Mr. O.: Immediately afterward, as I just told, in this succeeding legislative session, they adopted the Shipstead-Nolan bill for the state, which doubly assured our official protection against Mr. Backus' program. It would make it extremely difficult for him to get this authorization out of the whole Congress or the whole state of Minnesota. He'd have to have the agreement of the legislature. The legislature had to act. So we were doubly strengthened, and the program that we thought ought to be applied to lands of that sort had been made officially the program of both the state and the federal government, so far as you could make it.

Backus had made the plea before Congress, when he seemed to be losing, that this was nothing but a conspiracy against him by very wealthy interests that wanted to see him put out of business. He didn't name any of them, but he said his business enemies were back of all this and that if they could investigated, they would find out in time that this entire movement was simply a thing that had been turned up by his business enemies who were eager to bankrupt him if they could.

Of course it was really an absurd thing to think that this entire movement of ours, with all the people associated with it, could have been fostered by business enemies. But he made a lot of that. He told very forlorn, heartfelt stories in Congress about these attempts to block his progress in these great public works for the benefit of the people of the region. I don't know, I don't think too many people believed it. I don't know how much sympathy he got. There isn't any question in my mind that he had vast numbers of enemies who were
anxious to see his downfall, but none of them had anything to do with us. They never contributed a penny that I know of to anything we did. I know who some of them were. Of course the Shevlins were very much opposed. They never did one single thing for us.

MR. F.: The Shevlins opposed the bill?

MR. O.: No, they didn't oppose the bill. They just opposed Mr. Backus.

MR. F.: Were they in favor of the bill?

MR. O.: Well, not that we know of. They didn't come out openly in any way. The Weyerhaeusers opposed it finally, but not very openly. This was on account of Minnesota Power and Light. They also were afraid they might be shut out from handing over these lands that they'd cut over, that really were of no value, that would ordinarily have gone back to the state for taxes. They found a new use for them. They could turn them over to the Minnesota Power and Light and get stock for them and a dividend on the stock. That's what they'd been doing. Under our bill they couldn't do that, because the lands were worthless to the Minnesota Power and Light Company if they couldn't flood them, if they couldn't raise the levels and get more storage. Our bill was going to prevent that. It was exactly what it was for.

Now you've asked me how this was associated with the final financial downfall of Mr. Backus. I think that's what you had in mind. We knew that the bottom was dropping out of the paper business, after October, 1929, especially. The prices just dropped way, way down on paper products, way down, some unbelievable amount. And here was Backus. For a period already of at least three or four years, he
had been doing almost nothing but fight this public movement. He'd organized all these other things. He'd bought outdoor magazines. He sent a man around in a plane. He organized the Outers Club. He built the Nanibijou Club and presented memberships in it to all kinds of people he thought could help him -- judges, industrialists, and everybody else. He spent an awful lot of money. More than that, he used up his energies and his time at a most critical time in the financial history of the country; and suddenly he was caught with the market dropping clear out of sight for paper products, no sale at all. They reached the point where they even had to close the mill.

Meantime, in 1926 he had gone up here on the Seine River, on the Canadian side, and without any complete official authority, he had somehow, through agreements with the premier of Ontario, I guess, he had borrowed thirty million dollars (that's what I understood was the amount) to develop three power sites on the Seine River which averaged one hundred feet high each. It is a tremendous river with vast resources of that sort.

The first I knew of it was in the autumn of 1926 when I was coming down the Seine River with a canoe party. I had been up through the Quetico and was coming down. And here these beautiful places were all being measured by groups of men, and I didn't know what for. But it turned out that this was a great big project which involved flooding many square miles of the finest pineland there was north of Atikokan. After it happened we took Stafford King up there. He wasn't yet in government, but he was with the American Legion. We took Dr. Cooper
Botany Department of the University, the botany man. I don't think you ever knew him. He's been gone quite a while. But he took the photographs. We went up there in the autumn and Fred Winston went along. We went all over that basin that had been flooded and took flood pictures, which were one of the big contributions to our work. Fred paid for those. They were shown all over Minneapolis and St. Paul, and all over the state. They were black and white pictures taken by Dr. Cooper. They showed the flood -- as much as trees standing sixty feet deep in water. Staff King climbed one of those and measured it. We have a picture of him up there climbing the tree. He got out of the boat and went up there.

I suppose when I say Backus didn't have full authority, I couldn't prove it. But from all I have heard and the things that had to be done afterward to regularize the thing, and from the way he had, up to that time, taken similar things on our side without what seemed to us full authority, we think that's what happened there. He borrowed, of course, but how he could borrow money on some of those things when they were so speculative apparently timely is a question. But he was supposed to have borrowed thirty million dollars, I believe. He developed these power sites, and they were just done about the time that the panic came on. When the people in Fort Frances discovered that this power was to be exported from the Fort to International Falls for use over on our side and that there was not to be any additional industry over in the Fort and that they had wasted this beautiful pineland for miles and miles and miles (I don't know how much pine was destroyed there), and that their interests were ignored entirely just at a time when they needed help most, when
the panic came on, they put up a protest to Toronto and succeeded in preventing him from exporting the power for some use on this side. The result was that here he had this new power and all this interest to pay on the bonds and no use for it whatever. And his own mill had closed on this side. I forget how long that was, but it was closed for some time. No business. The market had dropped out, and here he was faced with this very grave situation that required his full attention. The Shipstead-Nolan Bill was soon to be passed, you see, right in the midst of this thing. It was an extra blow to him and to his additional projects. It would make it difficult to borrow money if he was hoping to borrow money on that prospect. Then he went around everywhere telling people (I think he addressed some business organizations in the East, too) that this was a plot of his business enemies. He told Congress that. So then his prospects dwindled of getting the necessary permission from the Joint Commission for this larger project up here. There was this Shipstead-Nolan bill both in Congress and in Minnesota. That was pretty hard. And after those passed, he couldn't go around thumping into all kinds of debates because there wasn't anything to debate about any more, like the Shipstead-Nolan Bill.

So then what did he do? It seems from what I've heard (but that would have to be verified too) that he saw he was in a dangerous position up here. He had many enemies who wanted to sue him, but they were all afraid to. While this was his own private company, there were enough stockholders so that he couldn't just take money out of the till and spend it freely. I wouldn't have thought so. But he took certain portions of the business that were sure to be profitable. For instance,
he set up an agency for purchasing pulpwood from Canada, but in order
to bring it over on this side, the company had to pay. This agency was
entirely owned by him and he was milking his own company. He didn't
have full control of his own company, so he charged it a dollar for
every cord of wood that came from Canada. In order to meet this require­
ment, it had to be brought across the bridge from Canada and delivered to
a place called Ranier Junction, down nearer the mill. So, whether the
business was good or poor, he was getting this dollar a cord for every
cord of wood that they used. That was his own. Well, then I think
the bridge from Fort Frances to Ranier was just the same kind of a thing.
There were a number of things like that, but I'm not sure about the
bridge.

When he finally crashed because he couldn't pay the interest on
Canadian bonds and he had to go into bankruptcy, a number of curious things
happened. That's when Faegre came in. Here they were taking over the
whole mill, trying to see what they could do with this wreckage. And
here was Backus on the outside. Well, you can imagine what that must
have meant to a man of his particular character and disposition. It
must have been most tragic, an overwhelming situation -- a man who had
everything his own way, just overrode everybody, and then suddenly
found himself bereft of all this property that he'd built up through
the years, by his own genius and force. No one knows for sure how he
died. He died very suddenly in his apartment in New York one night.
They found him dead in the morning.

MR. F.: When? What year?
MR. O.: Well, I don't know. I would think it was about 1933. We could easily check on that. I heard of it suddenly. Somebody telephoned me, I guess. Two or three telephoned me -- joyously. It didn't affect me that way at all. I really felt the other way. Of course, I said jokingly to people, "Well, now we have lost our very best friend, because we haven't got anything to talk about now. He'd stick his head out where we could hit him, and the rest of these people don't do that. They're very cautious. So we haven't got anything to fight about. But, I don't want anybody to think I'm so inhumane that I don't appreciate his state of mind." What an awful thing that was, you see. It was just enough to kill anybody.

MR. F.: Did you ever see him during this period?

MR. O.: No, but I heard him in Congress, arguing that this was all the work of his enemies, but that was before he'd gone bankrupt. Anyway, I have heard quite a number of people connected with the mill who have expressed doubt whether he died naturally or committed suicide. It wouldn't surprise me if he did commit suicide. But the sequel of it was rather strange, and that I only get second-hand from a lot of the people in the mill and some of the lawyers, so I don't know for sure.

But the receivers took over, and here they were all new to the whole thing. Faegre was in it. And there were new men up here. They tried to make friends with everybody. Immediately they approached us and said all kinds of nice things. They said, "Now it's going to be different. If there's something you don't like, you let us know and we'll see what we can do." There was one man who was going to be in charge of timber. I forget who he was. Faegre was the lawyer, and he
was pretty tough and continued to be right straight along. He was a hard man at hearings and all, and he'd always uphold these ideas that Backus had about more water power, more storage, and all that type of thing. And he would insist that everything about their past was legal. Well, we didn't think so. We didn't think they could produce the papers to prove it, and I don't think so yet. There were many of these authorizations that seemed to me very wishy-washy, and some of the things they never produced when they were asked to produce them by the International Joint Commission, and the International Joint Commission would never have seen them, I guess, if we hadn't produced them.

When they wrote me and said they'd asked three times for documents and hadn't got them, I sent them a copy that we had. One thing that I thought was very important - a contract that Backus had signed with Taft, who was Secretary of War under Teddy Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt had vetoed the first bill in a message that has been the foundation of all the water-power policies that we have. It was a very wonderful message, a very wonderful one. And he vetoed it because they were giving this boundary concession to Backus with no conditions whatever. He said that was wrong, that water power was a public asset not to be given away; that it should be kept in public hands; that if it went out as a lease, there should be a charge for the use of it; and that in its development there should be strict provisions for locks, fishways, levels, and a lot of things like that. It was all very reasonable, sensible, and fine. And that's the cornerstone of whatever water-power policy we have at the present time. He vetoed the bill, and so Backus, then, through his Republican
national committeeman, and through the members of the Congress put in a plea urging that he shouldn't be penalized, that he'd spent over a million dollars on the project, thought that he was surely going to be able to go through with it, and that he didn't want to be a victim of a passing plan to develop a policy that they'd never had before. He went then to Taft and said that he was perfectly willing to accept any conditions that Congress might ever impose in the future, but he'd already spent a million dollars. If they wanted locks and such things, then let him know at the proper time and he would go ahead.

Well, then Roosevelt was persuaded to lift his veto, and the act enabling him to build this dam down here went through in about 1908. They were building it in 1909 when I came here. Backus then went ahead to get the authorization by approaching Secretary Taft and agreed that he would do that. He signed this agreement with Taft, and Roosevelt lifted the prohibition and the act went through.

But when our project came up, I had become aware of that and had a copy of it. So when we were opposing Backus' new program in Washington on the score of the Shipstead-Nolan bill, we said that apparently some of Mr. Backus' authorizations had been in doubt. We pointed out that this wonderful message from Roosevelt had been the reason for Roosevelt's vetoing the bill and that the veto had only been lifted because of an agreement that Backus had signed with Secretary Taft. And Backus jumped up and said that was not true -- not true at all. There was no question about his authority. And so I said, "Well, I have here though an agreement that Mr. Backus did sign, on such-and-such a date, with Secretary
of War Taft, on the strength of which Roosevelt said he was lifting the veto." And I asked if I might read that, and I read it. Backus was standing up, and his hand was going just like that. "Huh," he said, "just a scrap of paper." That was the way he characterized that.

Well, that was one of the things that later the Joint Commission couldn't find. They'd asked for that. And they said they'd have to look for it; they couldn't find it. Faegre said they couldn't find these papers. And so then finally Mr. Burpee, the secretary on the Canadian side, said they'd never been able to find that. "Ober, do you think there's any way we could get hold of it?" "Why, yes," I said. So I sent him a copy of it. And Mr. Faegre's own lawyers couldn't find it, either.

They told all kinds of remarkable stories. How true those are, I don't know. But when they began to examine the titles and everything else, they found that in the first place Mr. Backus had taken out a large sum of money in cash (some said three million dollars) just before the bankruptcy, and he had done that supposedly because it was his company. But he didn't own it outright. There were others that owned stock in it, and so, if it's true, he could have been sent to the penitentiary for embezzling.

They said he took this sum out when he saw the hopeless situation, and they discovered after the receivers got in what had happened. So then they threatened him with legal action. Then he said, "Well, it's all right -- it's my company. Why shouldn't I do it?" And he said, "Besides you're not paying me rent." "Rent?" "Why sure, you're not paying me rent. I own the land that all these buildings are on, and you didn't get that in your bankruptcy proceedings. That's separate."

It sounds fantastic that that could be so, but still he was a very capable
and resourceful fellow, and he could make trouble too. So that was supposed to
be the situation when he died. I was told that they then went to Seymour, the son,
and they said, "Now we must get this title cleared, and you are going to be in a
peck of trouble if you don't come around and fix this up, and your father owes all
this money." "Yes," he said, "and he owns the land, too. He has the title to the
land and that never went through the bankruptcy. If you want to buy the land,
it's all right." Well, I understand the way they fixed that up was that they for-
gave the three million dollars, and Seymour signed over the land. You might have
a chance someday to ask some of their lawyers. Faegre would know. I don't know
whether he'd tell you all that or not.

But that kind of thing was quite common in Mr. Backus' administration. But
then he was cleaned out. Of course, he wasn't a poor man, I'm convinced of that.
His family were very well-to-do. His wife was probably a wealthy woman. But he
wasn't a hundred million dollar man any more. He might have had a million. He
might have had five hundred thousand. I don't know anything about that. His
wife, I know, lived right on the top in Los Angeles. She got to be quite an old
lady.

Mr. F.: Shall we go into the governors now? Will you just go over what you've
already told us when we didn't have the tape recorder on about Governor Christian-
son's reaction to your program, and then Governor Olson? And the conservation
Commission?

Mr. Q.: Yes, what I said last night. Of course, a lot of those governors I never
knew well, especially those in the early days. My contact with them was small,
and it was never my interest or desire to deal with those men first-hand if I
didn't have to, you see, because I wasn't that sort of a person. I wasn't a
politician. I couldn't go and speak to them from a political angle. The only
thing is that while I didn't like it, it made me a little bolder when I did go.
I never hesitated to speak very frankly and lay the cards right on the table, so
there wasn't any question about what we meant. Christianson had shifted in the course of this request for a resolution from the legislature, and in the course of the work for the Shipstead-Nolan bill. He finally called me and promised all the help he could give us.

MR. F.: Originally he opposed it?

MR. O.: Oh, yes. Well, of course, we might have misinterpreted it. But after it began to swing -- Now I don't know. I don't want to say that to indicate that he was just playing politics with the thing, but the general impression we got was that he'd been influenced by the public response, because it was overwhelming. And that was largely the work of Hubachek and his group in getting out all this publicity, all these things they sent out; also this campaign by the Journal.

Well, there was an awful lot of publicity. I don't think there's ever been in my time up here, perhaps, any issue that got so hot and so widely known as this did at the time. It was all over the state. The other papers copied what the Journal said, and we had material flying all over the state to the libraries and everything else. If we couldn't send it out by the Council, Hubachek's office was sending it out or somebody else was getting it out. The more Backus tried to break up our plans, the more we prospered, because he'd have his engineers, like Mr. Meyer, get into controversy with us.

Meyer was a very controversial type of man, and he'd go around taking the stump against you, you see, and you'd have to answer him. And here he was, highly admired as an engineer. But pretty soon he had got tangled up in a whole lot of situations where he said one thing one time, and he'd said an opposite thing at another time, according to
What he had to prove, you see. And you were able to quote him right out of the record.

And when I did that one time he threatened me with suit. Oh, he was really violent. He called me up over the telephone one morning early and said, "Have you written your apology?" "No, Mr. Meyer, I didn't know I had any. I'd be delighted to apologize to you if I knew I'd done you any wrong, but didn't I quote you exactly and correctly out of the record?" "That remains for the courts to determine." And, bang, went the telephone. And our people were scared to death. We had about three hundred dollars in the bank. We took it all out and hid it for fear it was going to be locked up by the courts until there was a decision, you see. But he never did a thing in the end.

But all that got a lot of attention in the papers. He had made a statement about the outlet of the lake around here, about where the outlet was. And he criticized me for something I had said about the outlet. Well, the real outlet of the lake is at Ranier. Then you get into the river. And then the outlet into the dam in the river (if you want to call that an outlet). But in every case he'd made that differentiation -- in all his reports. And I mean in his government reports. Then when I'd criticize something he said about the outlet (because he wanted to prove that what I'd said was incorrect) I was able to show that while he'd mentioned the outlet at one place as being at Ranier, that another time when they were having a lawsuit about the damages, it was at the dam, you see. And I was able to quote the cases and everything else. And I was absolutely correct.

So I said in my little reply to him that it appeared that they
had two sets of figures, according to what they wanted to prove, who
was suing or whatever it was, you see. And then he was very deeply
enraged. Of course, that reflected on his character, and it did hurt
like everything. Well, it went all over the state, in state papers,
in Duluth and everywhere else. I heard of it. And it hurt him. It
contributed in the end to our getting the endorsement of the Engineers'
Society of Minnesota for our bill. He spoke before them and everything
else, and so did we. His own society, and they went over to us.

Now we're talking of the governors, and Christianson was the
first one I remember. I do remember Preus' name. I don't know what he
did for us, but I don't think he was for us. Then Christianson shifted.
I have already explained that during the campaign he had shown an
increasing interest in our program and had accepted the action of the
legislature in memorializing Congress in behalf of the Shipstead-Nolan
act, and that he had done so out of his own convictions too. Well,
then there followed this long campaign which I think we've already
discussed -- the history of the Shipstead-Nolan Bill up to its passage
in July, 1930, the very last day of the session of Congress -- Shipstead-
Newton-Nolan bill it was often called because Newton was the original
sponsor in the House, under Hoover.

Then, on my return to Minneapolis, Governor Christianson was
good enough to invite me to come over and see him. I think it was in
the autumn, because it must have been after election time. But Governor
Christianson had suffered defeat in the election, and he said to me
that he felt that was due to his having expressed himself in favor of
our program and the Shipstead-Nolan act. He said that he had no regrets in doing so, that he was glad he'd been able to share in our victory, but that he did feel that he was leaving the governorship for that reason. I don't know whether I pretty well expressed what happened, but that was the gist of our conversation, and that was the last time I've ever seen Governor Christianson.

MR. F.: Would you tell us about your visits with Governor Floyd B. Olson?

MR. O.: Oh, yes.

MR. F.: And his reactions to this program.

MR. O.: Of course, the one who knew Governor Olson previous to his election was Fred Winston. I suppose many of our other people knew him, too, but I didn't. I had never met Governor Olson, and I didn't meet him immediately afterward and I didn't indulge in any congratulations, because I wasn't in the habit of doing that when people were elected. They might misjudge the purpose. I didn't then know enough about Olson, though I liked his general approach to the governorship. But I didn't feel that I was well enough acquainted with him or knew him well enough to send him any message. It wasn't until later that when in conversation with Fred Winston I was assured of his genuine quality, whatever you might think of his views. Fred said: "He's a straight-shooter. I have confidence in the man." And so at some time we did go over to see him. I don't recall that particular meeting, but I think Fred and I went over quite a while after Governor Olson had been in office. We just had a friendly meeting. But we discussed some of our problems, one being with the Conservation Commission, which had been more or less a leftover
from former administrations, and other difficulties in getting the area consolidated. At that time there was a very wonderful opportunity to consolidate the whole area under the Roosevelt administration at a low price, because this huge sum had been voted at Roosevelt's request to acquire exactly that kind of lands, and they were at a very low price then. Nearly everything else was down, land too. And most of these lands that were so much needed in Superior National Forest were more or less waste lands that had either been cut over or tax-delinquent, or something of that sort, and in the whole area. On one side the whole area, as outlined in the Shipstead-Nolan act, may have been as much as three million acres. That doesn't mean that there were that many waste-lands, but perhaps a third of that, a million acres, was lands that could be acquired at low price. And there was this huge revolving fund that had already been voted by Congress for the purchase of just such lands all over, and of marginal lands that had been unwisely put under agricultural use and then had only been a burden to the country. Part of the Roosevelt theory was that those lands ought to be returned to their natural uses -- forestry, game preserves or whatever -- and in that way would be less a burden and become productive for the nation. So this huge sum had been appropriated. Just how much that was, I don't know, but it would have been ample, I believe, and far more than ample to have consolidated the whole of this area that we were interested in on the U.S. side in Minnesota and still have enabled other areas to take out great chunks that they needed for the same purpose.

The obstacle was that the Conservation Commission of Minnesota wouldn't agree. And the Federal Forest Service was held up in making
any such purchases, since the Conservation Commission was so definitely on record against it. Before Mr. Olson came in we had held one conference after another, and it meant nothing but real obstruction and abuse, even, from the Conservation Commission.

So I think those things were talked over at that time with Governor Olson. They were explained, as were our difficulties and the opportunity we had to consolidate our forest. The eventual effect of all of that was that other states, which were only too eager to get ahold of those funds, got them, and none of them were spent in Minnesota. If they were, they were very small amounts in the older parts of the forests, not in these new purchase units, like the Kabetogama that had been agreed upon by the National Forest Reservation Commission, largely through the influence of Mr. Ickes, who was one of the members of that commission. They were reluctant to expand the forest, though they had agreed to do so in that original arrangement with us -- the Quetico-Superior program. But the Conservation Commission was reluctant, and the Forest Service was reluctant to go ahead knowing of this stiff opposition in the state by the government authorities.

Whether we saw Governor Olson once or twice about things of that sort I don't know, or whether it was simply a pleasant meeting and I had the opportunity to meet him, but my reaction immediately to meeting him was very favorable to the man. He was a man, I think, you immediately liked. He was open, apparently friendly, very human -- that's the feeling I got from meeting him. And so he's a man you'd like to have for a friend. But there we were, dragging along -- and
I don’t know just how long this was. It must have been quite a while, because Governor Olson was governor more than one term, wasn’t he -- at least two, I think.

MR. F.: Three -- he died in his third term.

MR. O.: Well, he died soon after he started the third term, didn’t he?

We were having these hearings before the Minnesota Conservation Commission on our subject and none of them were productive. There was one man in particular from the southern part of the state, Foley, and he was especially vitriolic on the whole subject. And we had thought that he was a supporter of Governor Olson. And so the thing went on -- many hearings and much discussion in the press. But we were at a standstill in consolidating Superior National Forest and extending it as it was supposed to be extended under the Shipstead-Nolan agreement with the Forest Service. And so that dragged on for quite a long time, and probably into Mr. Olson’s second term.

After a good many of these hearings and more and more pressure upon the Conservation Commission, they finally called a meeting in Duluth, a hearing on the whole subject, so as to give the local people a better opportunity to be heard. I was invited to go there myself, and I went there with many regrets, because I felt that the showing had been so unfavorable, and it seemed most likely that our opponents would be concentrated at that meeting. That proved to be true, and more than true. I was really surprised when I got there. I was the only one who was to testify on our side, and I saw lined up against us many people
who had declared themselves again and again in no uncertain terms, including officials of the various small towns along the north shore, where there had been constant assertions that we intended to close the schools, forbid electrical extensions, and consolidate all the counties into one, so that there'd be no county officials except for the one county. And also that, of course, we weren't going to include any waterpower development, and that included the Pigeon River, where they had been cooperating with Mr. Backus, and where it was also forbidden under the Shipstead-Nolan act.

So I found myself facing what was evidently a very hostile audience for whatever I had to say myself. I don't recall how I attempted to meet the situation, but however I did it didn't seem very successful. At the end of the first session we had a recess. By then I had been heard myself, and some of those opposed had been heard --- a good many. And it was quite evident that there were many who were opposed. So I walked out for a rest into the broad hallway where the rest of the audience was already pacing up and down, and I found myself entirely alone with apparently no friends. And I saw coming toward me Mr. Abe Harris, editor of the State Conservation paper (I think they called it the Conservationist at the time ) whom I knew, but not very well. Mr. Harris was the only one who came up to me. We shook hands quite cordially. And he said: "Well, Mr. Oberholtzer, I suppose this seems pretty bad to you." And I said, "I don't know how it could be much worse." "Well," he said, "I wouldn't take it too hard." Something
to that effect. And so I took heart from that. I didn't know what could happen, but the fact that anyone placed as he was, and in the midst of the demonstration we'd just had, could still say there was hope, made me think there was life in the corpse. And so I went back for the afternoon session, which was beautifully abusive, and they brought up all the reasons (and they were multiple) why the Shipstead-Nolan act and its thorough application meant the ruin of the entire Arrowhead Country. Every kind of organization was represented, and every kind of person, from governmental people to private citizens, resort owners, school teachers, almost any kind of representative that you could think of. And a great many of these were quite personal in what they said too, about me and my connection with this movement, and my purposes and reasons for spending so much time on it.

The damage had been explained many times with great authority by these various representatives, and finally it seemed that everybody had been heard, except one man, who had asked at the very last to have a few moments. He was a person with whom I was quite familiar, whose name I can't remember now, but he was a considerable landowner along the border, not valuable lands. He was an elderly man, perhaps sixty-eight years old, heavy set, and he didn't have a great deal to say, ordinarily. But he seemed to appear almost by magic everywhere I went. He was there at hearings in Washington a number of times. And he'd always come up to me in a very friendly fashion and hold out his hand and speak to me in rather endearing terms as "Ernie." When one of the U.S. Senate committees came from Washington to investigate the Shipstead-
Nolan area and was met at Orr to go out on a tour of the lake he was there too. And he said to me while we were waiting for the Senators to arrive: "Well, I want to remind you that the beavers put up dams, too." And, of course, that was a nice jocular remark. We discussed a little of the difference between the man-made dams and the beaver dams. So here he was again, and it didn't take him very long to explain why he was there. He said he was in agreement with these groups. He thought they were taking the long view of the situation and that it was proper that they should express themselves as they did about matters that were so close to them and not let them be decided by some outsiders, that he'd known Ernie Oberholtzer for a long time, and they were friends. He said, "Of course, Oberholtzer -- you know he's worked for Backus for a long, long time. And Mr. Backus is perfectly contented to let [Backus] him have the glory if he can get the spoils" And he said, "You know, Ernie Oberholtzer has worked for Backus for years." And so then he thanked the chairman and said that he thought that was maybe all he could add to their deliberations. They'd covered the subject so well. And then we adjourned.

Well, Ernie Oberholtzer, for some reason, wasn't very happy about this. So he lingered with the crowd; and he saw his friend approaching and holding out his hand; and he said, "Ernie Oberholtzer, I'm so glad to see you again." And he [Oberholtzer] said something like this, which wasn't very kind, of course. "You damned old liar. You're in luck -- if you weren't so old, I'd knock your head off." And the hero turned around and walked away, followed by his admirers. And that was the end of that session.
Well, of course, it was one of the most unpleasant things I've had to face. It was almost like a mob, it seemed to me. I had much the feeling I would have had if the mob had been there, except that they didn't immediately tear me to pieces. But it was as close as you could get to that and still survive, I think.

And so some time passed. It wasn't very long, though, before I was in the office, having just completed an article for some organization or some paper, like *American Forestry* about our program, and having been up all night to do it. I was preparing to go home about five o'clock in the evening and have a good night's sleep when I had a telephone call from Abe Harris, who said, "Mr. Oberholtzer, I'm speaking for the Governor. Our paper, the *Conservationist*, is going to press early in the morning, (I think he said six o'clock, and I was surprised at that), and we're to have an article by Mr. Willard (who was the Conservation Commissioner) on the subject of your program, and the Governor would like to have a similar article dealing with your point of view on the subject. But we'd have to have it by six o'clock tomorrow morning." "Oh, I couldn't do that, Mr. Harris, I'm awfully sorry. I was up all night, I just wrote an article, and I feel very weary, and if I did this, I'd want to be sure I did it well." "Oh, Mr. Oberholtzer, you must do this. It's of such importance to you and your work that you must get that article in one way or another. The Governor has urged that you have that ready." And it sounded as if the Governor hadn't known until just that moment that the other article was going to
be in, you see.

Well of course I could see the urgency -- what he had in mind -- and coming as a request from the Governor, it meant that our program had a friend, at least, to that extent, and so I didn't like to refuse. And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I can't promise I'll have that ready, but I'll do my very best." And I stayed there all night, and I wrote that article. Sometime -- half-past four or five o'clock in the morning -- I had it completed, clearly typed, and I called the Western Union Messenger and sent it over to St. Paul at the address given, and then I went home. And the two duly appeared not very long afterward in The Conservationist, side by side. I don't know, but I think maybe Mr. Willard may have been surprised when it appeared. But I don't know as to that. They might have told him; they might not have.

But anyway I went home and I had quite a little illness, an aseptic sore throat. I don't know whether it was due to this or not, but my doctor said that when people get overly tired in that way, they're much more subject to an infection of that sort. Well, that was that experience.

So soon afterward I was up here (that was after the lake was open which must have been in May) out at the island at my home at Rainy Lake, when I saw a boat approaching from Ranier. The owner was well-known to me, Harry Erickson, who conducted, among other things, a service on the lake. And, to my astonishment, out stepped two
members of the Conservation Commission -- those who'd been most friendly to us. And when they got out on the dock, I said, "I'm very pleased to see you up here." And they said, "Well, we're glad to be here, and you may like to know that we've come from Governor Olson, that he's appointing two new members on the Conservation Commission, and he has asked us to secure from you a resolution to be put before the Conservation Commission expressing what it is that you would like done by them to aid the Quetico-Superior program." Well, of course, nothing could please me more. Nothing was more of a delightful surprise. It was the only direct response I'd had from Governor Olson about our program and the kind of response, of course, a person would welcome more than any other kind, not in words, but in actions, you see. And that's very rare out of the government. So it didn't take long to write the resolution. It was handed over to these two men and they returned to Ranier and went back to Duluth. Two new members were appointed; the resolution was immediately adopted. At the same time the Governor, without consulting us, wrote Secretary Ickes, whom he knew to be the main promoter of our program in Washington, you see, and very close to the President on that matter. The President was wholly sold on the Quetico-Superior program. That appeared in one of our publications, and the letter that the Governor wrote was published in one of our pamphlets. After it was, H. H. Chapman, a Yale professor of forestry who had more or less cooperated with us, wrote me a most surprising and disappointing letter in which he said that he couldn't
cooperate with a man who was cooperating with a murderer like Floyd Olson, and there was more or less of an intimation that I had assisted in the murder.

This was all over a scandal that had been in the newspapers, you see, where some fellow who I think carried on a scandal sheet, and perhaps had abused Floyd Olson in his magazine, had then been murdered. And there was no doubt that from the point of view of all the political opponents that Olson did it, not maybe with his own hands, but he got as close as he could. And he evidently had people who cooperated with him like me, who were known to be bad actors. Well, that's that episode. That's probably what you meant me to cover. Governor Olson performed that wonderful act of friendship for our program. There was no question that it was whole-hearted and that he would have gone with the program to the bitter end. But it wasn't very long afterward before they discovered that he had cancer, and he died soon afterward.

MR. F.: Well, did this change in the climate on the Conservation Commission actually speed up the land acquisition program in the Superior Forest?

MR. O.: Well, here was the trouble. They had delayed it until most of these funds had been seized by other states that were only too eager to have that kind of help from the federal government. They really did Minnesota a tremendous disservice. They did the federal government an even greater disservice, perhaps, because it has cost the federal government millions of dollars now just to consolidate that one little
part of the old forest, around Ely. We never would have had all those airplane resorts if the government had been able to purchase. And they didn't consolidate this. They didn't buy any more lands in Kabetogama. They were going to get the whole Kabetogama peninsula which had over one hundred miles of shoreline, and they were going to consolidate the area between the old Superior National Forest and Grand Portage. That would have given us this whole area that we wanted in federal ownership, enough federal ownership to protect it. So that's been lying undone all this time except for what's been done in these later years under Roosevelt and his successor to get funds to buy out these airplane resorts that have started. And that has been a very expensive process. Nothing has been done in Kabetogama. They've made no more purchases because Minnesota had placed itself on record through Stassen against any further purchases.

MR. F.: Before we get to Governor Stassen, would you just tell us about Governor Benson's attitude toward the program?

MR. O.: Yes, Governor Benson. My mind is very vague as to his performance. Of course he came in as a successor to Governor Olson, and he was of the same persuasion, I think, wasn't he? We felt that with his predecessor on record, we were going to get some very definite help. Well, there were several questions that were coming up, and one was the Grand Portage road, on which we were on record. Our people were not all of the same opinion. There was nothing that could be more controversial than a road matter. But our whole council was on record and worked eagerly to prevent penetration of the tip of the Grand Portage reservation
beyond Mount Josephine, where no people lived at all. To have a new road built in through there -- It was the finest of all wilderness sections in the state, superlative scenery, a lot of game, very wild, and there was no necessity that we could see for the road. It may be that Governor Benson himself felt we were wrong on that subject. He didn't say so, but at least any approach we made to him was unproductive at the time. I don't think we put up anything to him. Well, I did write him, and I think I went to see him a couple of times about some of these matters. My feeling now is that the reason he didn't respond, maybe, more wholeheartedly, or didn't seem to, was that this Grand Portage road matter had become an issue, and that he didn't share our feeling on that. But I don't know how Governor Olson might have felt, because it hadn't yet become a serious matter. But I would have felt after what Governor Olson did that he most certainly would have seen our point of view and would have agreed with us on the road matter, because in the letter to Secretary Ickes he had made it categorically plain that he was ready to cooperate in every way with the federal government to bring about the success of our Quetico-Superior program. Mr. Benson might have been a more cautious man. I don't know. But my general attitude was that he was not so forthright by any means as Governor Olson. But that's all I can comment. I have no criticism of Governor Benson, because I don't really know enough about him.

MISS K.: Well, he was certainly beset with other affairs at that time, How about Governor Stassen? When he was elected, did you expect a favorable response from him?
MR. O.: I didn't. I don't know why. I couldn't tell you why, but I had an uncomfortable feeling about Stassen's approach to the thing, especially after Olson had gone so far in our direction. It may be I had a feeling that he might be reluctant to grasp an issue that a man of such a different political faith had accepted so enthusiastically, and there had been a good deal of publicity about it.

But we were unquestionably in the dark. We had many enthusiastic Stassen supporters that had done everything they could to elect him, and they were people who had the means to be of fairly great help, like the Heffelfingers. And they had also been on record a long, long time for our program. Some of us went over to see Governor Stassen. I think Peavey was along and a number of the others. I think Fred Winston was along at some of those meetings, too. But I didn't have the feeling at any of those meetings that the Governor committed himself any more than to let us know that it was one of the issues that he would have in mind, you see. I didn't come away feeling encouraged in any way that we were going to get help. As a matter of fact, in the end, before it was all done, we suffered more under Mr. Stassen's administrations in our program than at any other time. We had more setbacks. We had had plenty before Governor Olson swept away this obstruction in the Conservation Commission. But more and more of Stassen's appointees seemed to be put in positions strictly to oppose us, and all sorts of disagreeable gossip came out -- things that were very harmful. A member of the Attorney General's office, one of the deputies, put out a rumor that the reason we were opposing the highway was -- (It was traced directly to him. I didn't
trace it, but Will Zimmerman did, and Will Zimmerman was the deputy chief of the Indian Office in Washington and had been on our committee as an appointee of President Roosevelt for a long time and a very helpful, high type fellow). But this report was put out that Will Zimmerman and I had received $15,000 from a resort owner at this end of the old bridge on the Pigeon River who wanted the road to continue past his hotel, that he had paid us $15,000, which we had divided, for opposing the change.

That never came to me, but Will Zimmerman found that out, and he went there and confronted him with it. He didn't deny it, but he said, "Oh, forget it -- I may have been drinking." That's what Will Zimmerman said. But that wasn't all there was to it, because other people --. It came out of the Conservation Department, and I heard it. I heard it quite widely. I heard it in Port Arthur and Fort William, where we had a wonderful position, and anytime I wanted to go there and talk on our subject, they would hold a joint meeting of the two city councils and have a great big crowd there. Then one summer, Mr. Chester Wilson invited for some reason unknown the various members of those two councils to a meeting as his guest to Manitolin Island, I was told. When they got back, one of our best friends at the lakehead, Port Arthur, says to me, "Ober, you're done for. You don't need to come here any more. They won't give you a single hearing." And that's all I could find out about it. But those same reports had been put out. There was a real estate man there, the main real estate man in Port Arthur, who had a lot of authority and owned a great deal of land where the new road was to go on the Canadian side. Of course he was opposed
to us. How much he had to do with that we never knew. But this very
L. S.,
good friend named Col. Dear, who was a Legion man with a great number
of friends, said, "Well, he wouldn't have enough influence up here.
We don't think that road should be changed. We admit that our main
real estate man wants it to go that other way, but we people up here
don't want it. We've got a splendid road -- a wonderful road -- right
up to the old crossing, very attractive along the river in there, and
all completed. They don't want to change it. But this meeting has
completely changed your standing here." Well, that was a blow to me,
because I liked those people, and they had apparently placed full trust
in me until this happened. I couldn't help but feel that Mr. Wilson
had deliberately gone out of his way and arranged this -- perhaps Stassen
asked him to do it. I don't know. I can't blame him for something that
I only can guess, but it was very harmful to us and our standing up
there when all through the International Joint Commission's hearings
and everything of that sort I could go there any time and they would
arrange a joint meeting of the two councils, and we would be treated with
the greatest hospitality and deference. But there were things like that
going on which were very, very unhappy. Of course, it may be that in
our own pamphlets about this road matter (and that seemed to be the
largest cause of friction then) that some of the things we got out were
very offensive to the administration. And I was asked to make changes
in our publication in which we discussed this whole road matter, pro's
and con's, in great detail. And we listed the people who we knew were
against the road and the people who we knew were for the road. And
among those who were for the road (and there was no question about that) was the state highway department. But also the power people and various other similar groups who had an axe to grind. Well, we didn't differentiate. We did list those all together. And I think that Mr. Wilson called my attention to it -- not only called my attention to it but criticized it and said that he thought that was very unfair.

Well, they might have had a point there. We didn't say that they were for the same reason, nor did we give the reasons why any of these people were for or against, you see. But at least, they felt they were classed with opponents who had an axe to grind. But whatever it was, we did feel that there wasn't enough merit in the thing to get out any apology or to get out a special bulletin on the subject. We left it stand, and this has always stood. But it probably caused a good deal of anguish. There may have been the feeling that they must retaliate. I don't know. But anyway, they retaliated in a way that didn't end by classing us with some other bad people, but they told what we had done that was so bad, you see. According to this story, both Will Zimmerman and I had received cash -- $7500 -- for our opposition to this new road.

Now that isn't just guesswork. That actually happened. We heard of it both ways. We heard of it directly when Will Zimmerman confronted the state man with it, and he didn't even deny it, but he may have been said, "Oh, I might be drinking -- forget it." And the other was this report, unconfirmed as to the reasons. I never saw the letters. I don't know whether they'd ever show them to me. I didn't ask them. They didn't show any inclination. But they'd been guests of Mr. Wilson over
And they came back absolutely changed in their opinion of our whole organization, especially under me.

MR. F.: What effect did Governor Stassen have on the consolidation of the forest?

MR. O.: Yes, well that was something. That was probably the most effective opposition we had at any time. I had spent a lot of time in Washington trying to get an appropriation after we had failed to get any of these funds that were available to any of the states for consolidating lands like forests, but through the opposition of the Conservation Commission that had been prolonged to the point where those funds were all used. Governor Olson said he would do everything he could to help. That was, of course, during Roosevelt's administration. Then I went to Washington and stayed for many weeks to see what could be done to get a special appropriation. And that was very difficult, of course. The war was approaching. That is, at least, it looked as if the United States could hardly keep out of this conflict. The Second World War was on and Roosevelt was far-seeing. He realized that we couldn't afford to be unprepared, so he was already beginning to prepare.

When I found that we were right up against it, and there seemed to be no chance of getting an appropriation for a matter like this, then we communicated with Roosevelt directly, because he had set up our committee. I never saw him. I never tried to go to him myself. But we went to the proper authorities under him, and they were very friendly to us. We told what an emergency this was -- that the lands would never be so low-priced, and that meantime private parties were picking them
up and were likely to start all kinds of developments that were not in
the intention of the government when it established these roadless areas,
you see.

Roosevelt's response was that, of course, he was heartily in
favor of our program. He didn't have to argue that matter with us,
because he had established the President's Committee. He was the one who
established it in 1934. But he felt that at that time the necessity
of preparing for possible war was paramount, that everything must be
done, and that some of these other things would have to wait until after
the war. Well, that was a hard argument to answer. But no matter how
hard we tried I don't think we could have budged him in that. And I'm
sure he was absolutely sincere, and on the whole you would have thought
that when times were so hard, nobody could do anything, that there
wasn't much danger there were going to be a lot of developments in
Superior National Forest. So I had to come back from Washington without
any booty out of that. And so it went on until after the war.

MR. F.: I think you mentioned some time ago something about Stassen's
preventing acquisition. Was that the Kabetogama . . .

MR. O.: Yes, well what he did. Again I was in Washington. And again
I was working on this idea that we might somehow get funds to buy the
lands, you see. The Forest Service was already committed to expanding
into Kabetogama. They made that a purchase unit. They had two additional
purchase units they had set up during Roosevelt's time, under the
insistence of Mr. Ickes, who was on the Forest Reservation Commission.
The Forest Service had held back because they knew that the Conservation
Commission didn't want them to enlarge the forest any. And since that was true, they didn't like to take action to announce the enlargement of Superior National Forest. But they did under Mr. Ickes' insistence, and rather against the idea of Mr. Lee Kneipp, the Deputy Forester, who had helped me set up the program. And there was more or less conflict between Secretary Ickes and Kneipp on that subject. Kneipp didn't want them at that time to enlarge it, though they were pledged to do it. He didn't want to stir up any unfortunate political feeling in the state. The Forest Service is pretty cautious about that. The state had already shown they didn't want federal money to consolidate the forest, and so he didn't like to have the Forest Reservation Commission decide to establish purchase units, which they would eventually, presumably, buy.

But we were dissatisfied at the slow progress, and so we were prodding Ickes, and Ickes was very insistent on that commission. He finally succeeded in getting the Forest Service to establish the Kabetogama purchase unit and the Pigeon River Purchase Unit, which, if completed, would have given us everything that we'd ever hoped to get in the Shipstead-Nolan area on our side. We'd have had that all consolidated.

Well I was in Washington on various parts of this, including the Grand Portage road and a number of these matters. It was in spring and coming near the end of the legislative session. And I suddenly received from Fred Winston, who was in charge of our office in Minneapolis, a letter or telegram saying that the Pioneer Press, which had been favorable to our program (Though they didn't agree with us about the road, they'd always been strong supporters of our program), had warned
him that Governor Stassen had taken a step which was dangerous for our program, because just a few days before the close of the session there had been introduced at his wish a bill providing very simply that there should be no further federal purchases of land in the state of Minnesota without the consent of the Governor. And they said, "You'd better look out for that."

So Fred then went directly over to St. Paul, because there were only a few days before the legislature adjourned, and all their main business was done. And he found that such a bill had been entered for the Governor. So he went to the Attorney General's office, and said, "What does this bill mean? Is this bill going to be used against us? The Administration hasn't been friendly. Is this going to be used to block us, too?" And the person in the Attorney General's office, whoever it was, said, "You don't need to have the slightest fear. This is only to prevent new activities by the federal government in our state that's already overloaded with those things. It will not hurt your Quetico-Superior program in any way." That was merely oral.

So then Fred wasn't satisfied. He went to the Conservation Commission, and I don't remember now who was in charge. I don't think Wilson was at the time. But Fred expressed his fears there, and they gave their written promise that the bill would not be used against our program. So then Fred wrote me that and said, "Ober, there isn't anything we can do about it." I couldn't be there. It was too late to start any opposition or notify anybody. In a couple of days it went right through without any opposition at all. It gave the Governor that power to veto. It wasn't very long (I don't know whether it was one month
or two months or three months) before the U. S. Forest Service, knowing how eager we were to get something done —. The boundaries had already been established for this purchase unit, and the most important part was on the lakes. That meant the Kabetogama Peninsula, which is perhaps around 100,000 acres altogether — maybe 120,000. It lies between Kabetogama and Rainy Lake. Kabetogama means in Ojibway "Side by Side Lakes." They're parallel. Black Bay is the boundary down at this end, just a few miles away. Black Bay lies in St. Louis County. It doesn't come into Koochiching County at all.

So the Forest Service had gone ahead with the private owners. The private owners were largely represented by some man —. There'd been a man there named "Johnson," a lawyer, who got those things together, cleared up the titles, and then went to the Forest Service. Well, he's made a lot of money on this. It isn't always the best practice, but it helps the Forest Service, because it's a big job collecting all those things, you see, and he makes this smaller money and the totals add up. He's become wealthy through it. But he gets the land, even though the minerals are reserved, usually, with the reservation of minerals. That's done almost everywhere through there. It's very unfortunate. Ickes thought it was a very bad practice. I think so too, but it's the only way you can get hold of it. Then you get the surface rights, you see, and the Forest Service is able to go ahead and do something constructive for the state instead of leaving it just stand there, subject to fire and insects and anything that happens. Theft, a lot of theft.

So they had accumulated purchases there for about 100,000 acres, most of the peninsula. And it was a key piece for our program.
everything for us, because if the Superior National Forest was extended in that way at each end it would be a very persuasive thing to the Canadians who have their Quetico way over there in the middle of their boundary, you see, and if they saw we really intended to have a national forest all the way along there why there was more reason for them to do similar things over here north of Rainy Lake where they have very wonderful resources almost in their primeval condition. And so it meant much more to us than merely getting the forest.

But within a short time after the legislature adjourned the Forest Service went to Mr. Stassen for his signature, which was all that remained to complete the deal. They were going to take over this 100,000 acres or so. But when they did they found that Mr. Stassen was absolutely opposed. I don't know. I couldn't quote him. I wasn't there. But as I understood it, it was something to this effect: "You don't expect me to sign this, do you?" "Why, yes, Governor, that's why we came to you, sir. We would like to have your signature to complete the deal. We've gone ahead with all the legal aspects. We've spent a great deal of money on this thing." "It's not in the public interest. I'll not sign it." So he didn't sign it, and the deal fell through.

Well, that was the first thing. It was an awful blow to us. But then the Conservationist (I don't know whether it was the following issue, or very soon) boasted that at last they'd found a way to handle this whole project. Mr. Wilson himself had questioned it publicly and said, "I'd like to try -- I'd like to get to the bottom of this thing." It was under Stassen that he said, "I'd like to get to the
bottom of this thing sometime." And they said in the Conservationist, "We've at last found the cure for this."

So of course, that was a very unpleasant situation, and the shock of it went all around to everybody who was interested in our program. We thought it was a pretty bad -- a dirty trick. And so as the word went around it wasn't very long afterward -- now I don't know how long, but it was the same year, and I don't think it was more than a month or so.

**Mr. F.:** Do you remember the year?

**Mr. O.:** No, I'd have to look that up. I think it was during Mr. Stassen's first term, but not at the start. It must have been near the end of the first term, but I could easily find that out, you know.

**Mr. F.:** That's be 1940.

**Mr. O.:** Around there. The war was approaching rapidly you see. It was about 1940. It will be easy to find out. But anyway, it wasn't very long before there was an announcement in the paper that the M & O Paper Company was offering an exchange to the state whereby they would deed the Kabetogama peninsula to the state in return (that was some one hundred thousand acres) for some 37,000 acres of sprucelands lying down in Itasca County, adjacent to Koochiching, in a swamp where nobody ever went and where they was no recreational use. It was pointed out that the state would acquire some one hundred miles of recreational shoreline by doing that, that they would have this 100,000 acres of land in return for a place that nobody ever visited and there could be no recreational use, and that the values had been carefully weighed so that the actual values of the two areas were practically the same.
Well, that was something we couldn't measure. That would have been something for the foresters, all very skilled and very reliable people, to do. But we never questioned that. We were just helpless. We did question the whole transaction, of course. Here was this Kabetogama peninsula which we thought should be in public hands, and some people could very properly think and some state officials had argued, for keeping some of this boundary as a state forest. After our action and under the Conservation Commission they had set up on paper a whole lot of state forests up here in the north. But they were just on paper, and they were just clearly designed to tangle up our whole program, which had been evolved long before the state even thought of establishing its own state forests. Nothing had been done on these state forests. But this was going to become a sort of a state park for the public, under this generous offer. Well then all that summer, and before the next campaign (I think that's when Mr. Stassen was due for the second election.) various officials, including Mr. Wilson particularly (he was Conservation Commissioner then) went around the state addressing audiences, and telling what a wonderful thing this would be for the state to acquire. Various state officials flew over the area and looked at it, and there was a lot of publicity. Mr. Wilson came up here (he had a huge map) and he stressed this hundred miles of recreational shoreline that would be acquired and the fact that this other land was of no public interest whatever, and the values were the same.

Well we knew there was something wrong from our point of view, but we didn't know exactly how to put our fingers on it. So we weren't
in a position to say too much, except that we stressed the fact that this piece had been taken right out of the hands of our program, and put into private hands, and that Mr. Stassen was the one who did it. He just handed it right over. It could look as if this had been an understanding between Mr. Stassen and the M & O, and the M & O was a strong proponent of Mr. Stassen for President at the time. Even a lot seemed to know of the state officials already knew what their positions were to be in Washington. I've heard of a lot of them who thought they knew to what positions they were going to be appointed in Washington as soon as Mr. Stassen got there. Of course a lot of that might have been fiction, you know, but it was amusing. There was a lot of gossip about it, and evidently some of the men who expected that were a little bit precipitate in telling the position they were going to hold in Washington under Mr. Stassen.

Anyway we had to bide our time, and we did what we could to get publication of the facts. But the Minneapolis papers refused to say a word. We gave the editors two very fine dinners (It was pretty hard for us to do that) so that they would know more of the facts. They had a new editor there, who afterward died, and who was very well known and thought of. There was another friend of Fred's who had known him in college who commented on foreign news and was very good. You may remember him. He died in office, and now I think his son does something of the same sort.

MR. F.: Carrol Binder.

MR. O.: That's right. He knew Fred very well. He went to college with him. And he was friendly to us. When he was in Chicago on the
Daily News, he went to bat for us. But when he got here, he had to change his tune. He was one of the people who was invited to these dinners. And nothing we said made any impression whatever. When it was all over, the main editor, who died later, came up to me and shook hands and told me how much they'd enjoyed this, and how happy they were to know more about this situation. But he said, "Mr. Oberholtzer, I can't see how anything that's going to be gained by bringing up this old issue. It's all done." It was all over, this matter about the acquisition and the fact that they had promised that they wouldn't use that bill against us. And here they boasted right afterward in the conservation paper that that's what the purpose of the bill was. That was very surprising.

And so it went on. And we were dreadfully disturbed about it. Fred was doing everything he could. In those days he was still active, and he kept our office going down there [Minneapolis] and kept [Ramy Lake] watching everything. I was up here most of the time when I wasn't in Washington. The election was approaching rapidly. Of course this whole issue had been a very, very hot one here. The question of ownership on the lakes and the dams and all that stuff were hot issues. In a campaign they could ruin a man. Some of these governors have practically admitted that it ruined their career, you see, because they didn't happen to get in step. Of course there was a lot of gossip going around, even though we couldn't get anything in the newspaper. We couldn't get anything in the Minneapolis newspapers, you see, or any of these others, except the Pioneer Press. They were franker. They'd warned us, but...
they didn't like to step in after this other thing had happened. I suppose they were good Republicans, and they didn't like to reflect unpleasantly on Stassen, who at that time was so much in the ascendancy. So the election was approaching and there was a lot of gossip.

Fred then called up Chet Wilson, and said, "Mr. Wilson, there are a lot of us -- including some of our Legion friends -- who would like to go into this a little more thoroughly and intimately, if you had time. Could you do that?" So Wilson set an evening sometime. I don't know whether it was a month before the election or two weeks or something, but it was getting fairly close to the election. Fred was the spokesman for the group. He was very quiet, and he usually was, and said, "Well, now, Mr. Wilson, there are some things you don't quite understand about this. Some things have never been explained. I know that we take it for granted that these values are equal, that it's a fair arrangement so far as the money is concerned. But are there any conditions? We may not know everything here. A lot of it seems a very great puzzle to us. Are there any conditions?" Wilson says, "Nothing of any importance." "Well, that means there are some conditions, aren't there?" "Well, yes, let's see -- yes, but small matters." "Well, could you tell us what those are?" "Well, there are two. There is a reservation for minerals. But," he said, "that's common in almost all these deeds." And Fred says, "Yes, I know that. It's too bad, but we can't help that, I guess. But you said conditions, didn't you?" "Well, yes, let's see. Oh, yes, there's some kind of a flowage easement." "Flowage easement!" Fred said. "You mean the
right to flood the lands." "I suppose that's what you'd call it," Wilson said. "Well, isn't that exactly what it is, Chet. That's all it is. You reserve the right to flood lands. I didn't know that. Did you say we have one hundred miles of recreational shoreline that we're acquiring. And you mean you're going to grant them the right to flood those lands and the state never had done such a thing before? Could you tell us to what height this is going to be?" "No, I can't tell you now. I'll find out. I'll let you know tomorrow." "Well," Fred says, "we really feel we're grateful to you for giving us this opportunity, but we really have learned something that's never been mentioned before, and you've been going all around the state here pointing out that you're going to acquire for the people of the state this wonderful shoreline. But it is subject to flood. And so far as we know, the state has never granted a flowage easement on any of its lands. Wouldn't that be a bad policy?"

So he wrote me that, and the next day Chet Wilson gave him the figures. They were sent up to me, because Fred didn't know what these figures meant in terms of water levels here. I forget how many feet, but my gracious, it was the highest I'd ever known. Now the outright ownership of that land gave them flowage easements, if they could get government consent, you see. I mean, they [easements] went with it. It gave them the rights on both fronts -- on Kabetogama and one on Rainy. Any owner ordinarily owns the rights to his land down to the low water mark, you know. And that's all pretty well established by state decision long, long ago. You own those, unless
you dispose of them. But here were reservations to enable you to hold these levels up to a point where you'd be flooding other lands and flooding those very lands. And nobody could recover. The terrible part of it was that the purchase of that area, which they secured with the help of Governor Stassen, gave them the chief ownership of flowage rights on the whole two basins on the Kabetogama Basin, that's the Namakan basin, and the Rainy Lake Basin. And all the private owners on the whole lakes didn't have anywhere near that amount of shoreline, you see. Up to that time, whenever these questions had come up and these arguments were made before the International Joint Commission, the company was in the extremely weak position that they didn't own any flowage rights. It was very small pieces of land they had around. They didn't own it. So if they'd been granted something by the International Joint Commission during all those hearings they had, under the Backus project, something would have had to be done about flowage rights, or you would have had a tremendous damage suit. The state, for instance, if they chose to act. The state would have to be compensated, and all the private owners would have to be compensated. What Backus proposed when he was asked about that was that that would be taken care of by the two governments. Everything was going to be done very nicely that way.

Well, it was perfectly plain that what the company had taken that for was to have all those flowage rights in reservation if this program for more dams was put before the Joint Commission again. It was after the time when the Joint Commission had reported on the
Backus program, but they would have been much stronger if they owned outright some of the main flowage rights on the two lakes, you see. And while they had evidently taken that primarily for the flowage rights which were worth more (if they could ever be exercised) to the company than the land and all the trees on it. The forest wasn't any great thing over there, but they had to allow for that in their arrangements for transfer for these 37,000 acres down in the country below here, you see. No arrangement whatever.

So Fred had found out something there that was the key to the whole thing, it seemed to us. And of course nobody knew that better than Stassen. Evidently they got scared at the last moment before the election, and there suddenly appeared, some weeks before the election, a very small piece in the Pioneer Press and other newspapers, that in spite of this wonderful benefit that was going to the state, the M & O had withdrawn this marvelous offer, you see. Then the Pioneer Press, which had been following that closely, sent a reporter to Chet Wilson's office and he said, "What does this mean? How did this happen?"

And Chet says, "Oh, I guess they decided it was too great a bargain for the state." That happened. That was reported to me. There wasn't any question about that part of it. Some of these things are only hearsay, but I got that very directly.

**MR. F.**: When did the M & O acquire the peninsula then?

**MR. O.**: They had bought the peninsula almost immediately after Stassen vetoed the purchase by the federal government. How long they owned it I don't know, but I don't think it was more than a year, or
maybe two years before they offered it, in exchange, you see.

MR. F.: Was there a reservation in mineral rights in this proposal on both pieces so that the state would retain....

MR. O.: Well, that I don't know. Well, I'll tell you, the mineral rights were reserved by the people who sold the land or wanted to sell the land to the Forest Service. The M & O bought it subject to mineral reservations. So they weren't cheating there. I mean they couldn't sell mineral rights in this deal that was already reserved under their contract, you see, but there was no water reservation before. That was something they had added out of the kindness of their soul.

MR. F.: We probably should reserve this for a later tape, but I'd like to ask you just one question yet. Under this current proposal for a national park on the Kabetogama peninsula, exchanging state lands --

MR. O.: For the Kabetogama peninsula --

MR. F.: Yes. Is this essentially the same area -- the 37,000-acre area?

MR. O.: You mean what they're going to maybe take in place of Kabetogama?

MR. F.: As I have read the accounts, this is an area in Koochiching County.

MR. O.: -- that they're going to get. Yes. I believe that this is a new area that they're going to receive, and I take it for granted that when -- well, no, I don't take it for granted, either. I think the danger is if we don't watch it very carefully the state officials if they're
not high-grade -- and I would think that these state officials, if it went through, would be watchful for that sort of thing. But if there was another man like Stassen there, I would be pretty sure that if they exchanged for Kabetogama, the company would try to keep the flowage reservation, but not allow any money for it. I think they'd do that. So I said at the last President's Committee meeting when these park service men were there: "I think if it can't be done any other way that we should go ahead if the Park Service can acquire it for public purposes. I'm all for it -- if we can't get it any other way." "But," I said, "one thing I'm afraid of is that if they're not very careful they may find that it'll be subject still to a flowage reservation, which would be most unfortunate in every way. It would be a dreadful thing." But I don't think that the company would dare do that with the federal government, you know -- try to save a flowage reservation.

**MR. F.:** Under the existing ownership, do they have a flowage reservation? Do they have the right to flood? This is part of their right of private ownership?

**MR. O.:** Yes. Yes.

**MR. F.:** The Shipstead-Nolan bill didn't regulate this?

**MR. O.:** Oh, no.

**MISS K.:** It was a definite property right.

**MR. O.:** Why, sure. They didn't subtract it, but they were honest about the mineral reservation, because they didn't own the mineral
reservation, and they couldn't sell it. The mineral reservation continued to go right along with the property, you see. But they didn't buy it subject to a flowage reservation. These people who had these lands up there had no interest in flowage whatever. The only ones that would have an interest in flowage were those who wanted to reserve it so as to protect their property.

MR. F.: The mineral reservation was in favor of the state, or in favor of the company?

MR. O.: No, the mineral reservation was in favor of the former owners.

MR. F.: The private owner?

MR. O.: Yes.

MISS K.: That gets terribly complicated. Sometimes in those deeds they even forget it, because the mineral reservation will be held by the person who owned it way, way back.

MR. O.: Oh, yes, and usually they don't know who it is. He just suddenly appears.

MR. F.: But it's still valid, if they trace it back.

MISS K.: Yes, it's still valid.

MR. O.: When Freeman was Governor, one of his problems was getting income enough. He was studying new means of getting income. I didn't write him about anything except about our program and only occasionally when there was something quite glaring. I read about his efforts to find new sources of income, and so then I wrote him. I said I thought there was one great opportunity that I knew in the state that we were constantly aware of in the consolidation of the public lands and that
Secretary Ickes had been very much worried about it -- and that was this question of reservation of mineral rights. I said that we had looked up the law and we found that the mineral rights are taxable, and it was the duty of the assessor to record them and charge reasonable rates until they become productive. Then you would charge them accordingly, but it might not be any more than just for vacant lands -- any kind of vacant lands. The reason the people had held these lands was for the minerals, and presumably they would be taxable to that extent, since that was the only thing they were concerned about. It seemed unfortunate that it was so difficult to find out who the owners were because in most cases they were not recorded. But I thought that the total amount of reservations like that would yield a very considerable sum of taxes, and it looked as if just two things were necessary (we'd looked that up very carefully before) -- two acts of the legislature -- one to require that all mineral reservations in order to be valid would have to be recorded within a certain date, you see. It's perfectly legal to do that. But they're all afraid to touch it. Oh, they'd run into a hornet's nest, you know. But I think a good brave Governor would in the end gain if he did that. And I think it would be a lot more orderly and better in every way to have that done, and then make them taxable at a certain rate, something that's fair for undeveloped lands.

**MR. F.** Are they taxable now? Is it uneven, or aren't they taxable?

**MR. O.** Where they are recorded, they are taxable, but you find that the assessors don't tax them, because nobody seems to have a basis, and that could be set by the legislature. So it would seem the legislature
would have to do two things. They'd first have to provide they must be recorded. Second, they'd have to provide the minimum amount that they should be taxed.

Well, Freeman wrote back and thanked me for the suggestion and said he thought that that was a very interesting situation and that he would like to have it looked into. But nothing ever happened. Well, it's a pretty big thing, and it could be an awful stormy thing for a man to run into, because those things are owned everywhere, you see.

But about the flowage proposition. The M & O know that we know that, because it's come to their attention in a lot of ways. I don't think they would dare do such a thing in making a deal with the federal government now for their land, whether it's a cash deal or simply trading for a new area. It would be preposterous, and if we learned of it, it would just be explosive. Besides, if the federal government knew it was happening (and with their lawyers they'd be keen enough to detect those things immediately) I think they'd throw it right out. I never heard of a reservation like that against the federal government, but I suppose there are such things.

MISS K.: Did Governor Thye continue Stassen's philosophy toward your program, or did he turn a corner?

MR. O.: Thye was a good deal like Benson after Olson. Of course he was a more effective man than Benson, I guess. But Thye shied off from a whole lot of things. Then when he got into the Senate, he did finally come around when it came to getting definite appropriations. After I relinquished the constant effort of being in the office and traveling
so much, Mr. Hubachek's main hope then was to get that place around Ely sewed up before it got any worse. When we got Sig Olson to come in and help, he went around and Mr. Hubachek used every influence he had to get these appropriations. That was the time when we finally had Ike's help, too, you see. Ike was very much for our program because of Compton. He'd been sold absolutely by Compton.

MR. F.: Which Compton?

MR. O.: Carl Compton who was the head of MIT. But you remember my telling you something about that -- how they told me I'd have to go and see Ike, and all, and they even proposed that he should be head of our finance committee. Hubachek and Kelly expected me to sell him on that. They said: "Why, it's your duty. You've got to do that. Of course, you've got to go." I objected and I said: "I don't want to go to Ike at all." That was before he was President. I said, "Everybody in the world is going, and he'd just think I was a publicity seeker if I go there." That was in the meeting of the President's Committee. Mr. Hubachek was sitting in on it, you see. He said, "Ober, if you don't do another thing before you relinquish this activity, you must do that."

"Oh no, I won't do that," I said. "In the first place, I'd never ask him to become head of a finance committee," I said. "I think that would just preposterous. I think he'd think I was crazy. Everybody, of course, would like to have him do such a thing, but if he started, he'd go clear to the stars with things like that. There'd be no end to it." They said that was the thing to do and that I should immediately telephone and get an appointment. Everything had to be done by long-distance phone, you see.
I said, well, I was sorry, but that was one thing I thought was really beyond me. It should be a man who at least knew me, to whom I didn't have to be introduced. But I said, I think I have a lot better way. He sees Carl Compton who is the president of M.I.T., you see, and had been for a good many years -- a marvelous man and a very strong supporter of ours. He was the one who I mentioned had spent his honey-moon up here. That's what sold him originally. We got his name originally because he was one of the people who during that 1925 hearing (when Backus was first heard) had written in and protested. His name appeared in the transcript. So he was one of the first people we got in touch with, and subsequently I became very well acquainted with him because I consulted with him a whole lot of times after he had agreed to be on our national board, and he was always most helpful.

So then during Truman's day there was much talk of preparation in case Russia hopped on us, you see, which was never convincing to me. But Truman was getting ready, and he invited Compton to come to Washington, relinquish temporarily his position as head of M.I.T., where he'd been all those years, and take charge of the preparations that would naturally fall into the hands of a man like Compton who was in charge of great new inventions. And he invited Ike to do the same at Columbia, and both of them gave up their positions at the two universities temporarily. They spent five days every week in Washington, planning for the next war, every possible preparation and defense. Ike and Compton met daily at lunch. Compton told me that they almost daily conferred with Truman, too. He wanted to keep his hand right on this
thing and be prepared if anything should happen. So I suggested that since Compton had been our almost life-long friend, you might say, on the thing and had always done everything we'd asked of him, that I have him take it up with Ike, whom he saw daily, except Saturday and Sunday. I said that he must have Ike's confidence, and here would come in a new man that Ike never heard of who would have to sell him on the whole program and then ask him to do all kinds of remarkable things. So I was very insistent that the approach be that way. When they heard that, they said that since I wasn't willing to do it the other way, all right, then, we'll call Compton on the phone right now.

"Oh, no," I said, "I'd rather you didn't do that either. I'd like to write him" "Oh, no, we haven't time to write, Ober. We want to get Ike sold on this thing before he's elected." Well, he hadn't even been nominated yet, you see. It seemed to me there was a good deal of time. No, they wanted me to do this by phone, as they always did. Everything had to be done by phone. "No, I don't like to do that," I said. "It'll only be a day later if I write him, and I could tell him so much more completely what the situation is, and he's a very busy man. Just think of what he's doing. His university responsibilities are all there yet, and he has this other, and then we take his time for what is comparatively a trivial matter. I'd like to write him."

Oh, no, that'd never do. So they telephoned long-distance. He happened to be in Europe for his health. He'd had a heart situation. But then I wrote and I had the letter forwarded. I told him what it was I had in mind and said that I'd be delighted to come on and explain it
fully if he liked. But he'd already told me at one of these meetings, now you don't have to come on here everytime like this -- it must be a large expense. In a sense it must have seemed to him a criticism of our proposition, you see, that we'd spend all that money to come on and see him when he was already sold on it and ready to do anything under the sun for us. We had his complete confidence -- there was no question about it at all -- but I said I'd be glad to come on.

He was brought back on a stretcher, but he recovered enough, so he returned to Washington. I wrote him immediately and told him everything we had in mind. He said: "I have your letter, and at the very first opportunity I'll take it up with Eisenhower. Usually our noon luncheons are still devoted to business, but sometimes we relax a little and we sit in the lobby and just converse in a friendly manner to rest ourselves. And when the first one of those comes, I'll bring up your program."

So then I told Kelly and Hubachek and they said: "Well, you see how that is, Ober, delays and delays and delays." But he got back on a stretcher and he was soon in Washington again. Several weeks passed and we still hadn't heard. I could have been in a hotel in Washington warming my feet waiting for some opportunity to see Ike, this man who was trying to save the country. That's the way I felt about it. Maybe some of them could have done that. I don't know. But I waited and I began to get alarmed. Then one day I got a letter from Compton apologizing for the delay, and saying: "Mr. Oberholtzer, I was very sorry, but we couldn't bring this up except at some completely liesurely
opportunity when we were all relaxed and not talking about these national affairs, but I did have the opportunity yesterday noon, and I want to tell you how favorably Mr. Eisenhower reacted. I told him of my knowledge of the whole program and of you and of what had been done, and what I thought of the importance of a movement like this, and I'm sure you'll be delighted by his reply. He said, "Now, you just have Mr. Oberholtzer write me fully as to the principal aims of this movement and the various agencies with which they have to deal in Washington, and what the subject of these difficulties is in each of these agencies. And you send that on, and it'll be put in the hands of my aide, Mr. Schultz. It'll be his special mission to see that any time anything arises about this program that's causing you any kind of disquiet, you write him, and it will enable me to take it up directly with the agency involved. And you can be sure that I'll be only too glad to do that, both for you, Mr. Oberholtzer, and for my old friend, Dr. Compton." He wrote me a very nice letter. He didn't write it in his own hand, but it was signed by him. Copies went to Hubachek and Kelly. I don't know who has the original. Maybe they have it. I don't recall. I wouldn't think that they'd have the original. I think we'd give them copies. You haven't come across anything of that yet?

MISS K.: No, but I haven't handled the papers yet.

MR. O.: Well, that's an important letter. Anyway we got that, and then we had to act on it for several things afterward. Mr. Hubachek was giving his very best attention to it at the time when we called in Sig, you see, and he was trying to get a stronger committee over in Canada.
We had a wonderful man as our supporter right along. Mr. Massey, who had been Minister from Canada when I first met him. Now they have an Ambassador, but then he was called Minister. Well, the wonderful thing about Massey was that he'd never forgotten. He'd always kept in touch with me. When anything arose and we thought he ought to know about it, we notified him and he wrote the most courteous letters. And he went to all kinds of trouble, because during the war he was appointed High Commissioner to London and was there all the time. Now, I thought that it was quite a wonderful thing when a man like that, as busy as he was and on such important matters as High Commissioner to London, took the trouble before he went away to write me and say that he regretted that during that time it wouldn't be possible for him to keep track of the developments here, but that I was to be assured of his continued interest and help, wherever he could give it.

(I N T E R R U P T I O N)

MR. O.: My own impression was vague while Thye was governor. I don't recall any definite actions one way or the other that might have indicated convincingly how he stood when he was governor. When he was in the Senate a new effort was made to get action to acquire these lands, these properties that had become so dangerous for the airspace reservation. It seemed necessary to get them purchased even though the reservation had gone through under President Truman. The owners were threatening all kinds of action to break up the airspace reservation and one of the main things to be done was to purchase their properties.
Mr. Hubachek felt that the first order of the day was to consolidate that area absolutely and get all these private properties. That would mean expenditure of a large sum of money -- far more than we'd ever had before.

So then they sought in Washington (and I had nothing to do with this at all) the aid of Senator Thye and of Blatnik, who was our representative and very whole-heartedly for us, no question about that. Well, it was a strange combination, because when Blatnik was up for reelection, Thye had gone so far as to intimate, if not actually say so (I think he actually said so) that Blatnik was a Communist. It's a pretty flat-footed declaration. Maybe I'm a little mistaken in that. Maybe it wasn't quite as complete as that. But there's no question that that's what happened, the implication at least. But here they were -- both in Washington, one in the House and one in the Senate. They were the proper ones, Blatnik being the local representative and known to be very strong for our whole program, and Senator Thye was chosen in the Senate. Of course one thing that would strengthen their effect would be that they were from two different parties. Thye would be able to ask for some things and Blatnik others. So this combination was planned, of having a bill called the Thye-Blatnik Bill. Thye did cooperate in that. But that in no way concerned these very controversial issues that had arisen before. This was in the old part of Superior National Forest. President Truman had already established the airspace reservation. So both of these men were asked to sponsor legislation for appropriations to purchase these properties that had been threatening the airspace
reservation. That was called the Thye-Blatnik Bill, and that went through. I had nothing to do with the promulgation of that bill or the efforts to persuade those two men to support it. I think that Senator Thye supported it very loyally and evidently considered himself one of our best friends because when Dave Winton had this party to honor Fred and myself Thye came in. I was sitting, at the time, beside the new Governor, Freeman, who was anything but a Thye man. He sat on my right. We'd just sat down, but the proceedings hadn't started. I got up when I saw Senator Thye come in. He was walking toward me. I got up and met him and shook hands with him -- an acknowledgement of what he'd done to help us get these lands, you see. Maybe it wasn't the right thing to do. It might have offended Freeman like everything (I don't know) because we approached and shook hands like long-lost friends, you see. Of course, I'd had practically no relationship with Thye, but I did want him to know we appreciated that help which he'd given us, which was very important you see. Freeman is the same type of man as Blatnik. I think very highly of Blatnik for performance and all that sort of thing. I'm more impressed by Blatnik than I am by Freeman, even by his personality. I don't think there's any beating around the bush with Blatnik.

MR. F.: What about Senator Humphrey's role? Did he supercede Thye as your representative after he was elected two years after Thye as Senator.

MR. O.: Oh, yes, we have a very different relationship with him. I mean, it's much more personal than it ever was with Blatnik.

MR. F.: Would you say he's been as vigorous a supporter as Blatnik?

MR. O.: Oh, yes. Except that he has so many more irons in the fire, you
see. Blatnik has a lot, but Blatnik's are for his district, and
Humphrey's got so many things now that it's a wonder that he can
tend to any of them. Why, he's got the whole world to fix up. I
think he's a fine fellow, though, as far as his character is concerned
and his convictions. We're very fortunate to get a man like that.
I don't mean to say by that that he always does the perfect thing.
I think he talks too much sometimes, too, and I think he's rather
inclined to be a little wordy in that he might improve his performance
sometimes if he could check his vocabulary, you see. But I'm all for
him. I like him very much indeed. But I don't have any brotherly
feeling toward him, because he's just too much -- you don't have that
same feeling. But when you met Olson, you just were moved personally,
I think. You liked him very much and you liked to see more of him.
But I have very great admiration for Humphrey. We'd lose an awful
lot, I think, if we lost him.

MISS K: Did you know Youngdahl when he was governor?

MR. O.: No, I'm sorry to say I really never knew him. Fred knew him.
I had met his brother who used to be a great Legion man, and I liked
him very much. I guess he was a very high-grade man. I never under-
stood what happened, but it looked as if he was much more than a
politician and that he was uncomfortable as a politician (that's what
I would have guessed) and that he was only too glad to become a jurist
rather than a politician.
MISS K: Did any of your group have meetings with him, conferring about your program?

MR. O.: I might have to ask Fred about that. I think Fred would have watched that more closely than I. It was after I was down there, and I don't recall that anything came up in which he could be of immediate value to him. Fred would know, because I'm sure he would have watched that carefully, even though he was ill. I'm sure that he knew Youngdahl, because he knew his brother so very well in the Legion. I suppose this man was in the Legion, too, had had service, you see. I don't recall anything having come up, but we felt very much more comfortable about Youngdahl than we did about a lot of these people. We didn't have any such uneasiness as we did about Stassen.

MR. F.: Did the two Andersons leave any impressions -- C. Elmer, and later Elmer L.?

MR. O.: I met C. Elmer Anderson a long time ago, and they were grooming him for the office. I thought I never knew a man who was so naturally inconspicuous. No wonder I forgot him. I didn't even realize that he ever actually got there. I thought at the time when they said he was being groomed, he's being groomed because he's a man whom these groomers can certainly do anything they want with. Yes, I have to admit that. You've just brought him to mind but you know it never had even impressed me that he got there. Did he serve the whole term?

MR. F.: Yes, he succeeded Youngdahl when Youngdahl took the appointment, and then he was elected once.
MR. O.: Oh, my goodness. Well, what a change.

MR. F.: Then Freeman beat him.

MR. O.: My impression was that Youngdahl was a real man. I don't mean to say that anything had happened to this other fellow. I remember meeting him somewhere there, it seems to me back in Stassen's time. But I did get the impression of a very wishy-washy man with no convictions. Maybe it's all wrong, you see. I thought this last man you were talking about [Elmer L. Andersen] -- this last Andersen was reelected, was he?


MR. O.: That was the time when the outcome of the election took so long? Oh, yes. Well I didn't realize he'd had a full term, you see. Well, nothing happened that I know of during his administration, nothing on which we thought anything very much depended. I don't think I had any correspondence with him. The only thing that makes him stand out in my mind was the fact that he came out urging a national park up here, you see. And I felt that since he was a Republican creation, that he would never do that. I thought that it was excellent publicity for us, that it was an admission that the M & O paper people were willing, at last, to give up control of Kabetogama. But just what they had in mind in doing it was another thing, what they expected to get. I had again and again emphasized when I wrote to anybody about it that I thought the finest thing M & O could do for public relations would be to give the Kabetogama to the Federal Government, you see. It hadn't cost them an awful lot of money. I don't think it cost them a hundred
thousand dollars, and they'd taken a lot of timber off of it, and
they could write that right off on their taxes. So I thought if they
wanted to really make a great impression on the public, instead of
spending so much money on their public relations, they could give that.
It would go all over the country that they'd done that. I thought
it'd be a major stroke for the company. I think if they'd had a man
in there in charge like the present fellow I think is being groomed
for the presidency, that he might have. I wouldn't have hesitated
to go to him, and say, I think this would be the big thing to do.

MR. F.: This is Mr. Binger?

MR. O.: Yes. He's a fine fellow -- no question about it. But I
felt that Governor Andersen, being a Republican, would never come out
with such a recommendation openly the way he did, and fly up here and
everything and say that he thought it would make a glorious national
park unless he knew that this was agreeable to the M & O, which was
one of his chief supporters. I felt that he wouldn't have made such
a declaration without their having given consent and their having
some definite thing in mind. That's all I really know about him.

MR. F.: Well, that takes us through the Governors, doesn't it?

MISS K.: Yes. I'd like to ask one more question. When did you
relinquish the active headship of the Council, that is, leave the
Minneapolis office and come back up here?

MR. O.: Of course, I'd been up here mostly. I wasn't living in
Minneapolis anymore. I worked entirely from here with their consent
most of the time after the Shipstead-Nolan Act was done. I went every-
where, did everything, as if this were my office here, you see, and Fred kept that office going down in Minneapolis. There was a very large amount of travel. I'd spend weeks or months in Washington. Nearly always when I went to Washington I would go through New York, Ottawa, Toronto, and back here, with various periods spent at these different points. We were constantly trying to build up some sort of an organization in Canada, especially in the province of Ontario, which owned all the resources, you see, and which had always treated us with scant courtesy. That was on account, we know, to start with of M & O and Backus. But even after Faegre came in there, they were opposing us. They wanted rights of all sorts, and they didn't like to see our program being built up over there.

Well, finally, there were changes in the Ontario government, but it was very slow. After I got through with one of these meetings, for instance, I would have to go see a man named Kane, who was the deputy of the Lands and Forests. He was a very discourteous creature. I had to go in there and beard the lion in his den, you know, every single time, and I knew that he would just love to insult me. He came as near as outright insulting me as he could. He insulted me just the same, but he did it with the least little bit of precaution, you see, so I couldn't just start to damn him and walk out. But I knew how he felt. He felt we had no business in there at all, suggesting, interfering, or inquiring about any of their policies. I wasn't a logger; I didn't do anything in the way of industry there and my business was to keep out of it. That was part of this united -- I forget what they
call it -- but that party which is very strong in Ontario, that included the British patriots that got out of the United States at the time of the Revolution. If there is any one group that is dominant in Canada, they're the ones above all. Oh, they're very powerful. They're not the largest population, but they're wealthy, and they're intelligent, and they're very, very hostile to any kind of interference from our side. Oh my, it's a religion with them.

**MR. F.**: Which party are they, the Conservatives?

**MR. O.**: Well, they're mostly affiliated with the Conservatives, yes. And he represented them. He'd been in a long, long time, one of those old appointees who went on through one administration after another, because he knew all the men who dealt in the lumber business in there, you see. The Shevlin-Clarks, the M & O, Mathieu -- they all knew the ropes there under him, and he knew them. And most administrations (as long as everything was kept well oiled by the companies) didn't bother this man who took care of the actual details, you see. The arrangements were generally made through him as to what was to be paid per cord, and how it was to be scaled, and all those practical things, you see. When I went, I would interview many other people. We had built up a large board there of our own, with the help of Mr. Burpee after the International Join Commission had reported favorably to us and unfavorably to the Backus project. Mr. Burpee, who was the secretary of the Joint Commission on that side and who was our undying friend and Canada's greatest historian, just went all out to get us
This wonderful board -- presidents of the universities, presidents of the railroads. But it didn't really have much effect out here in the woods. In fact, when I went over there to talk and read the list of names at Fort Francis, they just damned me for it. And they said, what did those people know about conditions out here? What business had they to say anything about how these people conducted their affairs? What do the presidents of universities know about this country? They never heard of this region. They don't do so-and-so; they don't do so-and-so. Oh, they just gave me the biggest roasting for indicating that their really important men who made the whole economy and the whole reputation of the country had supported our program, you see. Oh, they didn't like that at all. They thought they should keep hands off.

Well, it's been a gradual matter of gaining, gaining, gaining. We had acquired as supporters through the years some wonderful men over there, like Massey. If ever there was a top figure in Canada in these later years, in my time, it's Mr. Massey. A marvelous, courteous fellow. When he said he was for something, he never changed. He's remained that way. That was this period we were talking about, before I felt it was time for me to stop, at least going at such a pace. I was getting to be an older man. I was throwing away the opportunities that I had to see the Indians, and of course, I found I was still so tied up. This was after the end of the last War, and I'd gone on right up to that time. It was while Franklin Roosevelt was still in Washington and Ickes was there, you see, and into the time Truman came in, and the war was over. Then the economic situation changed, and
there was a possibility of getting funds again. Mr. Kelly in a way directed operations. That is, you see, at any certain time if I didn't, of my own accord, think that I ought to go to Canada, why then he would call my attention to it, and say, I think we ought to go there -- we ought to do so-and-so. So I did a great deal more traveling than I thought was good for me, and I stayed around at all kinds of cheap boarding houses. They didn't always have money to pay for any hotel or anything like that. I had a very serious illness in Washington, which I think I picked up from food. It was a very bad case of jaundice. They didn't know for a while whether I was going to recover or not. Food poisoning, the doctor said. He said that he thought I picked it up in coffee and that it was arsenic, but we didn't know. He didn't know whether it was some internal condition at first, instead of some external thing, like that, you see.

Then there were several things that had made me feel it was time for me to go a little slower pace, aside from health and the things that I wanted to do. I thought maybe I might earn something if I had a little time to myself. I was getting only $300 a month, and prices were going up all the time, and it was harder and harder to go along on that basis. I wouldn't have asked for any more, and I was supposed to be on half-time. But there was no half-time in that kind of a thing. You'd be caught where you'd be up all night. Something would have to be done right away, you see, and when I was on there, it was always a hectic pace.

Well, then, we were defeated on the Grand Portage Road.
Ickes wasn't able to prevent them getting the right of way. It was tacked on to the appropriation bill for the Department of the Interior, you see, and that way they staked out the right-of-way any place they wanted to, and they chose what they wanted through there. Well, that was a defeat for us. It was the first real serious defeat we had had. I'd put in a lot of work on that road matter and they hadn't so much. I don't think they felt as strongly as a good many of our followers did here. Minneapolis followers were usually pretty strong for preventing that road. Well, Kelly and Hubachek don't like a defeat. Law firms are like that. And they told me very frankly: "Ober, we think you made a mistake." "Well, you didn't say so at the time," I said. "we prepared all our publicity and went ahead with a great deal of effort. I thought we all were in absolute agreement when we had our President's Committee meetings." I said, "I don't think so, and I don't think it's a fatal or a disgraceful matter to have a defeat in a thing like this. I rather think that in the end it might be to our benefit. I think it's more important to speak out and say what we think. We may be wrong, but we'd better say so anyway." But I didn't like that. It was kind of discouraging. It was the first time that anything like that had happened. Then there was this road matter over here, and most of our people that in any way knew about this situation up here or had....

MR. F.: Is this the Aticoken road?