

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ohio Democratic Party  
Tape #3

Personal Experience

O.H. 954

FRANK O'CONNOR

Interviewed

by

Mark Connelly

on

April 16, 1975

C: This is tape number three with Mr. O'Connor. The date is May 27, 1975. It is approximately 8:45.

You mentioned that you had to capture the actual machinery of the party for it to mean anything.

O: Yes.

C: For it to have importance. What was the party's reaction? I mean, how did they accept this? Did they accept it?

O: Just before the meeting was to take place, the then county chairman, Shutrump, Fred Shutrump, sent for me to come up to his office with the, did we ever put it on the tape about the roll of bills?

C: Yes, we had this covered.

O: Of course, he would not say anything, but I understand the innuendo, it is unmistakable what he meant. But this time he sent for me, and while he phrased it in the words of fatherly advice, he was just my best friend, he laid it down very clearly that if I did not endorse Governor Davey for the primary election, that I would have trouble with the Davey employees at this meeting. Of course they could bring them in from all over the state.

C: But this is before you actually took control of it?

O: Yes, I think that took place either it must have been after I made that, no I think it was even before that. It was before that, because I remember that when I left his office, I realized that before that. It was before that because I remember that when I left his office, I realized that I had declared war by refusing to take an order. Now, here is the conversation that took place, I said, "Well I would look like a fool endorsing Governor Davey when he has not announced he was going to be a candidate and maybe never will." I had been informed by Senator Seidner, who was a friend of my family and was a friend of my father's back years before, was at that time chairman of the Senate Investigation Committee in the Ohio State Legislature. He assured me that I could depend on it as a friend that they had sufficient and more than sufficient evidence of corruption in the governor's administration. I did not want to get out on a limb for a man that was just about to be accused publicly.

C: Now was this through personal contact, letter or phone that you talked to the senator?

O: Well as you will find later, I worked very closely with Senator Seidner and I never let anything leak that he told me, so I knew way in advance of the newspapers that they actually had evidence that would hold up. So I was not about to be browbeaten into being forced to make an endorsement.

C: Why would Shutrump endorse Davey?

O: Well, all over the state, there is all kinds of contracts; and he was a contractor. Now, I do not know of any specific contract but, whether he had any of the hot mix cases later-- we later proved, I did not, but Seidner and the people who carried out the investigation later proved in court, in what was known as the "Hot mix cases", that the contractors all over the state had a tactic of conspiring among themselves to fix the bids so that one of their number would put in a bid at maybe twice what the thing ought to cost and all the others are putting a higher bid in. Then they would rotate, and it looked legitimate.

I think there was something like either one or three hundred thousand dollars recovered in a lawsuit afterwards that had been stolen from the State Highway Department. Now knowing that this kind of a thing was coming up and assured by Seidner it was absolutely certain, I dug in my toes and I was not about to be forced to make an endorsement. If I had not have known this, maybe it would not have been so important. So I said to Mr. Shutrump, I said that Davey had not even announced. Well he said, "I can assure you that he is going to run, and you better endorse him."

C: Did Shutrump have any idea what was coming off here, as far as legal action being brought against the governor?

O: Well, I think the similar situation occurred here with they city. I do not know whether it was ever proven in court, but at that time, it was obvious, even to a casual observer, you could go out and buy retail, hot mixed road surfacing material for something like six dollars a ton, and I think the state was paying twelve dollars wholesale.

Now whenever the government, in quantity, pays more for things than you can buy it for retail, you can pretty well, it would be either gross inefficiency of those that were handling it to permit such a situation or somebody is getting a kickback somewhere. Now I do not know of specific involvement locally, but you see this is one of the powerful counties in the state. There are only a couple of others that were more powerful. I think Cuyahoga County, at that time I think it was the Miller Machine up in Cuyahoga County. I do recall that we once had a man by the name of Metzenbaum. I wrote up the initials and it is not this Metzenbaum that ran for senator, but it might have been his father. We had him down here in the Central Auditorium and we sponsored the meeting in order to encourage light resistance in Cuyahoga County. It was the Cuyahoga and Mahoning that defeated Governor Davey. He carried eighty-six out of eighty-eight counties.

But anyhow, to get back to where we were, he made it unmistakably clear without saying it in so many words, that he would make trouble for me if I did not publicly announce an endorsement. I refused to do so. In the past, because the president usually was given a political job and was a puppet of the machine, it was almost automatic whatever the boss said, that was what was done. If the membership would have tried to object to have a meeting without even notifying the members and it was done.

Of course, he would presume that I would run it the same way. However, I did not. As a matter of fact, if you go back and check it, everything was done absolutely

democratically, it was done according to parliamentary law and the constitution I wrote virtually made it impossible for any one officer to be bought off.

C: What would make him think that you would support this?

O: It has always been that way.

C: But you actually overthrew the people he had in office, people who were running things that way?

O: Yes, but see, this is prior to it.

C: Well, if you did not have the power, how could he expect you to give him an endorsement?

O: Well, he was just making sure whoever got elected would go do what he told them. But as I say, if I had gone to a grand jury and said he said so, he did not. He just gave me fatherly advice. But it is clear that you understand what is meant. When I walked out of his office, I knew that I had declared war. By refusing to concede that I would take orders. In fact, I told Shutrump, I said, "I will not have any trouble with Davey employees unless you tell them." When I phrased it that way, I was sticking my neck out.

C: What did he say to that?

O: Well, I do not recall exactly what he said, but we came to a clear understanding that we did not agree. So then we laid for them to call an official meeting because if we tried to call a meeting, they would say it was not an official meeting. So we all agreed, there was a group of us, five or six of us that whoever got a notice of a meeting would call all the others.

C: We covered all that. We covered all that before.

O: And about mailing the three thousand, I think it was about three thousand cards. And they said, "The war is on."

C: Yes.

O: Well, then they had the meeting in Traxler's office where they tried to hide the meeting what would have been over at the "Y", and adopted the constitution as I had drafted it, at the minority. Well then we came to the meeting thirty days later. Now as the meeting assembled, of course all of us had agreed to get as many people to that meeting as we possibly could. Now up until this time, there had been no

membership. The new constitution said that you had to, by the date, have paid one dollar dues.

C: We covered all that too.

O: Or had to be a new member. I stood there with eighty applications in my hand with the eighty dollars with a motion before the house to admit them. The other side decided that they were licked on the outside and they withdrew the motion. Unfortunately, my man who had seconded it withdrew, too. I think we covered that.

C: Yes, we covered all that now.

O: So, as the meeting broke up, they went out grinning, thinking they had licked me. I withdrew as candidate for president.

C: Right.

O: I still almost made it by one vote, I believe it was. I think the newspapers said three, but my recollection of it was there was only one vote difference, even after I withdrew, and I think three of my boys walked out missing the cue. But it worked. The other boys thought I was out of it and they must have done what I suspected they would do. They all tried to cut each other down. The result was my boys all got elected.

Now as they went out grinning, they thought they won; these three hundred other guys stormed in boiling mad because they had been barred from the meeting. Nelson Bernstein, who was the treasurer, and did not put up a dollar, apparently was leading them. He had them all steamed up. The first thing he did is ask them to elect me president, and by acclamation, they did. Well this is exactly what I did not want to happen. I wanted it done parliamentary procedure to the "n"th degree. So I withdrew, and told them to go back, take a secret ballot, take up ballots, if anyone else wanted to vote for someone else, why they had a chance to. I think I got all but one vote in the whole hall, on secret ballot.

C: But the other faction had left though, right?

O: Well, the officers had. I do not know how many of their followers might have.

C: Did these guys change their votes the same evening?

O: Well, probably, because you know, only the guys at the top had been maneuvering this and they may have gotten some of those people down to that meeting. Undoubtedly, they brought some of them there. But you know what mass psychology is, when it gets rolling. Undoubtedly outside those doors, there was almost a near riot for being barred from the meeting. And apparently they had

percolated through the doors somehow that it was not my fault they were barred. But of course then they had followed that they elected the same six officers as my officers in the new club. So now I am in control of both clubs. Completely.

C: Now, you say, "the new club". Did it split off into two distinct organizations?

O: Well, you see, they would not let them into the meeting. So they just formed a new club on the spot. We called it the Tri-Dem Club, Tri-County Democratic Club. So then the next move, of course, the following month, according to the constitution, we have a meeting to install officers, and under the constitution I was to install them. I was to conduct the club until they were installed.

So I called the meeting out at Ward Hall to install the officers. Well, by this time they thought that they had control. A Mr. Peebles had been elected president. He called a meeting back in the old Men's Democratic Club down at Democratic Headquarters in the Ohio Hotel. I guess Nick Ricci and a couple other guys showed up down there but the membership showed up out at the Ward's Hall. We proceeded to install the other six officers. There was a tie vote on one and we tossed a coin or something or took a new vote, I do not know what it was, but anyhow, we broke the tie and I think it was Joseph Parrish from Campbell was installed.

Then, because the constitution had spelled out how it was to be done. They had tried to ignore the constitution, a motion was passed to bring impeachment proceedings against Peebles for violating the constitution. We set a trial for the next meeting, which he never showed up for, and they voted him out of the club.

Later on, having all the same officers, all the same purposes, it was almost ridiculous to hold two meetings. While some of the members belonged to both clubs, a few belonged only to the one and a few belonged only to the other. Ultimately, we decided that we would call it the Tri-County, or Tri-Dem Club, and we appointed Walter See to liquidate the records and whatnot of the old club, because there was no point to having two of them.

C: Now, by the "old club," you mean which club?

O: Well, what we called the Mahoning County Young Men's Democratic Club, because I had full control of both clubs. When I say full control, if I said, "I want you to vote this," there were enough guys there would have voted it on a secret ballot.

C: How old was the Mahoning County Club at this time?

O: Well, it really did not exist, except as a phony, because they had no constitution, no membership list, and it kid the public, see.

C: How long did this thing exist?

O: Well, I had been going to the meeting for years.

- C: So even before you started in politics it was there?
- O: Yes. It was only, as I said, a meeting: Unless you adopt a constitution, and have a definite membership, anybody can control it with a barrel of beer. And this idea of holding secret meetings to elect the officers, well you only notify the insiders.
- C: How big was its membership? Of course, it was not a real membership.
- O: There were times that ten or fifteen show up at a meeting. I suppose the biggest meeting we ever had was about twenty or thirty, until this happened, and then there were hundreds. Of course, one of the strategies I worked on, the old political machine was to deliberately understate my own strengths. I even had fellows on critical votes that were on my side, vote on the other side simply so they thought that if they could get a couple more members in, they could unseat me. For months we kept this joke up. Every time they got a new member, we would get another new member. We had the enemy helping us build the club.
- C: What was Shutrump doing all this time?
- O: He was getting every political jobholder in the county to get in and join that club and stop me.
- C: With all his power, with all his influence, all his money, he could not do it?
- O: Well, here is why he could not do it: we set up a membership committee that had to investigate each member. When we found we had a political jobholder, we made doggone sure there was at least two non-jobholders join every jobholder because the jobholders were sure of votes on the other side.
- C: Where would you go and get you people from?
- O: Well, all the neighborhood boys out in Boardman all around Woodworth here. I had quite a gang from Boardman. This Slovak fellow got a bunch of the fellows from his Slovak Sokol. There was a lot of Italian boys, there was a group from Johnny DeMart, Joe Parrish, John Barlett down in Campbell, Kovack. Virtually every big jobholder today was once, Tom Barrett, Gilmartin, all of them.
- C: How do you get guys that are not by nature politically active to come and join? To take time out to become involved?
- O: When you are hungry enough that you have gone without meals and you begin to wonder in a free country why such conditions exist, and there were fourteen million unemployed, it was not quite so hard. It seems to be human nature that when you are

hungry, you think better.

C: Say you were trying to do this ten years ago. Do you think you could have done the same thing?

O: No, I have even tried to get some of the very boys to take an interest in good government and to a man, it is "What is the use? It is hopeless." I do not buy defeatism, but it is widespread. We have two things going today: One, defeatism, you cannot beat them. It is not true, but they believe it. And second, that everybody is crooked and therefore it makes no difference.

C: So the real thing that you had going for you in the 1930's was that the people were really suffering?

O: Yes, I think that was a big factor, particularly, among the youth. Surprisingly, I could not stir any interest among the colored. I tried. We did not have one colored member.

C: Do you think conditions are getting bad enough right now for something similar to happen?

O: What I am afraid of, the human tendency to think black and white. It is posed somewhat this way: things are so corrupt that it is useless to try. Then we get a reaction of "throw the whole system out." I find so-called liberals are reluctant to support a reform in a minor scale because they ultimately hope for a whole Socialist system. I cannot get any enthusiasm for reform.

Another group, of course, when I go to the far extreme, I have not run into many of them but it is usually posed this way in other countries, you finally get up against a choice between corruption and Communism. I do not want either. Surely, an appeal to reason somewhere in between, if our history, and what we were taught as children to believe in, either from the standpoint of our basic Judaio-Christian ethnics, there ought to be a reform. Surely, we do not have to let the country be run by crooks, but you hear people say, "I do not want my son to grow up in politics."

C: That was just a hypothetical question. To get back, you said that you could not get help from the black community. What did you try to do to bring them into it?

O: Well, I would run into them, I would talk to them and try to persuade them. Of course, I knew I would have a problem with some of the bigots among the whites, especially when in those days, you think of a mixed social thing, you would have had a problem.

C: What ethnic group did you find giving you the most trouble when it came to bringing



- in the blacks? Was there certain ethnic groups or all of them?
- O: No, they had not been there and it really did not come up much. But several feelers I put out, I got nowhere. There was no interest whatsoever.
- C: Most of these were just personal contacts?
- O: Yes, it seemed that the colored either were afraid or reluctant to take part.
- C: Do you remember anybody who you talked to? Who were the leaders?
- O: Not back then.
- C: Or did you just grab people at random?
- O: Well, anybody that showed any interest. Sometimes I ran into colored committeemen. Down in the districts that were solid colored, you got a few colored committeemen. Over the years, I have tried to talk to some that it was important to them not to be used.
- C: Did they think you were going to use them?
- O: You see, I have always tried to get a system where the committeemen would have a voice in running the party, instead of being puppets who are told how to vote or else. As we get through this, you will find out that it is set up so tight that you cannot effectively even discuss any reforms. It never comes up.
- C: Even now?
- O: No, you might out in some women' settings somewhere or some off end of the party somewhere that is not official maybe be able to bring up, particularly if you are well-known. But you would not get any official action.
- C: When you were a committeeman sitting in on one of the meetings, did you remember anybody ever building up some type of reform measure?
- O: Rarely was anything discussed; however, I made official moves to try to get such reforms as we will come to it very quickly as these meetings developed. I led the floor fight. My first move was to get a secret ballot so that those that were bought and paid for, or who had political jobs, and I can remember back in the Depression men broke down and cried at meetings because they could not vote for what they believed in because they said, "My children will starve. I will be out of a job Monday morning."

C: And these are political jobholders?

O: Yes. I heard it so many times, I would not try to remember who, it had been so many years, but I saw men with tears in their eyes that knew it was morally wrong but did not dare vote the way they wanted to.

C: And this is under such men as Shutrump?

O: It had been that way for sometime. Now as I say, my contact with John Farrell, everything was honorable, above board; he kept his word. But I was too young to know then went on in the back, and from the other things that happened, it must have been somewhat that way, even back then.

Now I have been told this system was set up patterned after Tammany Hall. You know from your history what that was.

Well anyhow, let us go back to how this developed. Of course, at this meeting out at Ward's Hall where we installed the officers and it became clear that I had full control of my group, but on a Democratic base, under that constitution, whenever anything involving personalities or major policies, it was secret ballot. Things such as endorsement, where names are involved, secret ballot.

Now about the time that this happened, I finally got myself onto WPA (Works Progress Administration). I do not even recall how it happened, but I do remember that the Federal Government opened a State Federal Employment Office under the courthouse downtown. We were all to register for employment. Now there were no jobs available, but they were getting the people registered. Having a little foresight on most things, I figured there would be a lot of people. So I was not going to stand in line all day, I was going to get at the head of the line. So two o'clock in the morning I drove my car downtown and parked, a little sheepishly, as I went over to the thing because it seemed awfully early to be coming around. As I come around the courthouse and down into the basement, in the dark I could see that there were people on the steps. So, somebody else had the same idea. So I hotfooted over there thinking it was just at the top of the steps, I get in line, and they went around the corner of the building.

I went around and looked down there, went down and around the other corner of the building, I will bet there were three hundred guys ahead of me already at three o'clock in the morning. I stood in line all day without breakfast, dinner, and it was sometime late in the afternoon before I finally got to the registration desk, and God knows how many thousands were behind me, and where they had to come back day after day and make the same stab at it.

Then we had to go back every thirty days and re-register. I did that for months on end. You would fight four or six abreast of the thing to get in there and re-register and to this day, I have never had a call from it. But whether it was off of that list, or how I got on WPA, I do not remember. I was working out on the Sharrott Road project and we were digging a ditch. One of the days that I went down to the City Hall to re-register, because I did not want to work on WPA, I wanted a job, someone down there that must have recognized me because

I was then president of this club, come over and suggested to me that they needed timekeepers on WPA and would I be able to do the job. I said, "Certainly."

Well he said, "You report out there as timekeeper on that job." I do not know how the setup was, but this one was a little bit funny because I knew on a certain day, like Monday, I was to report as timekeeper, and I always did an honest day's work and a lot of the guys were ribbing me about it, that what I was working for was promotion. Of course, knowing I was going to be timekeeper on Monday, I was having a little fun with the boys, so I just worked twice as hard that day. Some great big colored fellow was working alongside of me and he was taking kind of the lead in razzing me about working for a promotion and I said, "Well, yes, do you not know this is America? That is how you get ahead."

So Monday when I come out as timekeeper and I came down along the ditch with the book, and they each had a number, I called out the number. This big colored fellow looked up at me, and he sees me up there with the timekeeper's book, he took his shovel and he threw it three hundred feet, I believe it went clear across the field. I will not say what he said. But I just pulled a joke on him, because I knew this was happening. But there was not any joke about what went on behind scenes.

First the foremen did not want me to, when I come out and report for work I put on a white shirt, just to egg the guys on, you know. He said, "Get a pick and shovel, I am your new timekeeper." But the orders had not come out yet, see. Well, he said, "Go on home." I just stood around. Pretty soon new orders come out and I was the timekeeper.

But then I was informed, now understand I do not get this direct, but I think it was the fellow that came to the County Relief Director, had my appointment papers as timekeeper locked on his desk, when I got the Young Men's Democratic Club to endorse him for an office that he was running for, he would send those over to Akron or Canton's main office and I would get my timekeeper's pay. To connect it with this, but not get ahead of the rest of the story, election day, covering the last of my precinct in the rain, and exhausted from working day and night and not having any meals, I got pneumonia. I nearly died from it. As a matter of fact, I did not have a telephone because I could not afford one, and I was too weak to go out. I was over the worst of it, though, when Senator Siedner knocked on the door to come over to find out where I disappeared to, because I had been sort of his first lieutenant in the campaign. I campaigned with him. The machine was trying to oust him and I was helping him and the Young Men's Club endorsed him. He got nominated too.

He had not seen me for a couple of weeks and he wondered what happened. He went in town and got his doctor and sent him out here to give me some medicine. But it left me so weak that I could hardly walk. I finally dragged myself back to the job and discovered that I had been transferred from timekeeper down to a stone quarry in Campbell to load stone. To this day, I have never collected my timekeeper's rate. But you will also find if you go back and look it up that one of the few offices we did not endorse on at all was the one that Furor ran for, because I was afraid with a secret ballot, he might get it in spite of anything I could do. Because I could only persuade, I do not know what they wrote; in a secret ballot you do not control it. You can persuade but you cannot control.

C: Then there was no vote at all taken on this?

O: No. I said to the boys, "Whatever you do, do not let that office come up because it will look like I got paid off." Fortunately, nobody was interested enough to force the issue. So that was one of the few offices we made no endorsement on. This goes on constantly and it is absolutely illegal, but proving it is another thing. Even if you could prove it, where you going to get any prosecution?

It seems to be the law that if you know of a crime and do not report it, they can nail you for not reporting it. Yet, in a situation where the racketeers and the prosecutor are in cahoots, it is a very dangerous game to call the prosecutor and mane racketeer. Now, you can only guess at these things, but there were times when it was beyond any reasonable man's guessing that was the situation. As we come to it later the grand jury thought so also.

Anyhow, as a side issue there, to get back to the campaign as it progressed, at the Ward meeting, we wanted to get those who were trying to support the pretense, that Peebles and his group had a right to call a meeting, to participate in the meeting. Because when few showed up down at the Ohio Hotel, they came out to our meeting to see what we were doing. Ricci, I think Ricci, and a couple of other fellows. As far as I know, everybody that went down there showed up at our meeting.

C: What club did they belong to now? What organization did they belong to?

O: Well, Peebles had been elected, by one vote, president of the organization. He tried to break the constitution immediately. He ignored the constitution. He was going to take it back under the auspices of the county chairman. He had no legal authority to. He was not installed yet.

C: But he was elected president of the Tri-Dem?

O: No, of the Young Men's Democratic Club.

C: The Mahoning County Young Men's Democratic Club?

O: Yes.

C: But I thought that was dissolved?

O: I think that we waited a couple meetings before we dissolved it, because there was no point to continuing it after we proved our point we were in full control. We had members from Columbiana and Trumbull Counties, and if we did it the other way it was awkward, so we called it the Tri-County, took the other into it, and dissolved it as an independent one county.

But anyhow, at that moment, they thought that they could just ignore the fact that we adopted a new constitution and they would take it right back under the auspices of the county chairman and from then on it would be a puppet organization. Well the boys were not about

to let that happen, because the whole point of our bucking was to get the independent right to make a decision. Now I wanted to keep in the group both sides of any factional group, like the Sawyer-Davey split that was coming up over governorship, so that I would not take any official side. Whenever anybody tried to say I was on one side, I plainly stated that we had not made the decision yet, and we would not until we studied the evidence. No matter what I thought we were going to do, we did not do it publicly. One time they even quoted me and put it in the Youngstown Vindicator that I had taken sides. Of course they never talked to me. So I went down to the Vindicator to deny it. Clingan Jackson was not there and I could not find another reporter. That was the first time I ever met Esther Hamilton. Of course, she was not political minded. She wanted to know on whose authority I was denying the statement. Why, I said, "You are quoting me! And falsely! And I deny I said that!" She says, "On whose authority?" I said, "On my own authority!"

The vindicator did let me get the truth in. While they did not really seem to take sides on it, in fact, they did not know what side I would be on, they did print what I said our side was. That is, they did not misrepresent it. Of course, in a situation like that I got it corrected. Then we wanted the other group to participate in our meeting to strengthen the authenticity it was the organization. So seeing these boys come in the hall, one of our boys quickly put up a motion to endorse Governor Davey. I was taking the position neutral. Of course, that was the strategy to make them vote. So they took a ballot and voted and they counted. It was something like eighteen to one against Davey. They did not realize what a blow they had given Davey until it came out in the papers headline: "Young Democrats Refuse to Endorse Davey Eighteen to One."

C: What did Shutrump say?

O: What could he say?

C: Well, it looks like his own boys are going out from under him.

O: Well they walked into Hamaker see.

C: Yes.

O: And still I was neutral. You see, we refused to endorse him. We had not decided who we were going to endorse.

C: How many of the Mahoning County. There was just a scattering. I remember a Thompson, and there were two or three fellows from up in Trumbull County and a couple from down in Columbiana.

C: But how many who were exclusively from the Mahoning County under Peebles?

O: Do you mean of the membership?

- C: That were there for that vote on the endorsement of Davey?
- O: Well, when you add this three of four to what we had, it was all of them. There were about twenty five there, I would say.
- C: And still the endorsement was not passed?
- O: It was voted down eighteen to one. That was the count on the secret ballot. One vote I think it was. Or was it thirty-six to two, because I think the meeting was bigger than that. They had more than one vote there.
- C: Then how come they did not endorse him?
- O: Well, you know, when a man votes secretly, he does not always vote the way he pretends to be, because his job may be at stake.
- C: Right.
- O: He may hate the guy that is making him vote that way. You give him a secret ballot and he votes the other way. I have seen it happen time after time, We got the nearest unanimous vote I have ever seen on a secret ballot, we had one blank ballot and it was solid for Sawyer when we took the final vote. But by that time a lot of fellows had fallen out that knew it was going overboard that way.
- C: But if that was an open ballot, you could almost guarantee that Davey would have gotten the endorsement?
- O: Well, by that time most of the jobholders had given up trying to take it away from us and were not even attending the meetings anymore. That was months later. See that dragged out through the whole campaign.
- C: What about Peebles? What did he have to say?
- O: Peebles never showed up again. He never even showed up for the hearing. So they voted that he had breached the constitution and he was never installed. So that was the end of that. Of course, later then to try to recover some of the damage, they organized a jobholders group that called themselves another Young Men's Club and then they disputed our right to the seats at the State Convention. We ended up down at Columbus with a split delegation, two groups.

Now where this ties into this is: When this thing got real hot, I was informed by the grapevine that Shutrump and, I think Vitullo, and I do not remember just who was supposed to be with them, but a carload of the, four of five guys, took off for Columbus to get Governor Davey to help out here. So, while I got this by rumor so that I did not know it to

be fact, when a few days later Governor Davey got on the radio and made a speech and pointedly said, that Mahoning Valley he the Valley of decision in this election we knew that he was giving them help.

Now, shortly thereafter, the State Convention of Young Men's Clubs, was held and I had the delegation from Mahoning County. While they had a group there too with Mick Ricci and whatnot, they had to give me the floor to speak. Now I had a situation where I guessed that most of the people in that Convention Hall from all over the state would be the jobholders. They would be ninety-nine percent for Governor Davey. This is what defeats democracy because when it is open, the votes are bought and paid for way in advance to the extent that they are not free men and trying to reason with it. If they are going to vote secretly you might appeal to their conscience.

But a man is not going to throw his job away and jeopardize his family just because of a principle. A few will, but there are not enough of them. Now, I had to make my point, and make it effectively, without being drowned out by boos. So what I did, I got up and said, "Now Governor Davey made his speech over radio the other night and I want to tell you that Governor Davey is absolutely right. He said that Mahoning Valley would be the Valley of decision in this election. He is absolutely right." I said, "I want every one of you to go home election night and tune in to Youngstown, Ohio and listen to the election returns. Those election returns will be something that Governor Davey will not like." And I sat down. It was too late, see.

Undoubtedly that had some effect psychologically in other parts of the state because it was not a solid united fund. Although he did carry eighty six counties. He lost Cuyahoga and Mahoning by sufficient margin to wipe out his lead in the eighty-sixth. Now, as I say I had pneumonia. I had spent practically all my savings. I was down in Campbell working in a stone quarry, too weak hardly to report for work. Fortunately, the foreman was a reasonable man and when I explained what had happened, why he let me have a job that I would have probably dropped over loading that stone on those trucks. But I probably earned my money ten times over because everybody thought I was a secret inspector down in the stone mason's shanty and the production went sky high. I was just keeping out of sight until I got my strength back and that went on for a couple weeks and then I picked up the water can and appointed myself water boy. Then after summer dragged on and I began to get my strength back, I was a blacksmith's helper. I earned my share but this was a consequence of the fact that I would not knuckle under, even on WPA which was supposed to be non-political.

You did not get much money there and I had spent all my savings practically on that plight and I had worked almost a whole year on it. So I had to somehow repair not only my own health, but my own finances. So I finally got a job out in Truscon for five or six months as a steel fabricator. I worked in almost every job in the department. Found out after they had a layoff and I left that they were planning to make me a foreman, but I did not know that. So the next day after the layoff I was electrician in the Sheet and Tube. I worked there six or eight months and then I got a job down at Isaly's as commission salesman on a truck, a milk route. They worked us up to eighteen hours a day, six days a week, and that kind of cramped my style and political activity. Not having any money, we had these meetings from

time to time, and the headquarters that we had at Eight East Commerce Street, and I have got to emphasize this more because you miss the picture, we got Sam Rigas, who was one of the three brothers involved in what they called the South Side Numbers Racket.

Now this was an open operation, public, the police knew it, everybody knew it, but no one was going to admit this. I even heard the prosecutor running for office make a speech in which he said, "The people of this town want to gamble and they always will gamble, and if I am elected I will not enforce the law."

C: Who was the prosecutor?

O: Ambrose. At least part of the time. I do not remember whether he was prosecutor there at first, but he held it for sometime and I think he held it when the grand jury said so. Where my memory might not be reliable the Vindicator will supply that because this became a matter of public record. But anyhow, during this time we had the headquarters there, this large hall and a couple of offices was up above a balcony that overlooked the pool hall that Rigas ran as a front where the runner's men come in with their bug numbers behind, just like the tellers of the bank.

At one time they opened a shooting gallery in there too. I do not know, it is a matter a little humorous aside, I told you about it once. One of the summer nights we come down early for a meeting. Because of the racketeer background of the situation, it is a little more significant. The guy that had the shooting gallery there had a sign up if you light a match you make a dollar and if you light two of them you get five dollars. Just to pass the time and we were a little early, I put a quarter down for a clip of ten and I did not anticipate anything but one of those changes in a million by accident, and it was pure accident, the first shot, I lit the match. And the second shot I lit another one.

The guy behind the counter, was reading a magazine, he came up off of his seat as thought somebody put a hot poker under him, he swore, and he said, "Where in the hell did you learn to shoot?" I did not know what possessed me to say it, I says, "Oh, up in Little Cicero, Chicago." If you know your history you know what that implied. Course, I had never been to Chicago. I do not know whatever possessed me to say it, while we are having this discussion, the two lit matches, the breeze in the double heat set off the third one. I laid down the gun and I left with the five dollars. Maybe that was why somebody did not tackle me. But so that I did not spoil what had been a miraculous accident, I was curious how hard that was. I went up to Geneva and other places where no one would see it, I do not know how many times I tried, and I never lit one. I came home once with ten of them and I nicked the tip of the match. All ten times, and not one of them lit.

I just had the feeling almost like the hand of the Lord, you know, because in that situation it might have been one of the reasons why some of those threats were not carried out. Things like this happen in life sometimes it makes you wonder. But that the police knew this was so obvious. In fact, uniformed policemen were in and out of there.

Now as we began to put pressure on and the campaign developed the only ones we endorsed generally, were the ones the machine did not endorse. If they endorsed a man, we were against him. It all feeds together. There was one exception. While it was unfortunate,



I can explain very well how it happened. One of the men that the machine endorsed was a Mr. Glass, from Campbell, who had changed his name. He had a different name before. We had a lot of the Italian boys from Campbell, and they voted for him on the secret ballot simply because he was from Campbell. Not experiencing it, he came out with the majority vote, so we had one endorsement that overlapped the machine. Surprisingly, I think he was the only one got elected, because we defeated practically every man the machine endorsed, right down the line.

C: What do you attribute this to?

O: I attributed it to the psychological campaign that we conducted.

C: Which was?

O: To wreck the machine if we could, and Davey with it.

C: Now how did you do it?

O: We bucked being a puppet of the county chairman. He tried to threaten us. He tried every device he could to stop us. Then he went to the governor for help and the governor, by the speech that followed, evidently gave him the help. Besides that, I knew from Seidner that there was corruption in the state administration that was extensive.

C: Right.

O: It originally started out because the corruption in this county was so extensive I could not get any law enforced.

C: Under these conditions now, where you have a blatantly corrupt administration, both statewide and locally, you had threats coming from Shutrump. For example, what were his threats at you personally, that were leveled at you?

O: His lackeys would threaten to kill me. I remember one, I could even give you the name but he has eight or ten children living here and they probably do not even know about it. It might have been his own idea but that would even make it worse. He got a political job because we had decided that he was unreliable. From the very beginning the other fellows did not want him and I insisted that he be given a post simply because we needed everybody. We could not afford to lose any. When it came to the final vote he was left out. Simply, none of the other fellows trusted him. Then he took this political job and he attended one of four, I think it was a stag party we had, and right in the center of the hall he tried to start a fight.

C: With you?

O: Yes. Of course, I had been warned that they would frame me one way or the other to discredit me publicly, so I took my hands and put them behind my back and took a firm grip on my wrists so that it was obvious to anyone that I did not strike him. He made threatening motions and a couple of, I remember I think it was Cliff Passmore come over and said, "should we throw him out?" They overheard it. I do not remember just specifically who was there but I have a vague recollection it was Cliff. I said, "No, let him have his say." Part of what he said was that if I did not quit bucking the machine that they would find my body in a county ditch with a bullet through my head. Because there were some fifty bombings that were never solved, you had to take those things with just a vague hint that it might be possible.

C: Did anybody in your organization ever get beat up, ever had physical harm done to them?

O: Not that I know of. We had rumors of planned situations like that. In fact, the night if the big meeting it came to me from good sources that if they did not have enough votes to beat me, they were going to cause a riot and then have the police come in and arrest me. We laid counter plans that if such a thing occurred and for that reason those boxers came down and it happened that the leader of them was myself.

End of Part 3