

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Shutdown of Youngstown Sheet and Tube

Newspaper Coverage

O.H. 194

CLINGAN JACKSON

Interviewed

by

Philip Bracy

on

November 6, 1981

CLINGAN JACKSON

Mr. Clingan Jackson, political editor of The Youngstown Vindicator, was born on March 28, 1907, in Coitsville, Ohio, the son of John and Sarah Jackson. He attended Lowellville High School and the University of Colorado, where he received his AB in Journalism in 1929. That same year Mr. Jackson was hired by The Youngstown Vindicator and has remained there for forty-eight years. At 70 years of age, he is currently the political editor of the newspaper.

As well as having taken a part in the local political scene, Mr. Jackson has served in the Ohio House of Representatives in 1935 and was elected to the Ohio State Senate from 1944 to 1950. He has served as a Pardon and Parole Commissioner from 1957 to 1959 and as Chairman of the Ohio Highway Council.

Organizations in which Mr. Jackson has been a member include the Downtown Kiwanis and the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. He is an active member of Coitsville Presbyterian Church.

Presently, Mr. Jackson lives with his wife, Thelma, whom he married in 1935, at their home at 350 Jacobs Road, Youngstown, Ohio. They have two children Mrs. Susan Jane Ehas and Mrs. Mary Ann Hall. Mr. Jackson's hobbies include reading and golf.

Silvia Pallotta

July 6, 1977

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Shutdown of Youngstown Sheet and Tube

INTERVIEWEE: CLINGAN JACKSON
INTERVIEWER: Philip Bracy
SUBJECT: Reactions of Local Politicians; CASTLO;
Mahoning Valley Economic Development
Committee; Reaction of Federal Government
DATE: November 6, 1981

B: This is Philip Bracy for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. I am interviewing Mr. Clingan Jackson today, Friday, November 6, 1981 concerning the Shutdown of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube and subsequent coverage thereafter.

All right Mr. Jackson, could you please tell us how you, personally, found out about the shutdown of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube?

J: I found out in the newspaper offices when the news broke.

B: Were you invited to the public meeting that they held at the company offices?

J: No.

B: So, was somebody else sent out to cover the event or was that not announced?

J: I can't remember exactly what transpired, but our news people were immediately on it. If we were invited, we undoubtedly were there by invitation; if not, we were trying to find out, trying to get in to see what went on.

B: Did the paper do anything in terms of staffing to beef up the coverage? Obviously, a major news story like that would require . . . or did they just pull people

off of other areas?

J: We have a man here who has covered steel business for fifty years and he was on it. And of course, all the staff members were aiding any area that they could.

B: So, you didn't actually have to add any staff as far as coverage? You just pulled them off other areas?

J: That's right.

B: Over the period of time following, let's say from September of 1977 when it actually broke to probably March of 1979, did you meet with public officials and get their opinions on how they saw things taking place and what was going on overall?

J: Yes. I attended a number of meetings at which those involved in politics at almost every level were expressing their concern and offering ideas of what should be done. What was very evident from the beginning was the tendency of elected officials to turn to the Federal Government for aid.

B: In those early days when it first broke, do you think there was any kind of understanding of where they should go, what direction, or do you think they were trying to deal very quickly with a very bad situation?

B: Of course, it went both ways, but most knowledgeable people in the Mahoning Valley have, for years, realized that diversification of industry here was essential and the attraction of different businesses. Youngstown was a merchant steel producer, that is, the area didn't consume the steel it produced and it was in the merchandising business of steel. Ever since the decision eliminating the Pittsburgh plans regulations on railroad charges, Youngstown has had tough going. All through the years, there has been effort for a waterway. The effort for the Lake Erie-Ohio River Waterway was predicated as much on fear as anything else, because heavy steel production was moving to other centers. Youngstown area in the iron business in the last part of the 19th Century certainly rivaled Pittsburgh as the American center. With the building of the Indiana Harbor Works by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube, there was a realization there that transportation charges and everything else was militating against the Youngstown District in its advancement as an iron and steel center.

- B: In the time following the shutdown, you conferred with the mayors and commissioners? In other words, who were your rounds, if you want to call it that? (Laughter)
- J: Basically, my job here has been politics, and it has had to do with--so far as it affected the shutdown--it had to do with talking to officials in relation, principally, for getting the Carter Administration to do something to help here... I went to Washington and I went to the White House, conferred with people there as the Ecumenical Coalition was seeking to get some action. They [the White House people] told us then pretty much the same story as the final report a year or so later shows.
- B: Do you recall the date of that meeting that you went to Washington?
- J: No, but it's in our files.
- B: But what you're saying though, they released the report in, I believe, March or April of 1979, so that would have been approximately the fall of 1978?
- J: Approximately the fall of 1978.
- B: Do you think that the problem that was caused because of the shutdown was a lack of vision of former mayors and political officials? In other words, the thing happened and then everybody was trying to figure out what to do.
- J: No, I don't think so. The public officials had little to do with it.
- B: I think your own paper published it two weeks ago, the fact there had been at least five plans released prior to the shutdown itself urging diversification. You don't see that there was nothing that the political parties or the political system could have done to respond?
- J: The political system, for example, responded very heavily to support efforts for the waterway at many canal and waterway hearings. The failure was not local political failure in that regard. I remember the final hearing on the waterway proposal in Washington before the U.S. Army Board of Engineers--I was the moderator. I went to Washington with this group; there must have been 40 representing almost every political subdivision in this area as well as some others. And they stated the case for the waterway before the nine-member U.S. Board

of Army Engineers. There was no question then, but there was failure in the backing of it. I was thrown into the job about two or three weeks before it took place because one of the major industries had pulled out making it impossible for the people that had worked on it to perform. So, the political end of it worked much more effectively than did the actual business interests that had involvement here. The Youngstown Sheet and Tube, however, supported it all the way.

B: Do you think that Congressman Carney performed effectively during the crisis?

J: Yes, I think he did. I think he tried to do the things that could be done. His activity came after the waterway plan was virtually buried. He reacted on the outlook of steel mill employment.

B: He organized the meeting of what was later to become MVEDC [Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee] about the end of that first week. There was a meeting at Higbee's Auditorium and I believe there were approximately 150 to 200 people present. Did you cover that event by any chance?

J: I believe I did. I believe I was there; I don't know that I covered it. Carney tried to get as much action as he could. Operating on his knowledge, he moved as effectively as he could, I think.

B: What are your recollections from that meeting?

J: You gather a group together and the Congressman--sometimes he had somebody from Washington with him--attempted to explain the possibilities of what could be done by the general local support or understanding of it.

B: Was there any real conflict?

J: My memory of it is pretty vague. I go to a lot of meetings.

B: I'm just wondering about the general impression. Early on, was there any problem between the Coalition's goals and the Youngstown Area Task Force, which later became MVEDC, Congressman Carney's group? Do you recall whether there were any problems between the two groups?

J: I think the problem always was between what might be called visionaries and those who maybe had more technical knowledge and understood what was possible and they never seemed to completely get together on what could be done. There was a good many people who seemed

to think that somehow or other you should get immediately an operation that would employ 15,000 or 20,000 people and make a profit, with government financing or somehow. Now, the government money talked about, largely was in the shape of guaranteed loans. Now, when you talked to officials in Washington, they told you just exactly what they told me in the White House, just exactly what that meant. They would go just a little bit further in risk on a venture than a private lender would. In other words, their own records showed that they didn't want any great loss, if you know what I mean, so that there had to be a pretty well established profit motive for any development that could come. I think they set up \$100,000,000 or whatever it was. So, you had to come up with something that almost would meet requirements for awhile for them. Now, if you come up with a project that was almost in reach, then they might go the additional way.

The other thing is the money requirements. If you build a new steel plant or something, no one seemed to have an idea of what they were talking about in an economic context. Quite often, the government talked about \$80,000 or \$100,000 donation for every job, and that didn't make economic sense from the beginning.

B: I don't know if you attended the meeting; there was a meeting at the White House where the Beetle Report was reported to President Carter and some of his top officials. Congressman Carney and Bill Sullivan, I guess, from WREDA [Western Reserve Economic Development Agency] and his office--since they helped fund the Beetle Report--were there, and Jack Hunter, who was still mayor. I suppose I should ask you, do you recall attending that meeting?

J: No, I didn't.

B: The impression that one gets sometimes, reading the stories that took place at the time, was that perhaps because of the dichotomy . . . They seemed to be jockeying for position between the Republicans and Democrats as far as trying to get a hold of funding. And there seemed to be a fight on the Federal level between EDA and Commerce. Is that the perception that you had from talking to some of the officials in Washington?

J: My impression that I received in the White House was that the Youngstown District, in its approach to Washington, did not speak sufficiently with one voice. At the White House, they pointed out Detroit, for example, was speaking pretty much with one voice. And it wasn't

one voice from this District. There was, as might be expected, usual effort by different individuals and they became engrossed with their own objectives and sometimes failed to take an overall look and work along the line of most possibilities. They didn't work along the line of most possibilities and undoubtedly, we lost some possibilities that had a chance because of that. They did not want to sacrifice a major, I'll say, dream--it wasn't a dream actually--for something that was less, but obtainable. And in that process, we probably, in a period, muffed some opportunities, not major, but could have been accumulatively advantageous.

B: Probably perhaps started a little sooner? I mean, as far as getting funding into the area?

J: No, I think basically, it was a disposition when you're going after things to not lose sight of the major purpose. And in not losing sight of the major purpose, which was not obtainable, they sacrificed some that probably were.

I know some specific instances of that, but I'd rather not get into it.

B: Is it because of embarrassment to participants?

J: The people involved in this were, for the most part, working conscientiously and trying to do things. And they had to make judgments. At best, some of the judgments would be wrong. I think a fair criticism, maybe we had too many of them wrong. The Ecumenical Coalition's efforts cost a lot of money. That money would have started a small business employing a few people at least.

B: That's for sure.

What I'd like to do now with you is just go through some of the elected offices and see how you think they responded to it and what they really could have done. People always criticize government officials, but they don't really know the scope of government.

J: Elected officials usually respond on the basis of what they ought to do. And in that regard, they functioned pretty effectively. They tried to do what they ought to do.

B: For instance, the Mayors of the City of Youngstown, both Jack Hunter and Phillip Richley, do you think, given their limited governmental abilities, was there much

more they really could do other than just participate in something like MVEDC?

J: No, no there wasn't.

B: What about county commissioners? Was there anything they could have, perhaps, done differently?

J: I suspect that there was less than perfection in the process of obtaining government aid in various directions in the performance of the city and the county. On the other hand, given the knowhow and the facilities with which they had to operate, the leaders, I think, did just about all that could be done.

B: What about the State Senators and the State House of Representatives persons, do you think there was anything they could have done, perhaps, on the State level?

J: I think they did quite well. They worked with CASTLO [Campbell, Struthers, and Lowellville] for example, which worked effectively for the Mahoning Valley and they worked with the other agencies also.

B: That leads right into my next question. The impact of the shutdown of the Sheet and Tube really, economically, would have seemed to have more affected the communities that formed CASTLO--Campbell, Struthers and Lowellville.

J: It hit Struthers and Campbell worse in tax duplicate and every other way. Now, the Governor of Ohio responded very immediately. He came to Struthers; he met with the officials there; he told them what he would do and he did it. And CASTLO certainly must applaud his efforts as well as the legislators from this district who happened to be of an opposite party from the Governor. And there wasn't any indication of partisan differences hurting at all in the process.

B: The criticism is sometimes leveled that the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee and its predecessor, that too many dollars were focusing on Youngstown where the impact wasn't the heaviest--and that's part of the last question--and was not really directed at the CASTLO Community. Would you say that's a fair criticism and how else would MVEDC have responded to their particular needs? They did eventually become part of MVEDC, but initially, as you mentioned, it was part of the Governor's effort to bring them in. I believe he assigned a staff person to help CASTLO in their inception in the beginning.

J: He did, that's right.

B: Do you feel that the criticism that the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee should have focused its attention on directing a heavy percentage of the aid into the Campbell, Struthers, Lowellville area with heavy emphasis on Campbell and Struthers rather than using Youngstown?

J: Youngstown was a focal point, but the steel mills, with the exception of Briar Hill and the Ohio Works, weren't located in the city anyway, but it does have an effect on the Youngstown economy nevertheless, so that it was natural to focus on the biggest center. The Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee, I think, always worked in reasonable cooperation with CASTLO. CASTLO was a more realistic approach than most of the others particularly at the beginning. I think MVEDC is functioning very efficiently now.

B: Immediately following the shutdown, there also was a lot of discussion about the possibility of a Japanese firm trying to purchase the properties of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube. Were you involved in any of the reporting events?

J: In this whole process, there has been a proliferation of news releases and stories that were not very much related to reality. A lot of the Japanese stories developed from the fact some Japanese had been here looking things over.

B: Prior to the announcement?

J: Yes.

B: Now, the reason I asked that was that when I interviewed Mayor Hunter, he mentioned Boshi, USA, which was a parent company for, I guess it's Nippon Steel, one of the Japanese Steel Companies. And there seemed to be interest in actually purchasing the facilities. Part of his implication was that because he was a Republican mayor-- he was an outgoing mayor at that--and because of William Sullivan who was a Republican, that their invitation . . . What had taken place was, they had been invited, evidently, to go to Japan to discuss the possibility of finding out what the feasibility was of purchasing Youngstown Sheet and Tube and doing something with it as far as producing steel. So, what you seem to be saying is that that was just talk?

J: I don't have the full information on that. I had the feeling that there was a great deal in this whole process of "try anything." And when you try anything, you're often chasing the end of the rainbow, if you know what

I mean.

- B: I'd like to get your reaction to two proposals that developed. One was the Coalition's proposal, a modified, I believe, employee stock-ownership program. Did you really think that that particular proposal had any merit or had any chance, I mean, prior to your meeting in Washington? The community ownership concept that was put forward by Gar Alpervitz's . . .
- J: No, I thought, from the first, it was a fake. Maybe it wasn't a fake; I'm not saying it was a fake, but if you're examining my basic thinking, I had no confidence in Alpervitz from the start. They're consultants. I'm always fearful of consultants being interested in consultant fees rather than production. All history shows, the nearer the planner is to the actual effecting of something, the more likely it is real.
- B: What was your reaction to the proposal put forth by Mayor Richley and the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee regarding a possible steel research center? Do you think it was needed and do you think it was possible?
- J: I think it was worth an exploration at that time.
- B: Then you think it was a genuine proposal that might have led to something?
- J: Yes, it was a genuine proposal, now, it probably was found unfeasible. But to investigate something and work on something, you don't know until that happens whether it's worthwhile.
- B: Do you think that the Mahoning Valley economic Development Committee served a good purpose? Has it helped or could the functions of that organization be transferred to somebody else? In other words, were they creating another bureaucracy or could there have been possibly another . . . ?
- J: Too many organizations and not enough coordination in this whole thing. Now, Mr. Laird Eckman has done very effective work, I think. Sometimes it seemed to me-- and I've been further from this than some of them have that worked with these individual agencies more than I have--there has been too great a multitude of voices from the Mahoning Valley always. And what you needed, basically, was some, one filtering boss; it could be different agencies, but there had to be one boss, one central group to coordinate and we didn't have it.

We simply did not have anyone here that stepped forward and became the dynamic leader. Politicians, office-holders have a tendency to magnify themselves, that's what it's all about when you're in politics. It isn't always what you do, it's what you seem to do sometimes and we've had too much seeming in this whole process.

B: So, in one respect then, the Committee, even though there was no real leader out of that group, did it then serve a kind of collective leadership do you think? Did it serve that positive role?

J: Oh yes, they tried to get together and they made some contributions. Sure, all of them did, the Ecumenical Coalition did. But all of it seemed to be kind of a frustrating search for dynamic leadership that never quite succeeded.

B: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that I probably should have asked you that you really think was important at the time?

J: I think what should be part of the record is that the whole period, in my judgment, revealed it is time for Warren and Youngstown to begin to think as one. And that has never occurred. The historic differences between the two areas in the Valley have often deterred from advancement of the whole. Now, it goes way back to the original Federalists settled in Warren; Democrats from Connecticut settled in Youngstown--originally. Then part of Trumbull County was sheared off when Mahoning County was created fifty years later. There was a rivalry all the way back and quite often in affairs of the Mahoning Valley, there was no one to speak up for the whole Valley district. And from an economic viewpoint, it is one district. Now, I'm not sure that it isn't closer to real cooperation now than it has ever been, but it's still a shortcoming. The multiplication of political subdivisions in the Mahoning Valley is a monstrosity. The fact that it's true elsewhere in the State in extent also, doesn't change that fact. We've never been able to pull the weight of a half million or more metropolitan district in our endeavors, the reason being that Youngstown is a small central city to this district and yet it's still the largest.

B: I'd like to thank you for taking the time this morning Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW