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Interview with Judge Robert E. Quinn, July 19th, 1972

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July 19, 1972

Mr. Smith:

We left off at the events leading up to the famous January of 1935.

Judge Quinn:

Oh yes. Yes. We had talked about the filibuster days, I think and so forth. I didn't might have, I might maybe mention one thing before we leave the filibuster entirely which was, of course, in 1924. Actually, it come to a head, you know, when we had that fifty-five hour session and the Republican senators went to Rutland. Of course, we did actually have some fisticuffs...

Mr. Smith:

I was going to ask you about that this morning.

Judge Quinn:

Yes.

Mr. Smith:

Weren't you involved...

Judge Quinn:

Yes...

Mr. Smith:

...with Jack LaTendar and...

Judge Quinn:

I think I should maybe say a word or two about that.

Mr. Smith:

Quite a bit bigger than you.

Judge Quinn:

Oh, he was very much...He must have weighed around 250 pounds.

He was a big man. And, of course, I always weighed about 160, I would say. I was relatively small. But we had begun and, you know I had talked, I guess, a couple of hours. I think John McGrane was talking. He'd talk a couple of hours and so forth. And I had gone out through the Senate Lobby. From the Senate Chamber you went into the hallway, really, that ran from one side of the

building to the other. And then there was the Senate Lobby where the big easy chairs were there for the convenience of the Senators lined up along the wall. And then it went out onto a stone porch. There were big windows where you could walk in and out, you know. There were, oh I don't know, fifteen feet high, I presume they are there. In any event, I was I had gone out through one of those windows, was sitting out on the balcony and getting a little fresh air and a little rest and John Powers who was then the senator from Cumberland; he was the representative of one of the textile unions, I think. But, he was the senator from Cumberland anyway. As I came in from the window to go back toward the Senate Chamber, Powers stopped me and said, "Hey, you'd better look out." I said, "Well, what's the matter, John?" "Well," he said, "LaTendar carries a rod, you know." So I said, "Well, what do I care what he carries?" I don't, I don't give a damn about LaTendar or any of his friends. And about that time, LaTendar who had apparently had been looking over my shoulder as I sat out on the stone porch there with his hands twitching according to what Senator Powers told me was ready to grab me and

and drop me over the railing about 15 or 20 feet below, took a swing. I had come back and was along that line of chairs where the senators sat down, smoked and so forth. He took a swing at me and he hit me on the cheek.

Mr. Smith:

Grazing the bone...

Judge Quinn:

He just grazed. I could feel it. It was... It burned, you know. It hit me on the cheek and knocked me back toward one of the chairs so that I really got a kind of a spring. In other words, I backed on the chair, but that gave me a purchase to spring forward and he had a cigar in his mouth and I hit him back. I knocked the cigar right down his throat. And I knocked two of his front teeth out. So there was actual, of course, actual physical encounter and then, of course, in addition to that you had Tooth's Murray and his pals from Boston who were definitely gunmen around the corridors at that time and so feelings were running pretty high. In other

words, it wasn't just talk. There was actually some physical action involved involved in the matter.

Mr. Smith:

Judge , what kind of men were Peck and Pelky ?

Judge Quinn:

Well, Fred Peck, of course, would be, well, you might consider him an aristocrat and a blue-blood. I would say the Peck family were Yankee- old line Yankee type. Made millions in the mill business. Had that baronial palace or home down there in Barrington which is now Barrington College. Beautiful, beautiful estate, of course, Peck had, and a beautiful house. Beautiful libraries. I mean the man was a rich man. And I'd say there might be some dispute about it, if you say he was one of the old-line blue-bloods. Maybe he wasn't but at least he was a rich man. He was a Yankee I and would say identified with the aristocracy in the state mostly. How are you, young man? That was the mailman.

Pelky, of course was not a rich man in his own right. He had been city clerk of the city of Providence here for years and years.

And I think perhaps was a man of very modest means and became the chairman of the Republican state committee about 1920 I would think and remained until 1935 and he undoubtedly was an agent of Fred Peck.

I really think that Fred Peck during the time between 1920 when he first became finance commissioner, head of the finance committee of the house, and finance commissioner which required every bill that was introduced in the legislature carrying an appropriation to be referred to his committee--his approval or disapproval. And if he disapproved it, that was it. It was disapproved. I think he was the real boss of the R^Epublican Party in those days. He certainly had that finances it, and probably had access to many other rich men in the State of Rhode Island who contributed liberally to the R_epublican organization. He was not, however, a Metcalf man. Jesse Metcalf of course ran for the United States Senate in ...

Mr. Smith:

'24.

Judge Quinn:

in 1924 and beat Peter Genry as I remember it.

Mr. Smith:

Well, Metcalf had broken with the Republican Party in 1907

I believe.

Judge Quinn:

That's right. That's right. He had. I think the Metcalf organization, the Journal, and so forth had broken with the Republican Party. But whether it was as a result of the filibuster or whether it was as a result of the ending of the war, I don't know exactly why. But at least Jesse Metcalf, I don't think Steve Metcalf who was the chairman of the board of the Providence Journal Co., his brother, both immensely rich men, I don't think they broke with the Democrats over any local policies, but perhaps it might be as a result of Bill Flynn's election in 1922 and the filibuster and so

forth led Jesse Metcalf to go on over ~~to~~ the Republican Party.

I think perhaps they solicited him because of the money he could make available and, of course, the Power of the Providence Journal Co. But he was the candidate for U.S. senator in 1924. That's the time I think they resurrected old Governor Pothier and brought him back to run for governor. So it was a combination I think of perhaps the Metcalf family, Peck and Pelky forces at that time.

Mr. Smith:

You just mentioned the fact, Judge, the power of the Journal. From, because you've been involved five or six decades in politics ...but in general its always a contention, of course, since at least '38 when the other paper ends its operations. The Tribune, the Star Tribune, which had been originally a Geary paper...

Judge Quinn:

Yes.

Mr. Smith:

....Into O'Hara's hands. Would it be fair to say that the Journal has had an inordinate amount of power as the voice of so-called unbiased politics and...

Judge Quinn:

I think the Journal has been the powerful force in the... Perhaps it always was even back before my time. Of course, when John R. Ratham was the editor of the Providence Journal which goes back almost before my...I can remember him. Yes, but, of course he was a powerful editorial writer and he was very pro British, you know in the first war. And, of course, really it's been the only paper in general circulation in the state. Now, Gerry did buy the old Providence News which really belonged to a man named Brown in 1920, say in 1920. In the teens. I think Gerry bought it just before he was going to run for Senator in 1922. That's my recollection. Of course, the paper had a very small circulation. I think when Gov. Brown, he was either an ex-governor or an ex-lieutenant governor...

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BERRY did not lose in 1922.

He defeated Beeckman and
was the top vote getter in the
state for the Democratic Party.

He did lose in 1928 to Herbert

Flynn loss to Metcalf in 1924.

When he ran the paper, I think the circulation was less than a thousand. Very small. But Gerry bought it and bought in some newspaper men from New York. And he built up the circulation to a respectable number. I'd say in 1922, when he ran for Senator I think the Providence News at that time, maybe had a circulation of 20 to 25000. In other words it was a useful instrument for him and I think he made some use of it. But, of course, after his defeat in 1920...he was defeated by Metcalf.

Mr. Smith:

He lost in '22.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, he was defeated by Jesse Metcalf and he still continued on and of course ran. He ran again in ...

Mr. Smith:

'28

Judge Quinn:

...and was beaten by Felix Hebert. Then he ran again in '34

as I remember.

Mr. Smith:

Now, would it be fair to say that your uncle's wing of the Party or group from the Party opposed Gerry pretty much, especially after '28 ?

Judge Quinn:

I don't think they opposed him in the first instance. In fact, I think when he ran for Congress, my uncle perhaps supported him. I don't think he could have got that nomination in the 2nd Congressional district without my uncle's support. So I think he was with him then. In 1922 I think perhaps he also supported him for the nomination. Quite sure that he did. Now by 1928, there had begun to be a rift certainly between my uncle's forces and Gerry's forces. General Hamilton had come in and had taken charge to some extent and had tried to elect J. Howard McGrath chairman of the state committee in 1926. And when my uncle was supporting Louie DePasquale and was able to put him back as state chairman, there was certainly difference of opinion at that time and perhaps from that time on. I would say there would be definitely two factions, perhaps: Quinn faction and the Gerry faction. So that in 1928 I would say that Patrick H. Quinn would probably be opposing him for the nomination. I'm sure that he supported him for election. He was always that

kind of a Democrat who probably supported any Democrat who was nominated for office.

Mr. Smith:

And I think you predicted Mayor Daly right, too. You said that he'd...

Judge Quinn:

Yes, I think he will support the ticket, I mean his statement yesterday, I think...

Mr. Smith:

Will go along... but not as a Democrat.

Judge Quinn:

He's not enthusiastic. But, I, well, for his own sake I think he has to more or less go down the line. It's true that his power is concentrated in Cook County, but having the governor of the state of Illinois and having the President and having the district attorney, all, all leans considerable to Mayor Daly. He's facing insurgent forces in the city itself, so that I don't think Mayor Daly could afford to actually oppose the Democratic ticket nationally and in his heart I think he finds it difficult to support President Nixon. So that here in Rhode Island at that time there was definitely a division emerging, but I'm sure that almost all good Democrats supported Senator

Gerry in 1928. It was a very close election. Al Smith carried the state as you remember. Alberic Archambault was our candidate for Governor. Of course he was definitely a Quinn man, you know, came from West Warwick. So I, I campaigned for the ticket very strenuously and I'm sure that all our people did everything we could do to put it across. But, of course, money was still very scarce and well, Smith carried the state. I think, maybe one of the things that helped him more than anything else, of course, was the prohibition issue, the "Wet Issue". The first time in our history that Italians in large numbers came over and supported the ticket, but I think maybe they voted for Smith and then maybe, stopped there, you know, didn't go the rest of the way. But from then on I think the bulk of the Italian vote in Rhode Island became Democratic, could be counted in the Democratic count.

Mr. Smith:

Would it be fair to say as a...I didn't bring Levine along with me, Judge, But he intimates that Gerry actually paid people off a number of times got support within the state with checks, \$13000 in 1930 for supposedly for campaign, but he intimates that maybe some of this money went towards making sure he got votes at the State Conventions and so forth. And I know at one time you did call him "Money Bags". That was a quote I've never seen in the paper.

Judge Quinn:

I don't recall ~~that~~, Matt, to tell the truth. I probably did, but I haven't any recollection of it and of course he was a very rich man. No question for what Senator Gerry was among the multi-millionaires of the country. I think the Gerry family probably was well worth over a hundred million dollars.

Mr. Smith:

I think that's tremendous for those days.

Judge Quinn:

It really was...in other words, very rich. Although I think the Gerry's were richer than the Metcalfs actually. Theodore Green was a rich man in the ordinary sense of the word, but I would say perhaps his fortune would be limited to, well, three or four million dollars, I would think would be tops for Green which was a lot of money. But, I think the Gerry family ran into the hundreds of millions and the Metcalf family certainly was a very rich family because as I say, I know the income of the two men. Steve Metcalf paid a tax of \$36000, income tax in 1916 and Jesse paid \$330000. Of course that indicated that their income at that time was probably a million dollars a piece. And if a man's income is a million dollars, why you can figure ~~that~~ his fortune is probably forty or fifty million, I presume. I

don't know exactly. But they were rich men. The Metcalf family still a rich family.

But, however I think that little incident indicates that the feeling, the feeling was running pretty high in the days of the filibuster. And you probably understand how the Republican Party would go to the extent of taking the entire membership in the Senate and bringing them up to Rutland, Massachusetts and keeping them there until the following January. They were actually, I think afraid of the young Democrats in the state of Rhode Island at that time.

Mr. Smith:

I would have to say that that strategy must have been well laid out.

I mean between the bomb and immediately leaving the state and outside the jurisdiction of the state authorities staying there until actually, what is it, six months, Judge, seven months?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, it was over six months. Yes, about seven months. Oh, I think so.

We want to remember that at that time practically all the power, the money, the deputy sheriffs, the law enforcement officers, the state controlled police commissions, practically all law enforcement officers were under the control of the Republican Party. And then the mill owners, of course, also supplied a substantial amount of money each election. Pelky told me himself that in 1924 the Republican state committee had

\$250000...

Mr. Smith:

...to spend...

Judge Quinn:

...to use on election day. On the 1924 election which, of course would be infinitely more than...~~the~~ Democrats would be lucky if they had \$10000 in that election. That's probably all they had. But he told me himself that they had \$250000.

Mr. Smith:

Well, I know that seems to ^{be} one of your pet themes: the power of money in politics. You said it not only here in the state but nationally...

Judge Quinn:

Certainly, it's much more powerful than it ought to be, Matt.

And I think even in this election its going to be a powerful force. The Republican Party in the nation had got almost an unlimited supply of money. I mean, I think by their own admission they have something like 50 million dollars to use. Whereas the Democrats, of course are still in debt. They did cut down the debt from 9 million to 5 million. Yes, that still leaves them 4 million in debt and certainly our presidential candidate I don't think is going to tap much of the big interests of

of the country. He may succeed in his program to get a million people to contribute \$25 a piece which would give the Democratic Party 25 million. And that would be ample-that would be more than they ought to have. I don't think any party ought to have 25 million in the presidential campaign. But it's a powerful force. I mean we, we sought time after time after time. But we weren't lily white. In other words no question during the times when Senator Gerry ran for Senator and he ran several times, he supplied a substantial amount of money for use by the Democratic party. Mostly for his own personal use but the Democrats benefited from it;whether he actually paid people for votes I, I just don't know that.

Mr. Smith;

I think that when I said you used the term "Money bags " around 1932, before one of the conventions, before one of the state conventions that term came up, I think you ran for governor in '32, '34 again. Was it '34 ?

Judge Quinn:

For senator.

Mr. Smith:

For senator, for senator, excuse me. You ran for senator in '28, '30, then '34.

Judge Quinn:

That's right, that's right.

Mr. Smith:

It was just before that.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, well.

Mr. Smith:

Of course, after 1916-1924, then out to '28, '30, he must have been a well-known I mean a well-worn figure at least in Rhode Island. And I would think within the party. I mean a man so many times, would not have a chance of coming back were it not for his money.

Judge Quinn:

Well, I, I...

Mr. Smith:

I wouldn't think he would have held this great personal popularity among the rank and file of the party or to a large degree say among the public in general.

Judge Quinn:

Well, I think that's right. He wasn't a personally popular

individual. He didn't have too much personality. He was a likeable man, but he couldn't talk and he certainly wasn't a "Hail fellow", while, Matt...so I think his assets were money and the men he brought in from New York to work for him: General Hamilton and Harvey Baker.

Mr. Smith:

Harvey Baker.

Judge Quinn:

Well, Harvey Baker, of course, was a local man and a very well respected man, too. Fine man Harvey Baker was. But there was a man named Garrison he brought in to edit the paper and one or two more from New York that were definitely imports into the state of Rhode Island, and I think they were... their main interest was building up Peter G. Gerry. I don't think they cared particularly for the Democratic Party as such. They were here to work for him and build him up and I think they put him with the Times working for him.

Mr. Smith:

And probably the same thing with Green. Of course, Green has been beaten a number of times.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, he had. He'd been beaten for [~]Congress, beaten for Governor, and was not, not too popular an individual. I would in other words, Green couldn't talk very well either, you know. He was a well educated man. But he certainly was

not an orator and not a mixer. So, I think, I think Eddy Higgins, who was Green's secretary from the time that he was Governor in 1932 until he ended his terms in the Senate, I think Eddy Higgins was the key man. I think he was working for him 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Mr. Smith:

What I find ironic, Judge, is that that Democratic Party composed almost entirely of ethnic groups in this state as it grew in the period after the turn of the century right through the thirties. Having its top leadership being the 2 Yankee, 2 members of the Yankee establishment in the sense of Gerry and, of course, Green. I know you represent probably along with your uncle and Higgins earlier 1906 and 1907 the first really permanent thrust of an Irish politician that would cover a series of decades. Then, of course, those individuals that came along in the thirties like McGrath and others that projected themselves into the fifties, really, of course, you would say that things are going different in '45, actually '46. It might have been a different story of who were in the U.S. Senate. But you would have to emerge at least in the 20's as the key Irish politician. The key leader of the party statewide along with Lowell, E.F. Congdon, others, but you seem to have the staying power that continue after the elective office whereas Congdon went on the bench or McCoy got pushed out to one side in Pawtucket and

others. Would you care just to comment ~~that~~, you know, leadership of the party was somewhat in the hands somewhat of the Yankee establishment.

Judge Quinn:

Well, I...

Mr. Smith:

Of course, I won't belittle by any way Green's longterm interest in the party and his love of Thomas Dore.

Judge Quinn:

No...

Mr. Smith:

...which I believe was quite sincere.

Judge Quinn:

Oh, I do... I think Green really had the interest of the party at heart in those days. But, you want to remember that in those days, the turn of the century that most of our leaders were Yankees like Governor Davis who was elected Governor in 1890 and 1891 and Governor Garvin was, of course elected Governor in 1901 and 1902. I think served 2 terms before Governor Higgins. Many of the leaders in those days were Yankees. Louis W. Waterman who ran for Governor in 1911, 1912 was a Yankee. Of course, Addison P. Monroe who ran for Governor in 1916 was a Yankee. In other words, we had many, many leaders of the Democratic party in the

first quarter of the century that were Yankees. So that Dick Comstock who was national committeeman along say in 1910-1915 or head of the firm of Comstock and Canning, of course was a Yankee, but a very, very prominent Democrat. So that there were a lot of Yankee lawyers and Yankee businessmen who were leaders in the Democratic Party in those days. So it wasn't only, of course Gerry was definitely an import from New York. In other words he wasn't a Rhode Islander. He came in here and I think by liberal use of his money, why he established a stronghold here in the 2nd congressional district and then as a result of the strikes in 1921 and 1922, he got into the Senate. But, he definitely was a New Yorker. In other words, I don't think you could identify Peter Gerry with the state of Rhode Island before he came here as a very young man in 1914. Of course, Green's family would go back to the Revolutionary War. So he wasn't an import, but I think Green's principles were Democratic. As I say I don't think his personality or his ability to talk or his identity with the local people in the counties would have put him through without the aid of Eddy Higgins. I think Eddie Higgins did an awful lot to get Green in and keep him in.

Mr. Smith:

Did Green have an unpleasant personality or a difficult one to get along with?

Mr. Smith:

Well, I never had any trouble getting along with him, Matt.

But he wasn't, he wasn't exactly the kind of a fellow that you'd really enjoy going to the football games with or the baseball games with or...he's maintained, of course, that he was a bit of an athlete. He did play tennis. Never played golf to my knowledge. I, I wouldn't think that he would be the kind of a man that you would warm up to really. But he never was disagreeable with me. I never had any difficulties with Theodore Green. We had differences of opinion now and then but I believed the principles that he believed in...Thomas W. Doré, by the way, Thomas W. Doré is an ancestor of my wife's people...

Mr. Smith:

I understood that.

Judge Quinn:

...with the Doré family. But I more or less agreed with Theodore Francis' philosophy I think generally. But, I wouldn't...I don't think he'd be the kind of man I'd want to chum around with to be honest with you.

Mr. Smith:

I see. I see. Well, maybe I can turn this tape over. You want to get back to '35 let's say. I found very interesting what you said about the dinner

out in Pawtucket.

Judge Quinn:

Oh yes, that was a dinner for Joe Fay as I remember it. He was the football coach I think of the Central Falls football team I guess, maybe, maybe basketball, baseball, too, but anyway he's quite a famous athletic figure in Central Falls. And I know we were at the dinner and sitting with me was Frank Congdon. I think he sat on one side of me and Tom McCoy was sitting on the other side of me. I know they were both there and it was after the election and the question came up as to the future and I know I talked to them both about the possibilities of making some progress as far as the judicial system of the state of Rhode Island was concerned. I think I've said before and maybe I should reiterate that we, the Democratic party wasn't exactly ruthless in this matter of just taking the judges off the bench and putting their own people on. We had explored, the leaders of the party had explored the situation about a couple of the judges resigning from the Supreme Court. You see, the Supreme Court consisted of five Republicans, Superior Court consisted of eight Republicans and one Democrat, George W. Brown.

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Judge Quinn:

District Court, nine on the Superior Court, five on the Supreme Court.

Nine, fourteen, twenty-seven judges in the state of Rhode Island and there was only one of those judges a Democrat. That was George W. Brown on the Superior Court. He, of course, became a candidate for Governor in 1922. But Bill Flynn beat him in the Convention. The regular ticket in 1922 endorsed by the organization supported by my uncle was George W. Brown and Albert B. West. George W. Brown was going to run for Governor and Albert B. West was going to run for Lieutenant Governor in 1922. But Bill Flynn upset the apple cart in that Convention and got the nomination by rather a narrow margin, but nevertheless, he got it. And then, of course, Felix Toupin was pulled out of the air. I don't think-very few people had ever heard of Felix Toupin in 1922. Of course, he had been up in the Assembly, however, from Lincoln for one term and had played some part in that Bill Peck proposition which I think played a significant part in the election of 1922. But the ticket, the regular ticket was supposed to be George Brown and Al West. Albert West was, I think then senator from Providence. But the organization lost out and Bill Flynn was nominated and he was elected.

Now I guess that's when I first ran for Senator from the town of West Warwick, I was also

elected in November of 1922. Now the main, I think the main reason why the Democrats won in 1922 was because of the strikes, the textile strikes in the Pawtuxet and Blackstone Valleys. I would say that was the greatest contributing factor to our victory.

Mr. Smith:

This fellow Brown that got defeated in the Convention, he went on from the Convention He became the only Democrat. He was on '35...

Judge Quinn:

He was on the bench at that time...

Mr. Smith:

Oh, he was on the bench at that time.

Judge Quinn:

He was on the bench at that time. He was the only Democrat on the bench in 1922. And he remained on the bench for some time. But he was not involved in the 1935 change.

Mr. Smith:

Now it took a great deal of courage to work out this plan, Judge, in the sense of taking into, well, of course, the Republicans had never granted life-time tenure to the Supreme Court.

Judge Quinn:

No.

Mr. Smith:

And that was their...one of their weaknesses in their overall control of the state as far as the judgeships went, right ?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, of course, if they had had the foresight to establish life tenure which should have probably been then long on the roll. Most, well of course, the Federal Courts were all life tenure. But many, many state courts only served for terms, you know: eight years, twelve years, fourteen years in New York , thirteen years in Pennsylvania. So it's not unusual and from the standpoint of the Republican organization it was a tactical mistake for them not to have changed the constitution to give the judges life tenure. But they didn't. And so in 1935 when we came into power, of course there was that loophole which gave us the opportunity to by a concurrent vote of both houses to declare the places vacant. Now, I was saying, I think that we, we weren't ruthless about this matter. In other words we weren't just anxious to get those five places on the bench for five democrats that we wanted to award; we thought there ought to be a fair distribution of the judicial power of the State.

Mr. Smith:

Now when you say "we ", Judge, you mean the Governor, Green, along with the

individuals that were meeting with you that you described last time.[?]

Judge Quinn:

Yes, I would say all of those men who were in that conference felt that way. I didn't know the time I talked about the matter at that dinner for Joe Flynn^{Flynn} in Central Falls, But I knew there was some feeling abroad that something ought to be done, because this is definitely established, Matt. Everytime that a political case ever came before the Rhode Island Supreme Court it was a one way street.

In other words, the Democratic party had no chance in political matters before the Rhode Island Supreme Court. In all other matters, I would say in all civil cases, the old court was as fair as any court could be. Certainly during my time as a lawyer and arguing cases before the Rhode Island Supreme Court, I certainly got everything that I was entitled to. I think if anything I may have got more than I was entitled to. I would say if you looked through the Rhode Island Reports in those days, you'll find that I won may more cases than I lost. So I never could complain about fair and just treatment. They were absolutely all right, completely fair as far as the ordinary civil or criminal case was concerned. But when it came to a political case, then it was a closed door. In other words, no man representing the Democratic party had anywhere near an equal chance before the old Rhode Island Supreme Court. So that really was the justification for taking some action.

In other words we knew that the majority of lawyers in the state of Rhode Island by 1922 would be Democratic. And the ablest lawyers of the bar as far as trial lawyers were concerned certainly would be Democratic. Now there were undoubtedly fine lawyers in the sense of corporation lawyers, tax lawyers, probate lawyers and so forth among the members of the Republican party. No doubt about that, but as far as trial lawyers, men who actually went into court and argued cases in the superior and supreme court I think certainly the Democrats were in the majority. And so we concluded that fairness indicated that there ought to be a change in the judicial structure. And so we sounded out some leading Republicans. Jim Conley was one, but Jim had been lieutenant governor.

Mr. Smith:

Right. You mentioned that you spoke to him along with the state chairman to ascertain if two would step down.

Judge Quinn:

And also Dan McLaughlin who Senator from East Providence who was a leading Republican. I'd spoken to Dan. In fact I think we'd sounded out, I think several, several leading Republicans. I'd never talked to Fred Peck about it and he probably was the most powerful Republican in office at that time. But we had tried to determine whether or not one or two of the older members of the Supreme Court would be willing to resign and let us go ahead and put a Democrat on in his place.

Now the Governor couldn't nominate a judge to the Supreme Court. That had to be done by the legislature, elected by the Grand Committee of the legislature, same as it is today. But we were sounding out. In other words, would Jerome Hahn who was getting old in years it seems to me or Jerry Ratham or Charlie Stearns, would they be willing to step aside, retire with a pension? We weren't asking them to sacrifice themselves, except that they'd have to get off the bench. But the answer was no. In fact I think we even intimated if they could get two or three of them to resign, that we wouldn't have any objection to putting Jim Conley, for instance, back as a Republican member of the bench if they wanted somebody like that. I'm quite sure we made that intimation. But we got no favorable response. In other words, as far as our negotiations were concerned, it would be like Le Duc Thieu. The answer was no. They made no headway. So there was no chance to get anything through negotiations. And so then it was that I came to a conclusion that there was another way of doing it. So that was what I talked to Frank Congdon and Tom McCoy about at that dinner. In other words, Tom McCoy was really the leader of the city of Pawtucket. There wasn't any question. He was a force in the city of Pawtucket. Frank Congdon was a very popular man out through the Blackstone Valley and in his district.

I think he definitely got a bigger vote than any other man in that district, something like John Fogarty was in years succeeding. But we talked it over and they agreed with me that it was worth exploring. In other words, they agreed that I had an idea that ought to be looked into. And so^{it} was that I then went to Governor Green and Eddy Higgins and told them what I thought might be done and suggested that we had matters that the party ought to talk over. And we then decided to get together what we concluded would be the leaders of the party. And that would be in November of 1934. Yes, November of 1934. And so during that month we held several meetings. I think that Green and I and Higgins and perhaps Tom Kenney^{ry}. I think he was then the state chairman as I remember rightly, concluded that we ought to get together a kind of a general conference of the Democratic party. And we agreed that we ought to have the five general officers: the Speaker of the House, the Democratic Leader of the House, the Democratic leader of the Senate, the Chariman of the State Committee, the Representative of the U.S. Senators and the Congressmen. We had Frnak Congdon and O'Connell I think.

Mr. Smith:

O'Connell.

Judge Quinn:

...were the congressmen at that time. Each of them would either be a

part of the meeting or have their representatives there. And Harvey Baker represented Peter Gerry during those conferences as I recall it.

Mr. Smith:

There were always secret and held where?

Judge Quinn:

They were held in the Governor's office, all held in the Governor's office. Every one of them as I recall it was held in the Governor's office. Now, how or why they were kept as secret as they were, is a mystery that will never be explained. I don't think even that there was an injunction by the Governor or myself that nobody should say anything. In fact, I don't think there was any concerted attempt to make sure that nothing ever went out of that room. I'm almost certain that there wasn't. But the members of the conference as I say were those that I mentioned plus the chairman of the City Committees of Providence, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket. Of course, that brought in McCoy; he was Chairman of the City Committee of Pawtucket. And I think there was a definite attempt made to include maybe what you'd call the "warring forces" of the Party; in other words, the McCoy faction and the Gainer faction. I suppose they might be referred to as that.

I suppose Green and Gainer—they were in the same office. McCoy, Congdon, and Flynn were certainly identified as being a part of the same group.

There's no doubt about that. But we tried to have all factions, I think fairly representative. And I think the conference was well composed - in other words, the five general officers; the Speaker of the House, the Leader of the Democratic Party in the House, the State Chairman, the Congressmen, Senators, o~~F~~ a representative of them and the Party chairman of the big cities where our votes came from.

Mr. Smith:

Now, one of the key things, of course, was the Supreme Court appointment that you described last time to a degree. Other parts of that famous day was the re-organization of the state, getting rid of the budget office and the whole committee structure, Then it went right down to the city of Providence, getting rid of the police force and police commissioner. Then who came up with these various ideas, I think the state reorganization... again, I can understand fully why it was needed. If anything we were operating with antiquated and I wouldn't think too efficient type of operation.

Judge Quinn:

We had eighty-five boards and commissions, Matt, that were running in the state of Rhode Island. The Governor was the figurehead,

really. In other words, he was the chief executive, but he had no power except to appoint his own secretary, ^{and} barber commissioner. That was the extent of his power of appointment, except that, of course, in 1934, he appointed the head of the State Police. Now, of course, the State Police was created in 1925, as I recall. And so it ~~was~~ ^{was} a new act. It didn't come under the old 1901 Act that Charlie Brayton got there to preserve the power of the Senate. In other words, under that act, all the executive power in name presided in the Governor. But they put through that act that provided that if the Governor sent in a nomination of the public utilities commissioner and the Senate didn't like it, they'd lay it on the table for three days and then under the 1901 Act they had the power to elect their own man. And that applied to all these boards and commissions. So while you elected a Governor you'd actually get no executive power. The administrative power still remained in the Senate. Now, when they put through the Act in 1905 creating the State Police, the old 1901 act didn't apply to that because the act took place after 1901. And they didn't provide in that 1925 act that the same conditions would apply. Perhaps, because of the tremendous victory in 1924, they'd never thought they'd need it. In other words we slipped back from

...we had eighteen senators in 1923, nineteen if you counted Frank Grinnell from Tiverton who was an independent who voted with us whenever we could ever get another one. But we slipped back, I think to six senators, you know, in January 1925.

Mr. Smith:

two-thirds loss.

Judge Quinn:

And so we just got murdered. And so I presume that by the time they created the State Police, which after all, I suppose was basically created for the purpose of taking care of the mill barons of the State, protecting them because of the strikes of 1922.

Mr. Smith:

What about Prohibition, Judge ? Was it pretty widely disregarded in the state as far as the law itself ? Just your general impressions of the twenties here.

Judge Quinn:

I'd say yes. It was pretty widely disregarded certainly as far as the Italian people are concerned. They were still making their wine and drinking their wine at the banquets and so forth and I would say it was

generally disregarded, Matt.

Mr. Smith:

I know my father came here in '29. He came in '29. He said it was pretty widely...

Judge Quinn:

I think it was all through. Of course, by that time you were getting almost to the stage of repeal. You know, by '29. But there was a great deal of enthusiasm among a lot of people for it, you know in the early twenties. But it was never popular, never was ratified by the state of Rhode Island. And there was a general disregard and "rum-running", of course up Narragansett Bay was an everyday and everynight thing. Many of our rum-runners got rich by bringing liquor up Narragansett Bay or into East Greenwich Bay or into other, ...Wickford you know, and so forth.

I think many millions were made by fellows who ran the boats in...

We had a man down there in Warwick Neck. As a matter of fact his place was next to Senator Gerry's who had a secret cellar, you know, to run the boat in and unload and so forth and then an elevator up to a room above.

Reddick, his name was Reddick.

Mr. Smith:

That's right. Carl Reddick.

Judge Quinn:

Right.

Mr. Smith:

Carl was it?

Judge Quinn:

I think as a matter of fact, I think you may know the people who bought the house afterwards. Their names were Dunn.

Mr. Smith:

Dunn...

Judge Quinn:

In fact, I think young Dunn is the secretary or treasurer of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick here. His family bought the place, but Carl Reddick bought that place and they had the secret passage underneath where he could run in there and unload and so forth. Of course, he also was supposed to have been mixed up in the Fall River post office robbery, you know. \$129,000 in stamps were stolen in the post office robbery along the twenties and Reddick was supposed to be involved in that hold up. That I don't know. That was a rumor.

Mr. Smith:

He was eventually murdered, wasn't he, Judge?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, I'm sure he was.

Mr. Smith:

I remember reading that case in the newspaper. It caused quite a commotion.

Judge Quinn:

Well, he was one of the main "rum-runners". But there were many of them. Two men down in Pawtuxet Neck. Two- they were represented usually by Peter McKiernan who was their lawyer. Two Irishmen they were- they would be something like our friend- what's the Italian man's name now that's serving the term at Atlanta, you know...

Mr. Smith:

Patriarca.

Judge Quinn:

Patriarca. Well, somewhere along that line. There were several fairly prosperous "rum-runners" that were using Narragansett Bay in the days of Prohibition. It never was popular in Rhode Island, I'm sure. And I think there was a man named Joe Fitzpatrick, a lawyer named Joe Fitzpatrick. There were two Joe Fitzpatricks. One of them is living today,

you know, I think. This was "big Joe" they call him. I think he's dead and I think he died under rather mysterious circumstances as I recall it. But he represented a lot of the boot and also there was a fellow named Dan Hagan. Dan Hagan was a lawyer for many of the "rum-runners. He was the partner of a man named Jake Rosenfeld who was definitely a cog in the Republican organization. And they represented an awful lot of the people who were "rum-running" in those days. But, of course, the Democratic party as far as I had anything to do with never had anything to do with "rum-runners" or with people who were representing the gambling interests. Mike Slattery, of course, was one of the big gamblers of the state in the days when I was a young fellow. And he was tied up with Jim Dooley who came from Johnston and who afterwards president of Narragansett Track.

Mr. Smith:

Certain towns like Central Falls and later Woonsocket were wide open towns.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, yes they were.

Mr. Smith:

From what I can read, Pawtucket to a degree, of course being

right adjacent to Central Falls also enjoyed a reputation at least...

Judge Quinn:

Yes, of course. Pawtucket in the days before McCoy, I guess was definitely controlled by Isaac Gill and...

Mr. Smith:

Barney somebody.

Judge Quinn:

Barney Deenan who ran a barber shop and who was the father of Joe Keenan who became a very prominent lawyer in Washington in the Roosevelt era, you know...was afterwards sent to Japan I think, after the war to work on some of the treaties and so forth, very prominent lawyer. He's great friends with Higgins, I think. I believe I played some part in that. But Ike Gill I think ran the city of Pawtucket with an iron hand. He had control of the city of Pawtucket. No question about that. If Peck and Pelky had control of the state of Rhode Island, Ike Gill had control of the city of Pawtucket. And Central Falls- there was another fellow out there- Andrew, he's a Polish fellow. I can't think of his name- Andrew something who was pretty much the boss of the city of Central Falls. And, of course, Jack LaTendar was one of the big shots down there in the city of Woonsocket. Jack, of course, Jack was a gambler and a racketeer.

There's no two ways about it.

Mr. Smith:

Yes, he's- of course, he's the fellow...

Judge Quinn:

He's the fellow that I had the fight with.

Mr. Smith:

He hung on right on through the twenties into the thirties.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, yes he did.

Mr. Smith:

Always an enemy, Judge?

Judge Quinn:

No, not in the sense of being a personal enemy, Matt. I remember very well him meeting me down on Westminster St. at the Turks Head Building sometime perhaps in 1925 or '26. I would say, oh this is kind of a guess, but I remember him sticking out his hand, shaking hands and showing friendship. In other words, he wanted to make it plain that he had no hard feelings and so forth. But, the forces, the underworld forces had some part to play in the Republican organization in those days, although I'm satisfied that perhaps as far as the Metcalfs were concerned or Peck or many of the

Republican leaders probably no direct contact. But I think as far as Bill Pelky was concerned, the state chairman, but Bill had liasons between the forces in the underworld all during the period of the twenties.

Mr. Smith:

Well, maybe since we only have a few minutes left and you have an appointment for lunch. If we take the last five minutes and I want to ask you your impression of maybe Harkins, Hickey, and Keough, the three prelates, Catholic prelates of the period. If you wanted to say anything about them. Do you have any recollections of them?

Judge Quinn:

Of course. Bishop Harkins, Matt, goes back a little bit before my time. Actually I haven't any personal recollection. Of course, I remember Harkins Hall at Providence College was named after Bishop Harkins. I think perhaps, he was dead at that time.

Mr. Smith:

Just a, of course he experienced senility from about 1914 on in varying degrees with his mind. By roughly 1918-1919, I think they brought Hickey in as co-adjutor. *He is a late arrival being the youngest of the three and was not with them until 1918 or 1919.* Of course, Peter Blessing was around. I think.

Judge Quinn:

Father Blessing, you know, he was the pastor of St. Michael's.

right, wasn't he?

Mr. Smith:

Right.

Judge Quinn:

Of course. I know Father Blessing quite well. But I never knew Bishop Harkins. I would say I never knew him well.

Mr. Smith:

Harkins passed on in '21 and Hickey came in.

Judge Quinn:

Of course, mu...

Mr. Smith:

But effectively to the pattern for the preceding three-four years, it was Hickey that was in firm control that handled everything.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, well I think my first recollection, as I say I have no recollection of Bishop Harking except that I of course, I knew they were going to name Harkins Hall after him and I was glad to have him do it and so forth. But Bishop Hickey, of course, came into power I would say about the time I became a lawyer, just after the war. Of course I started to practice

law. I was admitted to the bar in 1917. I actually hadn't completed my course in Harvard Law School. But I came, I took the bar examination in 1917 and I passed the bar. So I was a lawyer, a lawyer. Then I went...

Mr. Smith:

Well, you said, Judge, you probably could have taken it in 1910 and passed it.

Judge Quinn:

No, it was quite a job but anyway I became a lawyer and then went to war and came back in 1919 and so I was then a practicing lawyer. So I started practicing law. Now, that was about the time I guess when Bishop Hickey really took over the diocese. And I didn't know him personally. But, of course, I certainly had no reason to think that he wasn't a fine man. And my first experience rather disappointed me a little bit. As far as Bishop Hickey was concerned was that in those days apparently there was an effort to establish national parishes. Now I guess the policy of the diocese was against that.

Mr. Smith:

Well, I think that most of the Catholic prelates had wanted to Americanize these groups coming and to downplay, of course with the Klan coming in in the twenties and the question of immigration restriction, the great upheaval there against southeastern Europeans, the Islamic Jews,

and the Italians, and the Hungarians, and the Slavs that were coming and I think the Church reacted a bit fearfully. Of course, they had a poor experience in the 19th century, the APA and the "know-nothing" earlier. They wanted to Americanize and I think Hickey was, you know, one of these individuals, "one-hundred percent Americanism".

Judge Quinn:

Yes, well I guess that was that was his policy and perhaps was a good policy and I guess he was a very determined man. But my experience, of course, came from the Portuguese. There were a fairly large number of Portuguese, of course down in the Pawtuxet Valley in the town of West Warwick. And more so now perhaps than ever. But in those days they wanted to set up a church of their own. A Portuguese church. And a man named Humbert Amaral, who was definitely one of the leaders of the Portuguese people in that section came to me and asked me if I could help them to get permission, I think that they had apparently tried to get permission and had got nowhere. And I told Mr. Amaral, "Sure I'd try". I didn't know anything about the policy of the Church. In fact, I was very ignorant about those policies. I knew of course we had the- I think at that time we'd had the fight with Monsignor Prince who was in fact Tony Prince's uncle. I think the French...

Mr. Smith:

That would be a little, just a little after that.

Judge Quinn:

Little later, little later. Well...

Mr. Smith:

"24 to...

Judge Quinn:

Well, then that hadn't occurred and so I really wouldn't have any intimation as to what the policies might be. But in any event, very innocently I wrote a letter to Bishop Hickey, as nice a letter as I could write. I mean it was very polite, so on and so forth; simply asking him explaining to him that Mr. Amaral had come to me and wanted to know whether or not they could establish a Portuguese Parish and build a Portuguese Church and so forth. And I was as polite and diplomatic as I knew how. And I got no reply. And so Amaral would come back. I had an evening office, of course, at that time in River Point. In fact, we went to that evening office I guess 20 years or more, 3 nights a week. But I got no reply. And so Amaral would come back and say his people wanted to know whether or not we could have an answer and so forth. And I never got an answer. So finally I had to tell Humbert Amaral that I guess that the Bishop didn't

like the idea because at least as far as I know, I couldn't do anything for him. He never gave me an answer. But, of course naturally it mad me mad.

Mr. Smith:

Definitely.

Judge Quinn:

Now, that was in 1921. And in 1922, of course, I was elected Senator from West Warwick and then I became a leader in the Senate. John McGrane was the Senator from Providence. That time Providence had only one senator in those days and so he came to me one day and said Bishop Hickey wanted to know why I never came in to see him. And I remember very well saying to John McGrane, " You tell Bishop Hickey if he wants to see me, my office is at 1411 Turks Head Building. So our relationship was not very cordial up until 1923. At least, I think later on I did meet him and we were...