanted to do that again in 1945.

K. Yes, it comes up every five or so years.

H. Yes, for different reasons - there are different people.

H. In 1940 these were old timers who really believed they were going to make it.

K. But they were afraid. "Be It Ever So Humble," had just come out.

Now that dealt with an area south, but it was close.

H. But the point is this: it was worse north of eight Mile than it was south. In 1945 I was there. I tried to stay out of it. Then you had a bunch of youngsters. Here's Wyoming Avenue. Except for about thirty or forty families over here, Royal Oak Township in 1940 was all over here. These were all old-timers. So you take the oldtimers who were for incorporation, and you've got these young bucks who are ambitious - you've got some who are honest, and some who aren't - and if they had left me alone, they might have got away with it, they might have done it. I mean it in this way--

K. What did they want? Did they think?

H. This would be an all-black city and they would run it: Police Chief, Fire Chief. That was the thinking of the new ones. The old-timers figured that they weren't getting any place the way they were. You see, there was Madison Heights over here, seven miles to the North. You realize that and you've still got 790 acres over here.

K. They saw what happened to Inkster-

H. Right. The former Urban Renewal Director of Inkster had to resign. He was bought into this arrangement too, as the one who offered the bribe in Royal Oak Township.

K. Oh, he offered the bribe?

H. That is, according to the papers, that was the charge. See, everyone was going to make some money out of it except me. I had no regrets, and neither does my wife. She wouldn't have it any other way.

K. You lived in the area?

H. No. But I might have, if the government hadn't tried to make me. I was out there during the war, and I had a boss who said - well, we didn't have any police in the Project. So he said I ought to live there. I said I wasn't going to be a damned cop, "Well," he says, "suppose we say you have to?" "Look," I said, "I'll stay out here twenty three hours, fifty-nine minutes, and fifty-nine seconds of every day but I'll be damned if I'll live out here." "What if I say you have to?" "Do you say I have to?" Well, he backed up. I had been thinking about it.

K. To get back to the bigger picture here -

H. My wife would kill me if she knew I was talking about Royal Oak Township. You see, we went east, never expecting to come back.

K. When was that?

H. In 1962. I went back with PHA. I always said that when my thesis got out, I would be sacked...but I had written worse in memos - I have several drawersful of them.

M. By the way, what are you going to do with these things? You know, we have an Archives where we would love to have a Ray Hatcher collection, to have further materials for students who read your thesis and want to reconstruct the story further.

H. They wouldn't believe my story. I think public service is the highest calling - as far as I am concerned. That's why I got teed off on this thing. I'm a cornball.

And I maintain public service is good because it's easy to make decisions - I don't say you make easy decisions - but it's easy to decide what is in the public interest. If it is, you do it.

M. But you found out that there aren't so many people like you.

H. Oh, No, there were. Otherwise I would have been sacked, three times. I always have to find a guy above me whom I can trust; then I can take on the guys between us.

K. When you came here the situation was rather good for a young guy coming here, in the black community. After all, the old-

H. What do you call a young guy? What age?

K. Well, young, or new, in that he isn't tied with the old structure. I think the problem of John Dancy was that he hadn't changed with the change that was occurring. As you pointed out, his name, the League's name, was mud with the UAW. There are guys like yourself and Gloster Current, guys who had come in the late 30's or the early 40's. There was liberal movement in the community. As I said, you came to this town about the time that - probably it was a good time, if you had come in the early 30's you wouldn't have had the possibilities open - this is a theory - I'm talking about a theory now.

H. I think that when I came here in '42 - when I came here and you had your community fund drive, you had a Urban League Day, because all the rest of the Fund assisted the whole town, and the Urban League assisted only Negroes. And when I raised Hell about that, some of the people in Community Fund agreed with me and we made Urban League a part of the whole thing. "Now we won't have Urban League Day," they said. I don't think Dancy liked it too much, at first. They gave the Urban League a quota of \$6500. They had a luncheon and came to me and said they wanted me to go up Hastings Street. Samuel Lieberman was the head of the Eastside Merchants Association. He was to solicit the whites, and I the blacks. When I heard that I said, "Hell I won't go." This would have been in about 1943. But the point is this: as much as they give the League, and John Dancy, Hell, you had a group of Negroes who profited by this, either socially or reputa-

tation-wise. They didn't want any change either.

K. They were able, despite the role the union played in the community - you're arguing that still a large number of conservatives were operating.

H. I was thought to be a Communist along with some of the folks in the union. We used to have meetings over at the Round Table at the Lucy Thurman Y.

K. You were a member of this group?

H. It was in existence when I came, It was quite an institution.

K. They were pretty conservative, weren't they?

H. Horace White, you wouldn't call conservative? Art Caruso you wouldn't call -

K. Caruso? I wouldn't know what to call him. He's done everything, and made all sorts of noise. I don't know him.

H. Well, he's quite elderly now. In a home, I believe.

K. Yes, but he was in with Cunningham and Coles.

H. Yes, but he was a different breed - he was smarter than they were, more articulate.

K. Who else was in that round table? The reason I ask is that the only reference I've seen to the Round Table was in a column by Gloster Current. He wrote something about their stand - this was about 1944. I guess. I forgot the issue.

H. Wayne University Medical Center?

K. Could have been there.