

INTERVIEWEE: EDWARD C. CRAFTS (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

May 12, 1969

Mc Let me identify the tape. This is a second session with Dr. Edward C. Crafts. I'm once again in his office in the Mills Building in Washington, D.C. The date is May 12, 1969; and I am David McComb.

There are a few questions to clear up, as I have just mentioned to you; and I might ask you first of all about beautification, and whether or not you had any role in either the passage of that act or the carrying out of the beautification specifications?

C: We attempted to have a role through the administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, primarily in pushing beautification matters in a number of ways. For example, some of the recreation areas that we financed, the very fact that they were preserved for posterity, is a credit to the beautification of our country. Going way back before the term beautification became a popular one, the passage of the Wilderness Act, which preserved some of the most beautiful spots in the country, was a beautification measure although not so-called. But more particularly, I think we took the lead initially in requiring the states to beautify the development of recreation facilities and to place transmission lines of various sorts underground. We ran into a great deal of opposition there, and we weren't able to swing it completely; but we did move effectively in that direction. We required, in connection with certain recreation areas along or near roads, to have certain landscaping requirements in connection with the scenic roads study that was carried out by the President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty. There was a provi-

sion in the study for national recreation ways and we pioneered that concept in a sense on a national basis, although the Forest Service had built some recreation ways inside the national forests.

On the passage of the Beautification Act itself, we were not directly involved. Indirectly, we gave it a push here and there where we could through our contacts on the Hill. But this was not our primary responsibility. However, in passage of the DOT Organic Act, particularly what was, I think, Section 4F, we were very consequentially involved. And what really happened was that one day in my office one of my assistants, Mrs. Combé, and myself sat--

Mc Will you spell her name?

C: C-O-M-B-É with an accent on it. We sat down and roughed out the wording of what ultimately became Section 4F, which required steps to discourage the intrusion of highways on park, scenic, historic areas, and beautiful spots of the country. We worked out the language, and then I handed that language personally to Sterling Monroe who was Senator Jackson's assistant. Jackson, through his connections with Senator Magnuson of the same state, who was chairman of the Committee handling the bill, saw to it that the language got incorporated into the act, against the wishes of the Bureau of Public Roads at that time. So in that back-hand, off the record matter, it seems to me that we did have something to do with that aspect of beautification. We were not involved; however, in the beautification of the Nation's Capital and the planting of all the flowering trees, shrubs, and plants and so on.

Mc If you wanted to influence that DOT Organic Act, why didn't you work through say the White House Staff?

C: Because we had a better way going through Senator Jackson. The first thing the White House staff would do would be check with the Bureau of the Budget, and check with the Department of Commerce, and that would be the end of it. So

we just by-passed the procedure, which you're not supposed to do, and went to where the strength was. I might say, it sounds like blowing my own horn a little bit, that just this last month in the May issue of Holiday magazine for '69, I was privileged to receive one of the Holiday magazine awards for a "More Beautiful America." I was more particularly pleased because Mrs. Johnson was one of the several other recipients, and it was nice to be included along with her.

Mc Did you work any with her on beautification?

C: A little with her, but primarily with Liz Carpenter and with her beautification assistant, who was Sharon Francis. Sharon was a close friend of mine and I handled beautification matters for her. Sharon was under Liz, and both Liz and Sharon I knew quite well. I knew Sharon best, and I worked constantly with her on these matters. Ideas, suggestions, thoughts, and a lot of times, they'd pick them up and carry them on. On some of Mrs. Johnson's trips to particular areas, we would help plan those trips. We would suggest itineraries and places to go.

Mc Would this be such as the trip she made to the Big Bend?

C: Yes, that was one. The one she made to San Antonio was another. Also, her last trip she made just before the close of the administration in which she went to Florida and the West Coast, and I forget the other places. We had a much more elaborate itinerary plan, but as usually happens, these things get chopped down in the interest of time. But suggestions have their degree of influence and effect. It's hard to tell how much.

Mc Did her interest, do you feel, did this help you in your work?

C: Oh yes, because the outdoor recreation, especially rural outdoor recreation, like the national recreation areas, national seashores, national parks, national

monuments, the state aid areas which were out in the country--none of these could really be disassociated from natural beauty. And she gave, in her quiet way, great support to our program and to the work we did. Of course, I have no way of knowing the influence or the relationship between Mrs. Johnson and the President, but I think I know that she stimulated his interest and, of course, this helped give us administration support. So I'd say indirectly she was a very great aid to us.

Mc Therefore it was nice to have a First Lady who was interested in your work.

C: Oh, it was just wonderful. You've no idea; it was just wonderful.

Mc You mentioned, also, that you'd done some work with Hubert Humphrey.

C: I knew Senator Humphrey when he was a senator. When I was in the Forest Service quite a few years ago, at that time he was beginning to grow in stature. He always had an interest in conservation matters and in forestry matters. He came from a state where this is important. And then I lost touch with him a little bit when he became Vice President, but in the last year our paths crossed again, and we became closer. This was through the vehicle of the President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty. As I think I told you before it wasn't working too well with a rotating chairmanship. We in the Department of Interior couldn't swing enough weight to get that system changed because the upcoming departments wanted their shot at chairmanship. But Laurance Rockefeller could, and he recognized the deficiencies of the council. Laurance, by himself, and with me a couple of times, went and talked to the Vice President. He was persuaded, despite all his other duties, to take on the job as chairman of this council. There was the usual delay in getting the orders changed and so on, but this did happen. It happened about a year ago, now, which was about 8 months maybe before the end

of the Administration.

There were a lot of people who thought that the Vice President, being so busy, wouldn't have much time for council matters, but they were wrong. He assigned his top staff man, Bill Welsh to follow it. Bill and I had been friends when Bill used to work for Senator Harte. He had another man work with Bill, whose name slips my mind, and the Vice President brought the Council together. I don't know whether it was once or twice; I think it was twice. He was well briefed ahead of time, and he got the principals to come more than they had in the past. The beautiful thing was he could make decisions. Before you'd get, "Well, we don't want to do this, we do want to do that," between two departments, and the Secretary who was chairman didn't know what to say. Humphrey just snapped out orders. I must say that my respect for him greatly increased as a result of watching him perform as chairman of that council and telling Cabinet officers what to do and giving them specific assignments--which departments were to prepare this report, which were to investigate this, and so on. And some of this came to fruition. The reports were prepared and then the election came, and then they became lame ducks. And the campaign was on. Therefore, we weren't able to get the final step from Humphrey or the council of approving some of these reports.

Now one of the studies was on the disposal of the surplus Federal property, another was on the beautification of federal buildings and structures. There was one on utilities that was chaired by Carl Bagge of the Federal Power Commission. This was perhaps the best. This one was released publicly but without council approval because Humphrey was too busy trying to get to be President. He didn't have time. But if he had continued as chairman of that council, it would have become a very live and active force.

I might say now that at this moment I am a consultant to the American

Conservation Association, but on assignment to Mr. Rockefeller's Citizen's Committee, which is the counterpart to that council. The present administration has in mind broadening that Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty to become a council on environmental quality. The order has been lying on the President's desk for some time. The committee would likewise be broadened, if this happened. They have dropped the term "natural beauty," it is too associated with the Johnson Administration; and they are going into pollution, pesticides, and other things that are broader than recreation and natural beauty. It's being held up for reasons which I'm not sure of, partly I think because Senator Jackson has a bill to establish a council of environmental advisers, which he wants. The administration says Jackson's bill isn't needed because they could do it administratively by having the President be the chairman, the Vice President [become the] Vice Chairman, and the Cabinet officers, members.

Which way it's going to come out I don't know. They'll probably work out some sort of compromise, but that's the problem. So as of the moment, this council is in a hiatus. Also, another adverse feature is that the Johnson Administration recommended doubling funds for the council and the committee, but the new Nixon budget cut those in half and cut them back to what they had been. They didn't cut them below what they had been but just back to what they had been before. Now the funds don't amount to much because Mr. Rockefeller puts in considerable money of his own, but nevertheless, there's the principle involved. On the one hand, you're going to establish a council on environmental quality and say that it rates with the National Security Council and the Council on Urban Affairs which are the other two which the President chairs. The Administration said in its congressional testimony through DuBridge, the science advisor, that "these are the only three that President Nixon would chair by himself." So they recognized the importance of the

environmental council but at the same time they cut the money.

Mc Would this broadening of the council be beneficial?

C: I think so, if it worked. And it could work if they would give it staff to work. I think being housed in the President's Office of Science and Technology is the wrong place to put it, because that's too limited. There are many other matters like economics and politics and sociology and other things that affect environment and what's done with the environment of a nation rather than just the scientific and technical aspects. They've got to have money, and they've got to have staff.

Mc You mentioned in the last tape the rather intriguing meeting between Udall and President Lyndon Johnson over Alaskan land, and you mentioned that Clark Clifford was in that meeting and how his task was to question about such acquisitions. To follow that through, perhaps more specifically, it was publicized in the press that Udall had an argument with Lyndon Johnson the very last moments of the administration, and I was wondering whether you could shed any more light on that?

C: I don't remember exactly what I said in our last interview, so if I can back-track just a little bit.

Mc Yes.

C: And possibly at the risk of some repetition. Udall had done, with the help of the President, a great many things in conservation. Udall visualized that it would be a wonderful thing if this administration could go out with a great big last splash--a big bang. A last big conservation step. And he had the Park Service and some of the other agencies in the department working for at least six months on a program proposal for additional lands to be set aside as recreation areas, parks, monuments, and so on, under executive authority not requiring legislation. The bulk of this acreage was in Alaska, but it was not exclusively in Alaska; there was quite a bit in the western states.

And he visualized in the last day or the last days of the Administration, the President would sign this. This would be the great final step, much as Theodore Roosevelt signed in 1905 the act establishing the national forests one night and the next morning signing the act that took the authority away from him. Therefore, Udall had devoted much time and had his people devote six months to working up this presentation. I had not been involved except very indirectly, but I knew it was going on. We had a rehearsal in Interior before the meeting with the President. We met with Mr. Johnson about noon the same day, and I think I've described the meeting. Udall presented the proposals, and it was a tremendous package.

Mrs. Johnson joined the group about the middle of it, listened to it. She was obviously enthusiastic, and I think the President was enthusiastic. He had not only Clark Clifford there as sort of a devil's advocate, but he had Charlie Murphy there, and he had some of his staff people. Charlie's only question was "was any national forest land involved?" He was thinking back to when he was Undersecretary of Agriculture, and the answer was "no."

Johnson asked Udall how the Hill would react to this. And Udall said that he had checked with Jackson and John Saylor and their general reaction was favorable. The President asked about Wayne Aspinall and Udall ducked responding. Johnson didn't say anything more on that point, but then he turned to one of his staff men and asked him to staff this out within 24 hours, and give him a little memo on it with a recommendation. They worked intensively for 24 hours. While I never saw the recommendation, I'm quite sure from what I was told that it recommended the proposal be checked more thoroughly on the Hill. They asked Udall to do this. Now from now on I'm speaking from not what I know from being there, but from what I've heard from people who were involved directly.

Mc Let me ask you about a point in time. Is this before the State of the Union Address?

C: Yes.

Mc In the State of the Union Address, he mentioned--

C: Our meeting was before that, the briefing was, yes. Udall, to the best of my knowledge, did not check with Congressman Aspinall, the chairman of the House committee, or with the chairman of the sub-committee that would be handling this, Roy Taylor. I don't know whether he checked further on the Senate side, but I believe he felt he would encounter difficulty. I'm sure he would have with Aspinall, because Aspinall himself told me later that he would have. So, then the White House did a little checking, and Aspinall objected. I don't want to put this all on Aspinall, I don't know who else they checked with, but I know they checked with Wayne because Wayne told me after it was all over. The White House felt that while Udall's proposal was legally possible it was going pretty far toward doing what normally Congress would do on areas as large and as valuable as those proposed, and that's true. Then the President wanted to cut down the proposal some way. Udall didn't want to. They had discussions back and forth and Udall got emotional about it. Some of this happened on a Saturday or a Sunday and at the end, my understanding is, they had words. The President spoke disparagingly of Udall and finally I think on the last morning before Nixon took office the President signed a much more limited order relating to some of the lands within the 48 states. I don't remember whether any Alaska lands were in it or not. But it foundered, you could say, over the adverse Hill reaction, and on the over-pressure by Secretary Udall. There really wasn't enough time. I don't know whose fault that was. I don't know whether Udall tried to get to the President earlier and couldn't, but for a package this big, the President should have had more time

to consider it, because this was major. And he didn't have that time. He had only a very few weeks, two or three weeks. In my view, it's a shame that the whole thing wasn't done, although Congress would have howled.

Mc It was a good idea?

C: It was very good for the country. Congress would have roared but the chances are they wouldn't have undone very much of it. To undo it they would have had to pass acts. And it's harder to pass them than it is to stop them. So my guess is that they would have roared, but the action probably would have stood. At that time I don't think Hickel was in the picture, but the new President and new Secretary of Interior could issue executive orders revoking what the previous ones did. Now this could have happened. But they didn't foresee it. They didn't know at that time that Hickel would be Secretary of the Interior. They knew Nixon was going to be President. This is all I know about it. But it's sort of a shame. It's a shame from the standpoint that it was good for the country, and it's a shame from the standpoint that I think Udall and Johnson ended on an awkward note.

Mc Now did you, in your capacity, do anything to ease the transition to the new administration?

C: We tried.

Mc What did you do?

C: Well, first of all, of course, the new and old cabinet officers met and Udall has told me that Hickel was not responsive. Hickel only met with Udall once and very briefly. This did not involve me. We were asked by Secretary Udall to make all of our facilities and records available for the incoming administration. We were asked to prepare a briefing memorandum of some length summarizing the major policy points and so forth. We did all of this, and we

stood there and were ready, both before and after the change of Administration. After the new administration came in, it wasn't good in Interior--I can't speak for the other departments--but the new people didn't contact the old people. They didn't trust them. I did prepare at the request of one of Secretary Hickel's assistants a briefer run-down from the more lengthy one. I was told later that Hickel had not read it, and wouldn't because he doesn't like to read things. It's mostly through across the table conversations that he gets his information. And we were really barred by the new people from communication with them; there wasn't any dialogue.

Now I've been through three changes of administrations in responsible positions--Truman to Eisenhower, Eisenhower to Kennedy, and Johnson to Nixon. There was some of this suspicion in the Truman to Eisenhower transition in the Department of Agriculture, but not nearly as much as we encountered in Interior when Hickel came in. And I know from my contacts down there that even after these months have passed, most of the bureau chiefs have very little contact with the Secretary's office. Hickel has surrounded himself with a number of staff aides, many more than Udall had, and he looks to these men for counsel and guidance. The bureau chiefs who are still there don't know whether they will be retained and they don't have access to the Secretary's office. So things aren't being accomplished, except in a few areas. I think in time this will probably change. But there was not a good transition in the Interior Department. I really think that this was not Udall's fault nor Johnson's fault nor the fault of the bureau chiefs who were there. It was the fact that the incoming administration was fearful and suspicious and didn't want to deal with the predecessors. And I guess that about summarizes it except as to my own situation.

Mc You might comment about that.

C: I might say that I knew all of the various people who I had read were being

considered by Mr. Nixon for Secretary of the Interior, except Hickel and Governor Babbock. I knew John Saylor very well; I know Rogers Morton very well, and am close to both of them. Worked with them over the years, and I've worked with Republicans and Democrats alike. If either one of those men or some others that I knew and had confidence in me had been appointed, my plan was to stay on a year or a year and a half or at the most two years and provide for an orderly transition until they got to know the ropes, and until they found somebody they wanted. With Hickel coming in and this complete barrier he put up I didn't know whether I wanted to stay on. I didn't know whether they wanted me and because of certain provisions in the retirement act, it was to my interest to retire either at the end of February or the end of May. So one day I asked for an appointment with Under Secretary Train [Russell], not indicating what it was about. I went up to see him shortly after he was confirmed. And I had known Russ Train for several years before in his previous job with the Conservation Foundation. I explained this situation to him, or started to. He interrupted me and said, "Well Ed," he said, "I anticipated this might be part of what you wanted to see me about." How he anticipated this I've never known to this day. Then he said, "I've checked with the Secretary and the Secretary told me to tell you that he wanted to replace you with his own man."

Now this was kind of sudden and kind of a shock because I had at that time never even seen nor met the Secretary. I had not had one word with him. Then I asked him, "Well, that's your right, but when will it occur, can you give me any idea?" Train either couldn't or wouldn't; it might be soon, it might not. And that was the essence of our conversation.

That exchange got into the press. The next day Hickel called me up, the first time I'd talked to or met him. He said he did not know what it was about

and would I tell him. So I started to recount my conversation with Train and Hickel interrupted me and said, "I've never talked with Train about you." Now, either Hickel was not telling the truth or Train was not telling the truth, or there was the most colossal mixup you can possibly imagine. I don't think it was the latter, and I'll tell you why. Hickel then said, "Well," he said, "What do you want to do?"

And I said, "That depends on whether you think I could be of any help to you during the transition period. I don't want to stay the full four years." He asked about the retirement aspects, and I told him. I then said, "I'll probably stay a few more months, if you want me." But he wouldn't say what he wanted, he wouldn't say, "Yes I'd like you to stay or no, I want you to go." He would simply say, "What do you want to do; what do you want to do." Finally, he said, "May 31st." He put the time limit on it. And when I said I'd probably stay a few more months or several more months, he said, "May 31st."

Then McMurray, a staff aide, who was the only other man in the room at the time said, "Well, Mr. Secretary, Crafts' name is one name we sent to the White House that we were going to keep."

Hickel said, "Oh, is this the fellow."

And McMurray said, "Yes." Then Hickel repeated May 31st, and that was that and so I left and thought about it. I went back to see Train and told Train that Hickel said he hadn't talked to him and faced Train with this. Train was surprised, didn't know what to say. He didn't say "Yes, he did," he didn't say, "No, he didn't." He said, "Possibly the Secretary and I had a misunderstanding." He just glossed it over.

Then I waited a number of weeks to see whether they wanted to clear it up or whether they wanted to cut me off--what they wanted to do. I could see

little advantage in staying between February and May since that was the time limit that the Secretary himself had set. I checked with many of my friends on the Hill, and they all advised me the best thing to do was to resign, which I did, as you know, at the end of February. I sent a retirement letter to him in which I outlined some of this. That became public, I made it public. This made Hickel very angry and he hasn't gotten over it yet. My own people in Interior are really afraid to deal with me because they're afraid the word will go back to the Secretary's office. He is very much put out because the letter made it clear that either he wasn't telling the truth or the Under Secretary wasn't telling the truth. If it was a blunder they had three weeks to straighten it out, and they didn't choose to do so. Moreover, there could have been nothing personal in this, because Hickel didn't know me. This was the first time I'd met him. If I'd asked for support from the Hill, I think I could have brought enough pressure upon the Secretary so I'd have been retained. I chose not to do this because I thought if a man is forced to keep a subordinate and doesn't want him that's no good either. It isn't good for the organization, so I thought it was better to get out. And I still think it was the right thing to do.

Mc And then you took this consulting job?

C: Yes. It's interesting. I took this part-time consultant job with Laurance. He wanted me to be the staff director of the Citizen's Committee, which is set up by executive order and in effect is an administration vehicle. Hickel learned about this and asked to see Laurance. Laurance went down to see him and Hickel raised all sorts of fuss about that. Although the advisory group is made up of private citizens, Hickel tried to tell Laurance who to hire. The odd thing is that Laurance told me later that he was trying to re-establish himself as a Republican. Because Laurance was so close to the Johnsons

the Nixon group was a little suspicious of him. He went along with Hickel part way, and I didn't really care. In fact, I sort of like it better this way.

But Laurance went through a shenanigan to switch me from a consultant to this committee to a consultant to one of his conservation organizations--which is entirely his own creation--and then assigning me to this, to do particular things. They're trying to get another man from Interior to be the staff director as such. This is an illustration of Hickel's vindictiveness. That's about it.

I took this present job, but I'm doing some other things, Boy Scout work, the Citizen's Committee on Natural Resources, which is a citizen's lobbying committee, special articles editor for American Forests Magazine. Also, I'm going to do some lecturing at the University of California and Colorado State University. This is more than I want to do, really. But I'm very sorry that my tenure in government after these 37 years ended on a sour note. It ended I do not yet know the reason why, unless it was wholly political. Probably I never will know. I think it was lack of knowledge, inexperience, suspicion, and so on, by the new administration and Hickel's ineptness. I do know though that I'm going to do everything I can working with Jackson, McGovern, Muskie, Udall, who's right upstairs in this building and a close friend, Mo Udall and with Senator Kennedy, all of whom I know, to do what I can four years from now on the conservation front. I think the operation in Interior is going to be largely a holding operation during the Nixon administration. This administration's heart is not in the conservation field, as it was in the last two administrations. They know it's got some political "umph" because they hear about it, but this is not really where the interest is. You read in the maga-

zines about cabinet officers who are close to Nixon and so on, and you don't see Hickel's name mentioned. And Interior took pretty heavy cuts in the Nixon budget. I think the entire department is probably going to be pretty much of a holding operation for the next four or eight years.

Mc Well, I have no more questions for you. Is there anything else you wish to comment on?

C: No, I've enjoyed talking to you, and it's been a privilege to have a chance to say some of these things.

Mc Thank you very much.

C: I enjoyed it.

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By Edward C. Crafts

to the

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Signed Edward C. Crafts

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