INTERVIEWEE: DR. WALTER W. WILCOX

INTERVIEWER: THOMAS H. BAKER

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B: This is an interview with Dr. Walter W. Wilcox, the Director of Agricultural Economics. Sir, could we begin by your outlining briefly your private and governmental service career?

W: Yes, I started with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in 1930 after getting my master's degree from the University of Illinois. After five years with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, I joined the staff of Iowa State University and was there about seven years. [I then spent] a year with the War Food Administration, the year 1943; then I went to the University of Wisconsin for six years as a professor of agricultural economics. In the meantime I had gotten my Ph.D. from Harvard University under John D. Black and at the end of that period I transferred to the Library of Congress--the Legislative Reference Service--beginning there in January of 1950.

During that period with the Legislative Reference Service, I was the economist who consulted, made studies for the agricultural committees and members of Congress on agricultural matters. During that period of time, I had a leave of absence one year with the Food and Agricultural Organization in Chile, and I made two trips to Africa and one to Latin America on a leave of absence basis for the Food and Agricultural Organization while I was there. Then, in January of 1967 I joined the staff of the Department of Agriculture as an economic advisor and Director of Agricultural Economics.

B: Is that appointment a presidential appointment or is it done by the Secretary?

W: It is done by the Secretary; it is not subject to Senate confirmation.

B: Is it the usual thing that that appointment goes to a non-political career man?

W: No, not necessarily. The Director of Agricultural Economics in this particular position also serves as the economic advisor to the Secretary, so it is a, shall we call it, a personal appointment of the Secretary. As a matter of fact, I am told that there was a request for two additional Secretaries of Agriculture and the Director would have been made an assistant secretary if they had congressional authorization for that.

B: Your position, you mean?

W: Yes.

B: Have you ever had any direct partisan political experience? That is, have you been active in one party or the other?

W: No, and I'm registered as an Independent, as a matter of fact. Although I have been registered, I think, both as a Democrat and a Republican at different times.

B: In your capacity as Director of Agricultural Economics, have you had any direct or indirect dealings with Mr. Johnson, President Johnson?

W: Only indirect.

B: That is, through the Secretary.

W: Yes.

B: Does the--

W: Or through the White House, DeVier Pierson.

B: I was going to ask you who at the White House dealt with the relationships with you.

During Mr. Johnson's Administration, has your section here been called upon for any special or particular research activity? Has there been any clear emphasis from the Administration?

W: Yes, the economic staff participates in the preparation of alternatives each year for our annual programs. We have to prepare plans for the coming year and we make those analyses as a part of a departmental-wide activity. My own staff participates in it.

B: These are policy plans as opposed to budgetary?

W: Yes.

B: Now, one of the things we are interested in is how that kind of decision is made. Could you take a case of a specific policy with which you have had something to do and describe and process of how it is formulated and agreed upon?

W: I don't know which particular policy to pick up. We might take, for example, the announcement of the increase in the price support level for milk last April.

The first step was a request from the Secretary, or the Under Secretary, for an analysis of what the supply situation and the demand situation was and the prospects of the Commodity Credit Corporation having to buy increased quantities of dairy products for the price; what we expected would happen if the price was raised, whether or not we would get increased production or decreased consumption--those kinds of things. Then a preliminary meeting was held in the Under Secretary's office as to the significance of the data and how we might interpret them. And on the basis of discussion in there, it was agreed that as technical analysts weren't in agreement on some aspects and we needed to take another look at certain aspects of the data, I was asked to get them together and to come up with a new estimate that took into account the things that were discussed in that office. Then it was taken in and the pros and the cons for the economic analysis were presented that would support either decision of whether to raise it or not.

B: May I check here at this stage of the deliberations, you are in effect providing the Secretary with arguments on both sides of the question?

W: It is arguments on both sides, or what we think the economic implications would be if he did it or if he didn't do it.

B: I see. Do you also make, as director of Agricultural Economics, a specific preference yourself?

W: Usually informally in the meetings, we indicate what our private decision would be, or private preference. It depends on the issue and who the Secretary consults for their private decision, but he makes the decision himself or he takes it to the President for a final decision.

B: In this case you are talking about, the milk price, was the final decision made in the Department of Agriculture or did it go on to the President?

W: I don't know for sure. If you will talk to the Secretary, he might say that he made the final decision, but he didn't feel free to announce it, at least, until it was approved at the White House. When it came out it was commented on that the White House made the decision. So, in a real sense, I think in this case the White House made the decision although it was fairly clear the Secretary was recommending the decision that the White House made.

B: Would you say, sir, in your long experience in government, that the Johnson Administration has had any particular emphases or special areas of interest in agricultural policy?

W: Well, of course it has. If you would put that question in terms of how does it differ from the Kennedy Administration or the Eisenhower Administration, then you can say something about it.

B: Why not do it that way?

W: As compared with the Kennedy Administration, I would say that the Kennedy

Administration came in after the Eisenhower period with a determination to change things radically from what they had been under Eisenhower, to try to increase income and reduce stocks. It first tried mandatory programs because they thought they would be most effective and least costly. The result, though, was that they soon found that neither Congress nor the farmers would approve tighter mandatory controls, so they experimented, or put on emergency basis, voluntary programs and moved in that general direction. The '65 Act is an act passed in the Johnson Administration based on the experiences of the Kennedy Administration and the early Johnson years. So that in this sense the Johnson Administration policy are the result of the experience gained in the Kennedy Administration and represents a shift in the leadership in the Democratic party in agriculture from high-price supports and mandatory controls to price supports at world levels and voluntary adjustment programs to attempt to hold supplies in balance and avoid the production of supplies which would push down world prices.

B: Is it fair to say that in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations the world effect of our domestic agricultural programs has been taken more into consideration than previously?

W: Yes, it is fair to say that, but it is also more accurate to say that in the Johnson and Kennedy Administrations we did have a substantial expansion in world trade, so it became more important to take it into effect. In other words, partly because of the export promotional efforts of the Administrations but partly because of the growth of world trade, it became far more important and therefore it had to be taken into account more than it was before.

B: Your agency deals directly with foreign and overseas agricultural research, too, doesn't it?

W: Yes.

B: Has there been any special emphasis in that area? For example, has the Viet Nam problem created additional emphasis on Southeast Asia?

W: Yes, it has, but I would say that one of the things that was done in the Kennedy Administration at the beginning was to take the research people in the foreign field from foreign agricultural service and put them in the new combined Economic Research Service and expand the work that was being done in the analysis of trade possibilities and export possibilities. Then as we got more experienced with the Food for Peace Program, and the need for developing self-help criteria, and the requirement that countries should have programs leading to the improved development of their own agriculture, we expanded very substantially our research in this field, too.

B: This is in connection with the policy that rather than the United States just giving food, it should encourage those areas that need it to develop their own?

W: Yes, so that we have had an expansion in both of those. We have had expansion of research relating to Southeast Asia in part growing out of the Viet Nam war, but in part growing out of the importance of our trade with Japan, and Japan's growing influence there, and our competitive position with Japan, and other suppliers of the Japanese market.

B: Do you mean in agriculture, Japan is becoming a competitor with us for the export of agricultural products?

W: Japan is our largest single country importer of agricultural products, and immediately after the war we almost totally supplied a number of her agricultural products. As she has grown and developed, she is moving out to diversify her source of agricultural imports not to our advantage. We are concerned then with the development of competing supplies of agricultural

products for the Japanese market. This is one of the aspects I was thinking about. For example, she is financing agricultural development of grain sorghums in Australia and of feed grains, corn, in Thailand, which is going to limit our ability to export our feed grains to Japan. It's that kind of thing that I had in mind.

B: Does that mean that our agricultural development work in countries in those areas would ultimately benefit, of course, the country itself, but also Japan as the major importer?

W: To the extent that our agricultural development activities lead to the development of crops for export which are competitive with our own, I would say yes. But in general, you see, most of our emphasis in agricultural development in these countries is the production of home food supplies.

B: Are you also involved in--well, in its broadest sense--the poverty program, particularly Secretary Freeman's Rural-Urban Balance Project?

W: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was named by the Secretary to be chairman of the Inter-Agency Research Committee on Social and Economic Problems associated with Rural-Urban Balance and with that committee developed the agenda which led to a meeting last December sponsored by six agencies of government; that is, the six cabinet positions, the departments of government, on--I've forgotten what we called it, but it had to do with rural development, and it was a rather significant drawing point in the discussions in this area. We have a substantial group in the Economic Research Service that are working in this field getting information together, getting out publications, and servicing the Secretary with data in this field.

B: Would you describe how the thinking is going now in that particular program? That is, what particular aspects of the problems and possible solutions are being developed?

W: This is such a big issue that I hardly know where to start. Let me say that we feel very much encouraged by the more recent statistics which show that the rate of employment in rural areas in 1962-66--the rate of growth in job opportunities--has been greater in rural areas than in central urban areas, and this is quite contrary to what happened in the early sixties or the late fifties. It's primarily associated with the rapid rate of economic growth under the Johnson Administration as contrasted with the slower rate of growth in the Eisenhower and the first years of the Kennedy Administration.

B: Does it also reflect the creation of, say, small industries in the rural areas?

W: Yes, we think it also reflects the emphasis that has been placed on the rural development, on the expansion of the resource conservation activities--forestry conservation activities and forestry development--and credit for things other than farm operating loans that the Farmers Home Administration makes available--sewer and water loans, rural housing loans, and so on. Now, they may not be big enough to have a great influence, but they certainly buttress that.

So we think that that is going, and then we are particularly happy that most of these small improvements in the legislative authorizations for the Farmers Home Administration to make these kinds of loans were approved in the last session of Congress. But especially, as you will hear from other members of the Secretary's staff, the legislation for housing had a Section 701 that authorized planning grants--grants for assistance in planning cities--and that has been broadened so that it now has authority to make planning grants to multi-county groups. We think this is going to be a very great growing point in this whole area of Rural-Urban Development. This creative federalism that the President has worked on, and a number of

people in the Department of Agriculture participated in, has gotten the federal-state relationships improved in this area so that we think we have channels now to encourage and help the states outline economic areas--functional economic areas--and then, with this ability to make grants available for planning, we think we've got some real opportunities for making progress the next two years in this area.

B: Are the facilities of your research people made available to states or communities who might need them in this kind of activity?

W: It's very difficult to say yes or no to a question [asked] in that way. We attempt to make available any data that we may have in our files or in unpublished manuscripts that would be relevant to anybody that asked for it in the state and local areas. Then we try to publish data--to get them organized in such a way--the kinds of data that will be useful to them. We look to those people as the users of our research in this field, so the answer is "yes." But if anybody wants detailed data on a particular geographic area, I'm not sure that we could furnish it for them.

B: Do you also work closely with the colleges, particularly the land grant colleges, in this kind of thing?

W: Yes, all of our work in this area is developed with either direct cooperative relationships with the land-grant colleges in the states which is where the data is related to there, or they know in general about what we are doing, the people that are working this field in the states--at least they should know. We try to keep in close touch. As a matter of fact, the Economic Research Service has from one to three or four people at most of the land-grant colleges that are stationed there. They may not be specializing in rural development activities, but through them we try to keep in contact as to what we are doing here with what the state is doing.

B: Does your position as an advisor to the Secretary involve you in legislative drafting and liaison with Congress?

W: I very seldom do any liaison with Congress, and my legislative drafting is drafting of an economic memorandum covering a legislative proposal, so that, to a certain extent, "yes." I might say that my position is somewhat less than you might expect of an economic advisor to the Secretary--and the economist in this administration would be--and it's different in the respect that I came in in the last two years of this administration. The basic legislation had been passed. The general position had been taken. And so there wasn't that.

Then, also, the Under Secretary is a competent economist in his own right, and he used to have this position. In this position the Secretary got to leaning on him so heavily that he put him in as Under Secretary. Therefore, much of the burden that might fall on the director of Agricultural Economics is taken as a part of the Under Secretary's activities at the present time, which is quite all right with me in the sense that he and I see things very much alike and I merely just help him.

B: Then your function by now is simply making sure that the Secretary is kept informed of the progress of the various programs that have been initiated?

W: Yes, I try to make sure that the Economic Research Service, in particular, and the Statistical Research Service will get out the data that are relevant for a position that is coming up and have it organized. [I] call the attention of the Secretary and the Under Secretary to economic developments that are about to happen or have recently happened and their relevance.

B: I noticed another area of the Economic Research Service is natural resources research. Has there been recently a particular emphasis on water and air pollution?

W: Yes, very much so. A very large part of the financing of this work of the Economic Research Service is provided by money appropriated for flood control and--there is another work, what is that--

B: Waterways Development?

W: Yes, it's that general thing. It's not only flood control, but it's watershed development. That money then is transferred by the Soil Conservation Service to the Economic Research Service to hire a technical staff to carry on its work. That was by direction of the Secretary's office before I came here.

B: Have you ever participated in any meetings at which Mr. Johnson was present?

W: Not at any meetings. I was at the luncheon with the Foreign Policy Conference where he was, and I've been at rural agricultural social gatherings where he participated, but I have not participated in any White House conferences.

B: At the kind of thing you just mentioned, how does Mr. Johnson get along with people in Agriculture?

W: Oh, very well indeed. I've just been back from two weeks in the field talking about the uncertainties of foreign policy in the future, and I made the point that President Johnson, because of his own farm background, has an interest which you can't expect most Presidents to have. President Kennedy didn't have it, for example.

B: Do you feel that Mr. Johnson truly understands the problems?

W: That's not quite accurate. I don't think anyone truly understands the problem, including myself. But I think President Johnson is aware of the nature of the problems that the farmers have today.

B: Do you think he understands it in detail. For example, I would assume that much of the information you pass on is statistical and fairly arcane statistics at that. Do you feel that the President understands that kind of thing, can digest it?

W: I have no reason to believe that he can't. On the other hand, I feel fairly sure that he has never given a great deal of time or thought to an evaluation of our economic analyses. I think that for the most part his decisions are based on his consideration of agricultural problems as he knows it and as the budget implications as he sees them.

B: Incidentally, in making your recommendations and reports, do you take into consideration political implications of which the agricultural program is full of?

W: Yes, in the sense that I don't spend much time on analyses of alternatives which are just not politically possible.

B: What would an example of that be?

W: One of the examples is that the whole parity concept had relevance when it was developed, but it doesn't have much relevance today. But it is so well-ingrained in people's minds and it is used so much that an attempt to drop it just leads to all sorts of charges and so forth. So there is just no use in sending forward the recommendation that we discontinue the parity series, for example.

B: I think you have anticipated something I wanted to ask you. First of all, would you correct this statement if it is wrong, but one gets the impression that the bases of our farm policy were formulated in the New Deal and have not changed fundamentally since. First of all, is that fairly correct?

W: The so-called goals, as enunciated in political terms, were enunciated then and have not changed since, yes.

B: Which brings up the question, "Should they" or "Will they"--that is, does our domestic foreign policy need a total overhauling in the light of the second half of the twentieth century?

W: The interesting thing was, you see, that my conversation over the phone with the Under Secretary just before this interview began was that I was telling him when he had time I wanted to talk to him about the need for a change in our goals as compared to how they had been stated. But I commented that it would not be politically acceptable at this time, but I thought it was something that we were going to have to work to.

Now, I am one that feels comfortable with the general direction and the general policy that we are following. I am not comfortable with the goals that we say we are trying to achieve. So, in that respect, I am expecting gradually to move toward some different goals--and perhaps that means some complications in some programs--but in general the programs are not as out of date as they might be in view of the fact that they are direct descendants of the ones that were started in the thirties.

B: What new goals would you suggest, sir?

W: I would suggest that since we are so much more on the world market than we were earlier and we find that many of our commodities will not be over-produced if price supports are at world levels--only a few, particularly the grains, are the ones in which we would be willing to produce such large quantities that we would break our own prices and break world prices if we didn't have an adjustment program--that we shift as our goals from parity income for the adequate size farm to a goal of adjustment programs to keep supplies in line with stable markets and market prices at about world levels with a supplement--income supplement--to those sectors of agriculture--those farmers--who are unable to find other employment and cannot maintain a satisfactory level of living at world prices.

B: That presupposes an adequate world statistical service, I presume?

W: Yes, we have a reasonably adequate statistical service. The great difficulties with these goals, as compared with the parity income for an adequate size farm, is that this would probably lead to substantially lower incomes for many of our producers, particularly of cotton and wheat, and this would not be politically acceptable at this time.

But the reason that I say that we may have to change our goals over a period of time is that, when we started out we talked about these goals for the family farm, and thought that the family farm was more or less broadly representative of all farms and accounted for most of the production. Sure, there were some farms that were very large--large family farms--and a large number of inadequate farms which we couldn't expect prices and incomes to be adequate on, and we would just have to have them get larger or get non-farm employment. But for the bulk of the farms, this farm program directed to give this price and income support would be our best line of governmental policy to help agriculture.

What has changed in the last eight years, I think, is that we have had a very rapid increase in the numbers of very large farms--large as compared with earlier years anyway. I have in mind, for example, that whereas we have 3,100,000 farms that are listed as farms by our statistical agencies, in 1967, 183,000 of them produced 47 percent of all farm products marketed, a very small percentage. Looking forward to five or six years, I am expecting that as few as 300,000 farms will produce two-thirds of all farm products marketed. That is what makes me think that this parity income for the family farm is going to become out of date as our guiding policy goal.

B: You have anticipated another area of questioning. I wanted to get into what even a layman can see is the trend toward land consolidation and mechanization which is really creating sort of agricultural factories.

Again, please feel free to correct that statement, which is an outsider's layman's view.

W: Well, we are rather concerned that--I am personally and particularly--these figures are not published anyplace--but if we make our projections it looks like we are going to have a very high concentration of the production on relatively few very large farms.

B: Which means extending that, that if the farm programs stay essentially as they are, that such direct benefits as accrue will go to a small number of landowners?

W: Yes, and that's the reason why we are going to have to change our goals.

B: There has already been some criticism that farm programs don't necessarily aid farmers or consumers, but aid mostly landowners.

W: That is correct. And we are now actively working on analyses of how a limitation on large payments to individual operators would affect the operation of these programs. I feel sure that this problem of the concentration of programs as we have gotten organized now--benefits going to relatively few people--is going to get worse, and that's the basis for my thoughts that I had in mind before.

B: Of course, this is a difficult problem because some of those recipients of large payments are indeed members of the House and Senate.

W: This is true and if the only way you can get parity returns on those large farms is by supplementing market prices with Treasury handouts or government payments, I doubt very much that the public will continue to support this. So I'm expecting that we are going to have to say that we will limit our assistance to these large farms to just price and income stabilization and perhaps a moderate supply adjustment, but not give them income supplements over and above what is needed for supply adjustments.

B: How far can you by statistics accurately predict the future in this kind of thing? How far ahead can you get the trends in agriculture?

W: Well, all trends tend to be projections of the recent past, and seldom do they have built in them information as to when they are going to turn and what rate they will turn. So for this reason the sort of nearby projections tend to be most accurate and they tend to be just a mere pushing ahead what's been happening in the recent past. For example, we know that at some stage the yields per acre will not continue to increase. But they have been increasing for the last fifteen years at least and at a more rapid rate in the last five than in the previous five. We think that will go on for some time. We have no accurate way of knowing what time it will turn.

B: In this kind of thing, do you try to take into account--by imagination I suppose--possible radically new technological breakthroughs?

W: Yes, we try to estimate at what stage or when it looks like a particular thing is getting economically feasible.

B: I was thinking of, say, chemical farming.

W: Chemical farming--one of the good examples of something that is a possibility but still isn't close enough to know when it will come is the manufacture of proteins out of oil, out of petroleum products. That's being done in Holland now a little bit, and it's being done a little in England, I believe. And there may be a time, but it will be based on the cost of certain technological operations, and as of now they haven't found a way to get the cost down.

The desalination of water is a good example of that in which we don't have any firm estimates as to how much we will be using desalinated water for agricultural production at any time in the future. But we think it's coming, and the people that are working directly on that can make some

projections as to how fast they think it's coming. I can't tell you now, but we do that.

B: Is this kind of what I suppose amounts to almost abstract speculation and projection; is this kind of thing discussed on up at the secretarial and administration levels?

W: Yes, the Secretary is particularly interested in this. He has sent me memoranda on it. I have responded. We have a project going in the Economic Research Service with the manuscript in process. We sent him a report on it within the last month or so. We try to keep in close touch with this, yes.

B: And [do] you know that the President gets involved in this kind of thing?

W: I don't know to what extent the President gets involved in it and knows the details.

B: This is another abstract sort of question. Do people like yourself, whose career is in the Department of Agriculture, ever begin to feel in recent years that you are somehow or other getting left out because of the increasing emphasis on urban affairs?

W: I have been out in the Midwest talking to university groups of economists and extension people, and so forth, and I make the point there that actually with these urban programs there has been a change in the last two years in which the administrators and the legislative liaison people for them have been coming to Agriculture and asking, "Now what is the reasonable growth component of this essentially urban program? We want to see that you are taking care of that." Then we on our side, with our legislative liaison, make the contact and it is in this way that we got the housing bill through Congress with as much support as we did. I'm telling people that I'm confident that this new relationship and with this emphasis on urban programs

that there will be more resources available for rural development than at any time in the past.

B: That's an interesting point. Do you feel that that is a specific philosophical policy of the Johnson Administration or is it, perhaps, part of political tactics?

W: It's just a realization. For example, I don't do this directly. Assistant Secretary John Baker is the legislative liaison with OEO, for example, for the poverty areas. But whereas they had to fight a good deal of bureaucratic difficulties in getting the OEO people to recognize the contribution of Agriculture and the need for these programs in rural areas, this last time they realized it was only when they had specific programs for rural areas that they could get rural legislators' support. They needed to show some development, something done in this area so that the relationship with OEO, as I understand it second-hand, is much better and that we have no difficulty as compared to what we had two years ago.

B: What's the current definition of a rural area?

W: I would say that it's the absence of a metropolitan area. By the census, we have definitions of a metropolitan area that I can't give you specifically on that as set up.

B: In effect, it's the small town areas?

W: I was going to say that there is a technical term for it--the metropolitan area, then you have SMSA as the letters that are used, I think. But, in any event, the census is set up on this way. Then, in general, if we are talking about the other side we usually use a town of 2500, if I'm not mistaken, as the upper limit of a town that is rural rather than an urban center.

B: I didn't realize it was that small. I thought it had gotten a little larger.

W: Somebody else better check it out.

B: It's the kind of thing that I was just curious about.

Sir, to move into another area, do you have any difficulty within your areas in getting and keeping good men in government?

W: Yes, we have a great deal of difficulty at the present time of getting new good men at the upper staffing levels. We can get some at the lower levels, but, in general, our rates of pay and the things that we can give a professional man are not such that it makes it attractive for, say, an associate professor to come to a government position. It's the very unusual situation where somebody has gotten far enough along to be recognized to be an associate professor that we can attract him into the Economic Research Service or the Statistical Research Service.

B: Is that because collegiate salaries, or college and university salaries, are beginning to move up?

W: Yes. In general, the salaries themselves for these people tends to be as high or higher than we can pay.

B: Is it salary only, or do you just find that government service is not attractive?

W: For many of the good analytical economists, they are not interested in administrative work. The governmental professional career doesn't have the appeal that the university position does. So I don't think you can blame it on money--it wasn't money. But as compared with ten or fifteen years ago, the government salary scale is not as attractive relative to the university scale as it was.

B: I was wondering if you noticed any difference in the attractiveness of government careers, say, in the comparison of the last three administrations, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson?

W: In the economic field, the people were drawn in in the New Deal period. A lot of young, bright people were brought into government. And then, certainly during the Eisenhower period, in the Economic Research Service, the economists--there was relatively little demand for them and those that were working here had a feeling that they weren't being used very effectively. Or their researchers were not desired--the difficulty in publication and so forth--such that there wasn't much attraction. But then the beginning of the Kennedy Administration, university salaries had gotten up already by that time, as I remember, so that they were saying they were having a great deal of difficulty getting new people in, and that's been increasingly true as the years have gone on.

B: Another general question; again from your long experience watching the Agriculture Department, one of the criticisms you hear occasionally is that there is a large Department of Agriculture bureaucracy, which has a certain inertia of its own and which is, if it wishes, pretty near immovable. Is that correct? That is, is it true that a President, and perhaps even a Secretary, cannot get new innovations in policy unless the career people are willing to go along with it?

W: Certainly there's an element of truth to that. It's really difficult to get a bureaucracy to change and you can see the differences in the different agencies within the Department of Agriculture. I suppose the largest agency that--well, the two large agencies are the Consumer Marketing Service and the ASCS, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. The reason you have so much trouble with that bureaucracy moving as you want is because, on the one hand, the bureau chief or associate chief is responsible to the boss above him and, in another sense, he is responsible to the people that he serves. He looks at the directive in relation to his own job, what

he has been doing, from the standpoint of how well it will go with the people that he serves as well as how well it will please the boss above him. Unless you can convince him that he can improve his position with the people that he serves as well as with his boss, why, it's much slower to get this new line carried out because this is what's involved.

B: Does that mean that organized agricultural groups such as the Farm Bureau perhaps exert an undue influence?

W: Well, I don't think the Farm Bureau, as such, exercises an undue influence. But our greatest problem, there is no doubt, is with our regulatory agencies and the people that regulate them. I expect this is true government-wide. I think the influence of people on governmental activities is not so much a large general organization but a small special interest organization. I have in mind, for example, that the dairy groups have a very great direct influence on dairy decisions. The fats and oil group have a very direct influence on decisions on those and the livestock and so on across the board. That's what's more true than the general farm organizations.

B: Does this kind of leave the consumer out in the cold? Are the consumer's interests being adequately represented and recognized?

W: Actually, it's hard to say. We do have now a much more effective consumer interest being felt from the White House, particularly in connection with legislation but also in connection with specific administrative procedures such as meat inspection and so on.

B: This is Miss Furness's office?

W: Yes.

B: It is an effective--

W: It has been much more effective than any consumer interest has been in the past, I would say. I'm not sure but what her predecessor may have also been just as effective. I wouldn't make any comparison between the two.

B: Actually, would the effectiveness be simply not so much Miss Furness or her predecessor as individuals but that the President's interest is thereby expressed?

W: Yes, apparently the President and his associates around him are willing to let the consumer interest be expressed more than they were in the past, and it has been expressed more. But to say that the interests as represented by these particular groups are contrary to the consumer's interests is not quite accurate. They may be tangential to it rather than at the opposite so that it certainly isn't directed as the consumer's interest. I don't mean that, but what I'm saying is that it is not necessarily adverse to the interest of the consumer.

B: Yes, well, I think that's generally understood.

Sir, is there anything else in the area of your responsibility that we should cover, that should be on this kind of record?

W: No, I don't think I have anything further that I want to be sure is committed to the records.

B: All right, sir, we certainly appreciate your time.

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to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Walter W Wilcox, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed Walter W Wilcox

Date May 4 1970

Accepted Wayne C. Grover

Archivist of the United States

Date July 23, 1974