INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWEE: ERNEST CUNEO

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Cuneo's Office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

F: Mr. Cuneo, last time we were just starting to talk about the Supreme Court reorganization, and I thought you might reminisce a bit about your experience with this, anything pertinent that you think belongs.

C: That's a little difficult to fully describe it, by reason of the fact that there's so much to describe. Essentially, I think that a history of the time is almost impossible without capturing the ethos of it. There was an atmosphere around the President and in Washington which I have not seen since, and I think for which there are few precedents in American history. There was one in 1912 when Theodore Roosevelt ran, and such was the fervor that the New York Sun ran a note, "Positively tomorrow at three o'clock Theodore will walk on the waters." It was something of that tremendous populist movement.

As we thought of it at the time, President Theodore Roosevelt, whom the President inordinately admired, had captured the Bryan movement, that the Republican Party could not assimilate it, that thereafter Franklin Delano Roosevelt brought it back into the Democratic Party. Almost from the first I think he made due

obeisance to the absolute necessity of the party, but his eye was fixed on the tremendous crusade of Theodore Roosevelt. That crusade permeated us young men completely. The town at that time vibrated. It was almost like the start of the Crusades from Clermont. Firstly, I suppose it was born of exhaustion of the country. Secondly, there was no place for large numbers of young men out of school. Thirdly, there was a vast latitude. The latitude was that the patient was already dying on the table, and the country was ready for any kind of experiment.

F: There is, I suppose, a certain similarity between Franklin Roosevelt's early days and the kind of young men around Kennedy, except that they didn't have the issues.

C: Yes, although in all fairness President Kennedy was achieving that ignition. Alex Rose, the head of the Liberal Party in New York, said to me in the 1968 election, "Never in American history has one man done so much and been appreciated so little as President Johnson." There's no question about that; I mean, in terms of absolute accomplishment, where Franklin Delano Roosevelt blazed the trail, Lyndon Johnson put down an eight-lane highway. There's no question about that in my mind. But he said, "No man could do so much for so many and ignite so few. Whereas," he said, "President Kennedy, if one looks at the record, did not do very much, but he ignited so many."

I never could understand that about President Johnson, and I am one of those who say, having just looked at the tremendous

Federal Reserve and census reports, that in fact he did create the Great Society. There's no question about it, especially his education measures. But he came in at the end, more or less, of the Court fight. That Court fight, I think, was born of the euphoria of the President--Mr. Roosevelt. I was at the head table, so to speak, in a very minor capacity. I was at the Democratic National Committee. I was the only man of the young men who had had a great deal of newspaper experience, and therefore I spent a great deal of time with Charlie Michelson, who was regarded as the past master. We became very good friends, very good friends.

When the 1936 campaign ended there had been no real campaign. There were some alarms. Ickes and Morgenthau became rattled badly and told the President he was in difficulty, Jim Farley called practically every precinct man in the Union and came back to the President with the same report--he would carry all but two states.

F: Was this alarm on Ickes part just a matter of innate pessimism, or did he have some reasons for it? Or did he just listen to the wrong people?

C: No. He was a man of passionate nature, and he loved it so much that he feared its loss, so to speak. This was routine. Every headquarters has them. But that campaign headquarters was the happiest place in which I had ever been. I had played professional football and I had been a sportswriter, and I just say this in background: there's nothing more glorious than a singing, happy team.

And the headquarters at the Biltmore were like a gigantic ship underway. Everybody sang "Happy Days Are Here Again." Actually, the crew control of the campaign was in Farley's hands, and on occasion, on navigational things when problems appeared, Charlie Michelson would be summoned. Chip Roberts was there, a hell of a wonderful guy and a wonder raconteur, and almost every night we'd go down to the restaurant there. I have to say this because it was part of the ethos. It was happy.

When the last weeks of the campaign came about this alarm had gone through, and the President then started his campaign. I've never seen anything like it, nor are we likely to see it again. It was past the royal progress; it was the visit of a holy man. I think this had a great deal to do with the Court fight. The President passed through crowds who wept. They called to him, "You saved me." Astonishing! When the last night of the campaign came, if he hadn't been vulnerable before he most certainly would have been then. I sat up on the platform at Madison Square Garden. The unions had provided everyone with tiny flags. When the President took the rostrum, no Hollywood man could ever have staged such a scene. The place was reverential, the organ spoke, and then this marvelous voice came. He spoke, and you could feel, as you did on inauguration day compounded, a rapport which quickly passed into hypnosis. When he finished, I have never seen anything like it. The flags fluttered, people roared, the roofs seemed to open, and you could hear everything in you own mind's eye, from the Seattle boat whistles to the men in the bayous. I looked down, and such a

remarkable man as Herbert Lehman had lost his composure to such an extent that he and Mrs. Lehman stood there with the tears pouring down their faces.

F: He's an old pro.

C: Oh, it was unbelievable. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was played, and I must tell you it was a religious experience. This I think had a great deal to do with the President's decision on the Court.

F: Of course, a speaker who can provoke that kind of reaction instinctively feels it. He gets it back from the crowd.

C: It was reciprocal hypnosis. By the way, I had written a little analysis of the President. Tom Corcoran used to ask me what I thought of the President. I said, "Look, Tom, I mean this man has charisma, and perhaps it's born of Goethe's thing, 'what comes from the heart, goes to the heart.'" But if you ask me, the effect of Mr. Roosevelt on the crowd is as nothing compared to the crowd's effect on Mr. Roosevelt. It was a reciprocal hypnosis. And this caused great difficulty, because the President was laterally educated, as most Edwardian gentlemen were. He was what was called the "well-rounded man." He was in Dr. Butler's words, "a gentleman should be in a state of intelligent ignorance about most things." The President knew a little bit about everything. So did Herbert Bayard Swope. So did Bernard Baruch. So whenever you mentioned a subject, they could contribute something to it and evoke background out of it. They were men of vast experience, and of course the President dearly

loved this.

But after that experience, which was November in 1936, unquestionably, in my mind, he was affected with hubris. I mean he was still in that euphoria, if you will, because no one had any notice of the Court plan.

F: This caught his staff by surprise?

C: Absolutely flat-footed, including the Senate. I think there were very few [who knew]. I don't know the details of it. I know that I was thunderstruck, and I know Michelson was thunderstruck, and I know Farley was. But the Supreme Court had given every indication that it intended to retreat before the President. I well remember this. It did so in one of the most remarkable decisions in American history, which was completely overlooked. It was The United States versus Curtis Wright--and the date of that deserves a special notice; it was November 21, 1936--in which, without going into the details of the case, they held that the president of the United States had inherent powers outside of the Constitution; that sovereignty was indivisible and many of his inherent powers had been derived from the Declaration of Independence; that he could not be questioned in any other place, neither the courts nor the Senate could review his decisions; and that he was answerable to no one, in effect, he need not furnish them any information. Until 1967 that was the law of the land.

Indeed in October of 1942 I had noted the Supreme Court decision. I couldn't believe my eyes the message that Franklin

Roosevelt sent up to the Congress. He said, "I am asking you for legislation stabilizing wages and hours. I have been in some doubt as to whether I should ask you at all under my war powers. In the event that you do not pass this legislation, I shall enforce it anyhow, and at the conclusion of its necessity I shall return it to the American people." At which point Professor Corwin of Princeton said, "Gentlemen, we are back to the first institution of the race, the elected kingship." And he was quite correct.

F: Who said this?

C: Professor Corwin, who wrote the introduction to the official Constitution. Absolutely true! It was even more dramatic--I remember being electrified by it--than Mr. Lincoln's claim of power to make peace with the South under his power of pardon, as indeed he invoked an army of one hundred thousand men without act of Congress to take care that the laws were enforced. At that time I said to Lowell Mellett, "We are taking on the aspects here of Louis XIV's court," and he said, "That's absolutely correct with one modification. Louis XIV doesn't enjoy his as much as Franklin the First." But we loved him.

When this came out some time in February it was an absolute bombshell. Bombshell! When the men were called down, Jack Garner and I think Hatton Sumners, and the President explained it to them, it was sort of a famous story which you've probably run across, that when they went up the men were stunned and Congressman Sumners said, "Gentlemen, this is where I get off." I mean, this split the Democratic Party in half. Where, as I told you, the Biltmore had

been the happiest of championship dressing rooms, it suddenly became still. Nobody knew where he stood. It was a question of identity.

The President had had some damned good luck. The first good luck was that the drawing of the Securities and Exchange Commission Act came under Congressman Sam Rayburn, chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission. As was so often the case in American history, the provisional becomes institutional. Thereafter Tom and Ben [Cohen] worked so closely with him, and Mr. Rayburn was so very effective, that the President wished him to be speaker. The first claim on that was John O'Connor of New York of the Rules Committee, who was a bete noire of the President, who certainly looked like an angry robin.

F: In spite of being from his home state.

C: Yes. He was a limited man. But it was a clash of identities. He was entitled to the job of majority leader or speaker, I forget which now. But the President, I think, and that's when Tom's king-making started, convinced him it should be Sam Rayburn. The vote was going to be very close. Corcoran flew up to New York and was taken out by Coast Guard to the incoming liner, on which was Jim Farley. The Coast Guard put him aboard, and he went to Farley's cabin and told him that the President wished that he would make no statement on John O'Connor. Farley was furious, but he went along and Rayburn got the job. Farley still rankled, because this was the first time in the feudal sense that the King's men went in and told

the local barons what they were to do.

F: Well, virtually every appointment had been cleared through Farley up to that point.

C: Every one had. When this came down Senator Wheeler understood at once that this was in pattern with Henry II's establishment of royal command, as it were, under jurisdiction running in, as it was with Richelieu and the Louies. He said in so many words, "I am the Baron of the Northwest. What are they going to do, interfere with my barony?" And the answer was, "You bet!"

F: Is this the seed for the split between Wheeler or--?

C: It is. I think there was a great split temperamentally, because they were both commanders of men. In my view, Burton K. Wheeler was one of the greatest senators the United States ever had, and he had the expertise and the guts of a mountain lion.

F: And a real bastion for Roosevelt in those early years.

C: I had been LaGuardia's administrative or legal secretary, and I had watched Burt Wheeler break that coal and iron police of Pennsylvania. Burton K. Wheeler deserves as much credit for the Norris-LaGuardia Act as either of those gentlemen. He was a great man in my view. In any event, whether or not you think he was a great man, he could fight, and he swung against Mr. Roosevelt. He saw Mr. Hughes.

F: Which Hughes is this?

C: Chief Justice. As the saying was, Burt Wheeler was all knees and elbows in a fight, and Mr. Justice Hughes was no slouch. So they took the complaint, so to speak, of the President, then they just negated it. That's all, they answered him. When the Court plan was

sent up, as a matter of courtesy Mr. Roosevelt, I believe, sent Tom up to see Mr. Justice Brandeis to tell him that it was coming, and Brandeis froze. He was utterly against it, which was something, you see, because he was called the Isaiah, and our saint was against him.

So then started the usual game. The American Bar Association and the Liberty League, as might be expected, took positions against us. To get some kind of legal representation against the American Bar Association the Lawyers Guild was formed. Morris Ernst, Thurman Arnold, Randolph Paul, I think Bill Douglas, Bob Jackson, the whole bunch of us--"Who stands by the President?" So that's how the palace guard was born. We played the game of forefathers back and forth, what the forefathers said and what the forefathers didn't say. You see, [in] a great debate there is just routine formalization, and it was a hell of a lot of fun. Farley led that fight, and it was the roughest one ever seen in Washignton. He stood up for the President, and so did Joe Robinson.

The rest is painful history. Because all that rapport I told you of, this great crusade [was lost]. It was like a quarrel between the dukes, and many of the dukes who supported the President hated it. They hated it. It was against everything. It became apparent they were going to lose. I think Jack Garner offered some kind of a deal to Burton K. Wheeler, who was really running the show, and Wheeler turned him down. He knew he was going to win by a knockout, and he did!

F: Garner kept the facade of representing the administration?

C: Yes. But that was the beginning of the break, really, the real break. Because the one side around, our side, was gay and happy, and it was a real Lincoln Steffens' split in this sense: both sides were right. There was a Greek tragedy. The old Democratic Party men said, "For God's sake, do you think you could have passed this legislation without us?" The answer was, we couldn't have elected an alderman without them. The second was, "Has not the Democratic Party extended every opportunity to you young men? Why don't you take your place in line? Your leadership will come early enough." The answer was, as far as we were concerned--you must remember that we were out in a depression--"Sure, that is the ladder of success. Yes, we've been educated. But what of the common people out in the street who sacrificed so that we could get an education? Do you think we're going to turn them down? We will not run out on our people." We didn't want anything to do with what was then paraphrased from Adams [Henry James]--the bitch-goddess Success. "We are not going to turn our back on the people as a whole, and we're going to use every bit of our skills to see that the American common man gets a break."

They thought we were monumental ingrates. We thought that they were crustacean, that they were like Lincoln Steffens' description, "They were crooks and didn't know it," that they were an establishment, that they were merely barons who handled legislation in a reciprocal symbiosis with Wall Street. We didn't want that kind of success.

Now at the conclusion of this, the President having been established in the House because of Mr. Rayburn's ascendency, a very, very majestic break of luck came to him. He was defeated, and he is a Dutchman. He was not only defeated, he was humiliated. Less than nine months after I told you of this religious fervor, the country was bewildered, and he was a really lonely man.

F: He had fallen off the mountain top.

C: Yes. The rapport was completely broken. They couldn't believe [it]. The hero had assaulted the tribal gods, and he lost. At that time, as a compromise, Joe Robinson, majority leader, was to go up to the Supreme Court. Jim Farley notified him. Shortly thereafter, a matter of hours I guess or a few days, Joe Robinson dropped dead. Everyone went out to his funeral. The great question then arose as to who was to be Senate leader. There were two candidates: one was Alben Barkley and the other was Pat Harrison, a wonderful guy. So was Alben Barkley. On the way back from the funeral everyone knew it was going to be a close vote.

Almost as if it were a duel, they met in a drawing room. My best recollection is that present were Jimmy Byrnes, Farley tells me this, Pat Harrison, Barkley and Senator Dieterich of Illinois. It was then and there agreed that there would be no interference, and the Senate itself would make the decision. That's what Farley understood, that's what he told the President, and the President according to Farley acquiesced. As the vote was coming on, Barkley called Corcoran and he said, "I am one vote short, and the vote

I'm short is Dieterich of Illinois." The President was notified, and he did enter in. I don't know who made the call. Tom, I believe, was willing to make the call. They wanted to get hold of that Chicago Mayor. What was his name, do you remember?

F: This is after Thompson?

C: Yes, indeed. It was the Democratic boss out there. Oh, I know his name better than I know my own.

F: Does Jake Arvy come in the picture?

C: He was up at Eagle Lake, Wisconsin, I remember, and the President told Tom, "No, you're too damned badly damaged after the Court fight. I'll do it or I'll get someone else to do it." I think Harry Hopkins made the call. The Mayor's name was Ed somebody, I forget.

F: It doesn't come through right now.

C: Then Farley picks up the story. He said that the next day or immediately thereafter Senator Dieterich was waiting for him when he came into his office. Senator Dieterich was as white as a sheet, and he said to Farley, "I got a call and they put the law down to me." Farley said to him, "Now I want you to understand this. I am neutral, as my position requires, and you don't have to say another thing to me if you do not wish to do so." "No," said Dieterich, "I came to you for advice. I want to tell you what they told me. They told me to swing to Barkley, in which case I would have the say on the next nominees or nominee of the federal bench, or if I didn't they wouldn't give me the nomination. What do you think I

should do?" Farley said, "Are you asking me?" And he said, "Yes." Farley said to him, "You gave your word. Why don't you keep it? I'd tell them to go to hell! Then I'd go to the people of Illinois. That is what I would do. It's not binding."

Senator Dieterich then went up to the Hill, and I think Jimmy Byrnes described this to Farley. He said he came in white and shaken and he said to him, "Senator Byrnes, I can't make the seconding speech." Byrnes thought he didn't want to make the seconding speech. He said, "You don't have to make the seconding speech then, I'll arrange for it otherwise." And he said Dieterich said to him,"Well, Senator, I don't think you understand me. I'm switching my vote." Byrnes couldn't believe it. But the vote was switched, and Alben Barkley became majority leader. It had a tremendous effect on Pat Harrison, seemed to break his heart. I don't know why; he was a casual man and easy going. But whatever the result, you can easily see that the President was in an immensely strong position in his continuing fight with the Hill, because he had both majority leaders and they could prevent plays from forming against him.

F: Now about this time during this fight you had this young man down in Texas running for an open seat, Congressman Buchanan's open seat, on an all-out Supreme Court reform ticket, "I'm behind Roosevelt all the way," which may have been shrewd calculation, may have been heart. We can't gauge that. But I wonder, did you get any notice of that up this way?

C: Yes, to this degree. There's a certain logic of events. Up until that time, as part of the territory to be redeemed the South was foremost. I mean, people will not realize today what that meant, because this was poverty stricken. The South was in chains, cotton and corn and tobacco. We said that, and the horrifying conditions, which again are overlooked. But nevertheless the President was terribly aware of it, and a book which came into tremendous usage at the time and had powerful impact was Claude Bowers' The Tragic Era, in which it was indicated unmistakably that what the South had suffered was a Hitlerian peace, that these so-called carpetbaggers were not scalawags, they were Gauleiters. They were absolutely as ruthless as Nazis. That's how we felt anyhow.

But the President felt very deeply about this, very deeply. Now if you will consider then the operational thing. Here was this man who was humiliated and here were his right and left hands, Rayburn and Barkley, absolute necessities, and Tom who really ran the whole show. Under these circumstances, when Congressman Johnson came up there was almost a literal laying-on of hands. He had absolute top credentials with the President. [When] I met him for the first time I had an apartment alongside of Say Rayburn's. Is this relevant?

F: Yes, this is very relevant.

C: And this will give you an idea, as my favorite story.

F: Where was this, incidentally?

C: In the Anchorage. I think more history has been made in that Anchorage.

This was absolutely a place out of this world. I can only describe it in this way. And it was of vast importance if for no other reason than Sam Rayburn was there. But there were others. I had a little apartment; it was very beautiful and very modestly priced. [There was] an excellent restaurant in connection with it and a marvelous Scotswoman who ran it. It's part of the old Leiter estate. Above Sam Rayburn was Millard Tydings. Over to the right above me was Admiral Stanley. Above him was Charles Lindbergh and on the other side was Bill Bullitt, and there were one or two others of that kind. We never saw each other as a matter of fact, but it was beautifully done. I have a very great fondness for it, because in the years subsequent my apartment was more or less used as a headquarters, off-scene, for General Donovan's Strategic Services, OSS, and through it passed various people like Arthur Goldberg, Bill Douglas lived there, and such. It was just one of those things.

This was all part of the delightful aura of Washington, which was then a stationwagon town. It was like a beautiful Ionian city, a Greek city. New York was Rome; everybody went up there for the weekend. But in any event, Premier Clemenceau had asked President Wilson how the United States government worked. He said, "It's an extremely complicated affair." President Wilson said, "My dear Premier, I can explain to you the government of the United States in one sentence. It consists of the chairmen of the standing committees in the United States Senate." But such had been the change under Mr.

Roosevelt that as was said in the time of Louis, "There is no law except access to the person of the King." Now Lyndon Johnson had such immediate, full-fledged, full-credentialed access, and upon him the President placed immediately a heavy burden, which I will presently describe.

But as to the workings of the Anchorage, after Czechoslovakia fell [in 1939] there was a chambermaid who was a refugee. One bright May morning, I being on the bottom, she leaned on her broom and said a friend of hers who was also a refugee was over at Harold Ickes' Department and that they were transferring him, and that they were lonely and the transfer would be such that they couldn't see much of each other. "It's really not an important job, let me say, he is a janitor," she said. "Could you help me?" So I said, "I think I might be able to help you." I say this, because this is how the government of the United States worked. It was ten o'clock a beautiful May morning, and I got hold of Ickes. I said, "Mr. Secretary, you have a little problem which is a major for others, but not much." I said, "You have a man working in the bureau of Interior building as a janitor," and Ickes said to me harshly, "I know." He said, "Sam Rayburn's called me this morning; Senator Tydings has called me; Admiral Stanley has called me; Bill Bullitt has called me; for God's sake, Lindbergh's called me." He said, "Maybe this guy can get my budget through!" But anyhow, I thought that would give you an idea.

There was one thing that was preponderant in our minds at that time, and that was the clock. The Senate went back into a defensive position. So did the great baronies, and all they had to do was wait.

In the meantime the country went into a terrific recession, and here we were the palace guard, and Corcoran ran the show. Something had to be done. As I say, we couldn't have elected an alderman. In the meantime the country went into a very deep recession. They had hoped not, and three schools of thought came up.

F: This was the year you tried to balance the budget.

C: Morganthau wanted to balance the budget, and the President dearly wanted the budget balanced. Jim Rowe will tell you. He [Roosevelt] knew down to a five hundred dollars expenditure where the federal government's money was going. He hated to spend money, believe it or not. That school of thought, balance the budget, he tried. It went so badly that he had to call a special session. The second school of thought was that it was a gigantic conspiracy, this was headed by Ickes, and the President dearly loved conspiracies. It enchanted him. So the third school of thought was more or less us, and that was headed by Jerome Frank, Bill Douglas, Tom and Ben and to a lesser degree myself on the outside. We said every time our view was, "We're Keynesians. Every time Morganthau says he's going to balance the budget, down she goes, the market."

At that time the President selected his successor, Tom selected him, and it was Robert H. Jackson. I remember it well because I got a call from Bob, and I went over there and Tom was beside himself with excitement. He said, "We were over to the White House, and the President said, 'Bob,'--Jesus was laying on the hands--'I want you to take my place.'" He said, "I don't need the experience"

and such. So our problem was, you can't beat somebody with nobody, and the first step was to get Bob in as governor of New York. So that was going on.

I went up to see the Liberal Party. I was liaison with Dubinsky, Rose, and that group, as opposed to the [Sidney] Hillman group. Of course it was a notification to them of who was going to be. In bald political terms they had no other place to go. I ran into a stone wall at Tammany, and it was quite amusing. I said, "Look, it's the Koran of the sword, and let's not mince any words." And they said, "No it isn't, it's the Corcoran of the sword." While I was there Dubinsky talked of the Depression, quoting Jay Lovestone. He said, "Look, I'm all right, but you people had better take a look at Detroit. With that new young union there Detroit is flat on its back." I duly reported this to Tom. It was arranged that when they next came in I should bring them to see Tom; that was Homer Martin, Dick Frankenstein who headed the Chrysler, and subsequently the addition of Walter Reuther.

The third thesis then was spending, which the President held off until the last moment. But he toyed with it, and he toyed with it because he liked to toy with ideas. Jerome Frank told me there was one incisive meeting at the President's breakfast tray when Dave Stern, a New York publisher, said to him, "Look, Mr. President, I've done business all over the world. You're accused of being an unbusinesslike president. I suggest you adopt business methods. There is a lingua franca. It's called a balance sheet. The balance sheet of the United States government lists no assets. Do you have

any idea of what assets you have?" He said, "In the first place, a great many of your expenditures are self-liquidating. Some return a profit, such as TVA will out of reclaimed lands alone, aside from the electricity. The second is education. For every dollar you spend, you'll get twelve back. I suggest that you just change the budgeting of the United States government." He said, "Do you know what you carried the Presidio [in San Francisco] for?" The President said, "No." He said, "It's one dollar. I'll give you five for it now." It was a joke. The President liked the idea.

But he first, having tried Morganthau, then tried TNEC, and he put Jerry O'Mahoney on it and Lyndon Johnson. Lyndon Johnson was the man of the President designed to go into the South. That was one hell of a committee, conspiracy or not, because the conclusion was, and I think the Scientific American published it some time in 1963 [1933?], that the South was an undeveloped country within a country and had been treated like a conquered nation for everything from preferential freight rates to denial of public lands from the very instance of the Republic. And that if they were talking racial differences, they were not really accurate; they were talking poverty compounded, and that the South was entitled to that part of the national heritage of which it had been deprived.

Lyndon Johnson I don't know, but I assume this made a powerful impression on him, because it certainly made a powerful impression on the President. He liked the South, the President did. Very

few people up here of that era--there are very few who don't love it. Our experience with them, we are northerners, was absolutely perfect. They had to fight to live, and they used seniority in the committees to do so. They knew their business. Jesse Jones did a great job, but Lyndon Johnson finished the job. The South is now, in my view--he's the greatest southerner since Thomas Jefferson, in terms of economics at least. And on the education it is Lyndon Johnson.

When I first saw Lyndon Johnson, I met him at the Anchorage. Tom brought him in there, and he had breakfast with Sam Rayburn. Excepting that he was as skinny as a stringbean and good looking, the only impression he made on me was when he departed. I said to George Bowden, "George, why in the hell is it that some guys are born looking like great pine trees and I look as if I were chopped out of an oak stump? I wish to hell somebody could write, 'Cuneo threw his long lean frame into a chair.'" I remember this. But he was terribly earnest. This was the first thing that struck me about Lyndon Johnson. As strange as it may seem to you, he was overly respectful. He was a man learning his job, I think. But he was a frequent visitor and in this, when the purge came on and throughout, he had a peculiar position with the President. It was one of those things that the President particularly attached importance to, that is to say, he had gotten himself elected. So as the burden of the war came on, more and more descended on Lyndon Johnson. So that in my view at least, while so to speak, speaking

of a championship team, the President pitched, Tom caught--(Interruption)

So it was a team, as I say, with Tom catching but really running the team, Sam Rayburn at second--I regarded him as an outsider, so to speak--as the keystone sack, Barkley in the hot corner, third base, and in between them, as a rookie if you please, Lyndon Johnson.

F: Good veterans on either side.

C: He couldn't help but pick up, and he picked up very rapidly.

F: I judge [he was] a good listener in those days.

C: He was, almost alarmingly so. Almost alarmingly so, I found, and exceptionally good mannered.

F: Was he considered very seriously for the role of fund raiser as early as the 1940 campaign? He was still relatively wet behind the ears.

C: I don't think so. I don't think so at all. That's another long story, but I don't think Lyndon was considered for a fund raiser at all. As a matter of fact, the funds came from other sources. The labor people were. I myself went up with a purge. You may recall Lewis put up a half-million and was ungracious enough to mention it, but for the purge alone. It was legal in those days. You got a commitment of a hundred and twenty-five from Dubinsky and one hundred and twenty-five from Hillman, and a great deal of the educational departments of the labor people went into campaign allied literature.

F: Before we leave this period, did you know Maury Maverick very well?

C: I knew him well enough. He was a factor. He was a factor, though, in a certain attornment. There was a dichotomy coming up in the White House between Corcoran and [Harry] Hopkins. Hopkins and Niles and Mrs. Roosevelt represented the great good heart. (Interruption)

F: You were talking about Hopkins and Mrs. Roosevelt and good hearts.

C: This is where the start of the break-up of the palace guard started. Because Tom was the field general, and enormous respect attached to him. Harry was the courtier. He was a very good courtier. I don't say this in a deprecating way at all. He fitted in with Mr. Roosevelt very nicely, because the President, I believe, was lonely. Harry also had that Edwardian breadth, which does not necessarily mean depth, but it certainly does not mean lack of depth either. But it was conversational. Harry could instantly establish rapport.

But Harry would make extravagant promises. He was like a quarterback who'd call for an end run four times in succession, and, if I may say so myself, we'd have to go out and bust our necks. He'd make a hell of a campaign pledge to the President; then we'd have to go out and he'd walk in, you know, and say, "I got it!" I can tell you stories on that till tomorrow morning. Nevertheless, it was functioning. It was slightly, slightly--the edge was slightly off the body. It was like the palace guard versus the machine. In that milieu, as it were, the President had absolute confidence in Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn, and their position was difficult. But it became apparent that we were not going to have a platform.

Hitler was compelling one.

F: It was being written in Berlin.

C: Yes. I won't go into the details of Bob's candidacy, which is a story in itself. The President had to pull out on it, because they went off on Ickes and used Bob and Ickes as attackers. I fought, bled, and died on this because I was supposed to run the campaign on Bob. Look, if you send a man in on the first wave you're going to get him badly damaged, and Ickes made a charge that it was a conspiracy and Bob echoed it, and the skies opened up. Then there was a debate, Willkie stacked the house, and instead of getting Bob off the ground we got Willkie off the ground.

At this time Harry thought that he wanted to be president. I felt like Longstreet at Gettysburg. I said, "Tom, for Christ's sake, I'll put in what artillery support I can, but I'm not going to make that charge. It's just out of the question." I mean he was the bete noire of the regular organization. I do not know what Lyndon's part in it was, but I do know that at that time in the most intricate kind of manner I was handling all of the press, and to the extent it was not managing the news but managing the spotlight. It was nip and tuck. Sam Rayburn got the draft through by one vote.

F: Yes I remember, for one year only.

C: Yes. This was life and death, and it's a whole story in itself. But if nothing else, Congressman Lyndon Johnson must have gotten a pretty good idea of how the Constitution could be stretched.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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