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Interview with Judge Robert E. Quinn, July 14th, 1972

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July 14, 1972

Part I

Mr. Smith:

Do you want to go back to the first race at this time, the first race for public office, for senator ?

Gov. Quinn:

The first time I ran for public office was in 1922. I ran for senator from West Warwick and was elected. That was perhaps, to some extent, an aftermath of the textile strikes, you know, in the Pawtuxet and Blackstone Valleys. In 1921 all the mills in the Pawtuxet Valley were on strike: cotton mills, Knight Chain, and the woolen mills, the silk mills. And first there was considerable trouble in the Pawtuxet Valley in those days. There was- we had what was called the Iron Battalion in the village of Natick which physically were armed with iron bars and so forth, you know, to retaliate against that power of the mill barons. There was real serious trouble. I don't think anybody was killed as I remember, but there were physical encounters and there were threats on mill property. There were evictions from mill tenements. Of course,

the mill owners in those days largely owned not only the mills, but they owned the stores from which you got the groceries and provisions, and also the houses in which you lived in the village of Natick, Riverpoint, Clyde, Phoenix, and Harris. The houses that the people who worked in the mills lived in, brought up the families in, all belonged to the mill owners. They paid rent and usually the rent was deducted from the pay of the individuals who worked in the mills. Now, there were evictions of people who were willing to make a fight for what they thought was right. And the result was that the sheriff actually put some of the people out into the street- putting their furniture out into the street. There is an account of that in the New York Times. They picked it up as a national story at that time.

Mr. Smith:

Judge, this philosophy that you're fighting, whereby, you'll say the mill bosses or I should say the mill owners took very little interest in the workers, I mean, was it exploitation in the sense

or, or was this just a dominate rugged individualism say, that you hear so much about the Republican party here during the 20's without any social concern ?

Judge Quinn:

I think there was very little social concern for the ordinary individual during those days. I think that the predominate philosophy was that it was up to you to make your own way. That's not a bad philosophy, but, of course, wages were small. I think that the average wage in the cotton mills in 1920 were perhaps a dollar a day. Of course, ^USenator Lippitt, United States Senator Lippitt, who was perhaps a grand uncle or grandfather of John Chafee said that a dollar a day was enough for any working man. Now, of course, you got to admit that a dollar a day at ~~that~~ time was a lot more than it is today. But, I think it was pretty difficult for the ordinary mill worker to have any surplus, to save any money on what he earned in the mills. Of course, in days earlier than the 1920's, I mean back in

in the 1880's & 90's, of course it was the custom of the mill owners to bring whole families down from New Hampshire and Canada to work in the mills paying the father, we'll say, a dollar a day and the wife three dollars a week, and the sixteen-year older two dollars a week and maybe the ten-year older a dollar a week. Whole families were brought down from Canada and Northern New England to work in the mills. They were paid very, very small wages and were able to save very, very little. Now, if they were extremely frugal and had large families and who were physically able perhaps they were able to build up enough to finally build a home of their own. But, it was a hard struggle. I don't think there was much, no feeling of responsibility for people who weren't able to work and social welfare was really an unknown quantity in those days. I think that philosophy came along with Franklin D. Roosevelt generally speaking, around 1932, from then on. In the 20's I don't think that the mill owners felt responsible for what would happen to a family who had serious sickness or who wasn't able to hold up his end in the mill,

spinning wheel or weaving.

Mr. Smith:

Now as far as the strike went, Judge, had you decided to run for office before this occurred, did you make up your mind to run as soon as you finished law school ?

Judge Quinn:

Well, I think that perhaps, Matt, I always thought that I'd like to run. I hadn't made up my mind definitely that I was going to run that year, but I, of course, had become a lawyer and started to practice and had a good many friends. I definitely wanted to run and the opportunity came and, of course, I represented hundreds of strikers as a result of turmoil which existed in the Pawtuxet Valley. There were hundreds arrested and, of course, the enforcement machinery in those days was solely in the hands of the Republican organization.

In other words, Peck and Pelky in those days really controlled the

politics in the state and the police arrested very liberally, arrested people who were any threat to what they thought was their concern.

Mr. Smith:

Did Pothier call out the National Guard ?

Judge Quinn:

San Souci called out the National Guard.

Mr. Smith:

Then they brought Pothier back to run after San Souci.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, that's right, that's correct, of course San Souci was beaten in 1922. Gov. Bill Flynn, who was the leader of the house in those days from Providence- came from South Providence, he was nominated and elected. Felix Toupin was elected Lt. Gov. in 1922.

Mr. Smith:

I knew Judge Flynn. He lived on Rhodes Street.

Judge Quinn:

That's right where he lived.

There were three or four boys- Ed Flynn who became Chief Justice of Rhode Island Supreme Court. He was also a leader of the House a little later than Bill. In 1921, Bill Flynn was the man elected governor. But there were four boys: Bill, Ed who became Chief Justice, Fred who was a lawyer practicing in New York and Jack who I think became coach of the Providence College Baseball team. That's right. Quite a good baseball player Jack was. Of course, they're all dead now. They were fine, fine, boys- really good, young, Irish, Catholic Americans that you would be proud of. I mean they were a fine, fine family. Their father was a policeman on the beat here in Providence. Walked the, well, he was a patrolman and their uncle was my pastor in Saint James Parish in Saint James Church where I went to the parochial schools. The Franciscan Sisters by the way ran that school, but the pastor was Father Flynn who was Uncle of Ed, Bill, Fred, and Jack.

Mr. Smith:

I see.

Judge Quinn:

There was trouble, I mean real troubled clashes that did damage perhaps to some extent, but as I say, the mill owners decided to put them out in some places and, of course they needed representation- they needed lawyers. I think there were over three hundred arrested in the Kent County area and that was the fourth district court.

Now the judge of the fourth district court in those days was Felix Hebert of West Warwick-Artic. He became- he was elected to the United States Senate in 1928. Felix Hebert was an adjunct of the Republican organization. We would have these defendants brought into court and of course I represented them all as I say, over three hundred.

Of course, they'd plead not guilty. Actually, of course, there might have been a little trouble, but there was no harm in them, but they'd be arrested for destroying property, assault and battery, and so on and so forth. So I'd represent them. I'd plead not guilty and to the best of my ability, but it would always be guilty.

Invariably, every striker ever brought in to defend a case before

Felix Hebert that was involved in the strike was found guilty.

Now, of course, I'd take an appeal which would entitle them to a jury trial in the superior court in Kent County. And of all the hundreds that were found guilty in the fourth district court in West Warwick, no one ever was finally convicted. I'd take the appeal, give them a jury trial, and they wouldn't dare to go to trial because I would win the case without any question at all. They never pursued the matter so actually they would just fall by the wayside. I don't think that the mill owners were vindictive. I don't think that they were looking for their ounce of flesh. You know, for the time being they wanted to show the people who worked in the mills that they were the boss, that they ran the show, and that there was nothing we could do about it because in those days, the law enforcement authorities in the towns in the counties, and in the states, were completely in control of the Republican party. And so they wanted to flex their muscles and they wanted to show the people that they could control them.

But in the final analysis, as I say, there was not one single man that was ever found guilty in the fourth district court that ever had a final judgement against them and I was the lawyer who prevented it.

Well, I think that to a certain extent played an important part,

of course, in my nomination for senator from the town of West Warwick.

In other words, all the people on strike and so forth, who rallied to me- they knew that I was a young man fighting for their rights.

And they liked me personally and the result was that I was nominated for the senate and won by a very substantial majority.

Mr. Smith:

Who did you beat Judge ? Do you remember ?

The first time ?

Judge Quinn:

I think perhaps it was a man named Joseph Noel who was senator from West Warwick, I think in 1920. I don't know if he would be related to the present candidate for governor or not. But the same

name Noel. I'm pretty sure.

Mr. Smith:

Were you the first democrat elected from West Warwick for senate ?

Judge Quinn:

No, I was not. The first democrat was Alberic Archambault, who afterwards was a candidate for governor and then later on became a judge of the superior court. And also, a man named John Cassidy was elected to the senate from West Warwick before I was elected and he later became town clerk of the town. He was rather a mild man, but a very well thought of man. We had two senators, John Cassidy and Alberic Archambeault. I don't know which became first, both be you know 1916 or 1918 or 1914. I think Alberic Archambeault came first.

Mr. Smith:

Anything special about that campaign that you remember ?

It was your first one.

Judge Quinn:

Of course, I think that the strikes and this was both in the Pawtuxet Valley and the Blackstone Valley, you know did pretty well in the state. I think perhaps that was a predominate theme. We carried the state, not by a very large margin, but Bill Flynn was elected Governor, Felix Toupin was elected Lt. Governor, and Herbert L. Carpenter was elected Attorney General.

Mr. Smith:

Did you have a woman running that year also ?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, we had a woman running that year for Secretary of State, but she lost. Her name was Susan Sharpe Adams. She was defeated rather narrowly, but, of course, in those days the Secretary of State was almost a permanent fixture in the political life in Rhode Island. It was very difficult to beat him. Being up there and dealing with people you know from all over the state he made friends and I think it was rather non-political in the general sense of the word. So, he was re-elected and also, the General Treasurer remained in the

hands of the Republicans in those days. But we did elect the Governor, Lt Governor, and Attorney General.

Mr. Smith:

Now I wanted to ask you, once you got into the senate, from everything I read, you assumed leadership of the democrats there working with Governor Flynn and Toupin.

Judge Quinn:

Well, of course really there was substantial change in the senate at the time that I first went up there, you know. In 1920, the year before, that is the political year before, the Democrats fell to a very low ebb. I think we only had five senators. After the 1920 elections were the, you know, Woodrow Wilson policies, where the League of Nations, and so forth and the national resentment between the Irish, French, Italians, Portuguese, so forth built up. The Democrats got a very bad beating. Ed Sullivan- his brother Frank one time chairman of the state committee was the first mayor of

Cranston, Cranston, of course, was a town when I was a young fellow. Cranston was probably the biggest town, I guess population wise in the state. They changed it from a town form of government to a city form of government. I think in 1914, it would be about that time- might be 1916, I'd say 1914, Ed Sullivan was elected the first mayor of the city of Cranston which was rather a large order because I would think, generally speaking, the city was republican, largely a Yankee city, of course a sprinkling of Irish, French, and Italian and so forth. But I would say you would feel in 1914, if it was 1914, that they first elected a mayor, that chances would be that it would be a Republican. But Sullivan was elected and he was re-elected. Now I think there were one quarter terms in those days. Of course, up until 1912, there were one year terms for governor here in Rhode Island. But in any event Ed Sullivan was elected mayor and he was re-elected. He was an able fellow; he was a very controversial man. I think he made enemies, maybe unnecessarily sometimes, and

maybe in the long run that turned up to haunt him because he was nominated for governor on the democratic ticket in 1920 and he got a terrible beating. I would say, probably the worst beating in the history of the party, at least the worst during my memory. I think he was beaten something like 100,100-50,000. In other words it was a 2:1 defeat at a time when the democratic party had done pretty well. From 1890 on, elections were very close in Rhode Island. I think Governor Davis was elected in 1890 or 1891. Governor Garvin was elected in 1901 and 1902. ¹⁹⁰³⁻¹⁹⁰⁵ Governor Higgins was elected in 1907-1908 ¹⁹⁰⁹ and the battles for the governorship from 1890 up to 1920 had been pretty close fights.

Mr. Smith:

One thing about those fights, Governor. When we look at the Republican candidate, it's usually a French man. Was that their strategy to split the immigrant vote ?

Governor Quinn:

Well, I would say that the nomination for Governor Pothier, for instance definitely was designed to get the French vote, and it

accomplished its purpose because he was elected governor because, I think, maybe five times- yearly terms- I think 1906 right after Governor Higgins, I think maybe 8,9,10,11,12, something like that, but the figures were close. In other words, Theodore Green ran for governor and came fairly close. An old lawyer named Louis Waterman, Waterman and Greenlow was the firm- they were right next office to us in the Turks Head Building from 1913 on. He ran twice and I think was defeated by 908 at one election and I think 1011 in the next election, very close. In fact all those elections from the time that Governor Higgins was made governor up to 1920 were close elections as in Pete Monroe, my Uncle Henry, and Col. Quinn. They were all defeated but by very close margins. Pothier, I think was elected four or five times. Then ^{ee} Bickman came in, really a New Yorker, but a very rich man. That is where the power of money has always showed, I think here in our Rhode Island elections. In 1920 with that League of Nations thing looking us right square in the eye, the democratic party almost disintegrated. In other words, Ed Sullivan a good

democrat and an able man was beaten 2:1; that was an unheard of thing in those days, but he was. So that it was a time when the Democratic party had really reached its lowest end. We used to meet a group of young fellows. I would say about 15 to 20, mostly Irish boys, Jack McGill, Frank Coogan, and a few of those fellows. We used to meet at Duffy's Store which was across from the Clyde Carban^{and}. Where the cars came in from Providence and also come in from Rocky Point. And that was a kind of a central point. And I can always remember saying to the group election night in 1920- Well, it's always darkest before dawn, and that was about the time that I really started actively into the political arena. It was a result of that terrific beating that we got in 1920 and the break up of the democratic party all over the state on the League of Nations issue really that we started to do a little building up and then the strikes came along and they undoubtedly helped up substantially and so that while the town of West Warwick from the time that it was divided in 1913 to 1922 was always nip and tug, it was, you know, a divided council and so forth. if you won by 50 votes, you did pretty well. We carried the

town that night I think by about 1200 votes.

Mr. Smith:

Wow !!

Judge Quinn:

...Which was a tremendous victiory.

Mr. Smith:

A landslide.

Judge Quinn:

So that was the first time that I actively engaged in a political campaign. I had campaigned before. From 1914 I was out making speeches for the party and the candidates. I campaigned for Woodrow Wilson, of course, in 1916 and of course, we son. Although it was a teffific battle as you remember. It was three days before we knew whether had won or lost-till they got the results from California, Minnesots, and New Hampshire.

Mr. Smith:

Right.

Judge Quinn:

But, from that time on, of course West Warwick really was a democratic stronghold. And as I say, when I went up to the legislative berth, January 1923, of course we had elected 18 members of the senate which was, you know almost incomprehensible. And most of them were young. The leader, of course was not a young man, although he wasn't an old man. John Barry of Central Falls had been the Democratic leader, of course he continued as Democratic leader. But he kind of took me under his wing. He liked me. He knew I could talk. John was not much of a talker. But we had such young fellows as John McGrane who was the senator...

from Providence. At that time Providence had only one senator and we had John Green from Newport who was a bit of a firecracker, a good talker and so forth. He studied law but never became a lawyer. He afterward became clerk of the superior court down in Newport. We had a fellow named Bert Harris from Lincoln who was a young man. Dan Coggeshall who is still alive, later became postmaster in Bristol, and was postmaster for 30 years or more. I think he retired here two years ago. His father was also a senator from Bristol after Dan was elected senator in 1922. He was up there with me and stayed there for some years. After Dan got out, his father became senator from Bristol, so the congress office had quite a following in Bristol. As I say, the three members of the senate who are now alive, that were there when I went there in 1922 were Arthur Sherman, who is town clerk of Portsmouth. Arthur was a republican leader. I understand now that he's a democrat. I think last time he was elected as a democrat from Portsmouth. He's 90 years old. Dan Coggeshall of Bristol is still living. Dan would be about the same age as I am,

78 or maybe I think Dan was a few months younger than I was. But Dan Coggeshall and Johnny Green, and maybe one or two more were all the same age. We were in our twenties at the time of the - that was the days of the ^{Filibuster} filibuster.

Mr. Smith:

Yes, started a hectic two years.

Judge Quinn:

We were confident that we were right, that our course was right. In other words, we knew that the so called "rotten borough" system existed in Rhode Island where West Greenwich with 485 people had a senator and Providence with 275,000 people had a senator. In other words the "rotten borough" system meant that the old republican organization, through towns like West Greenwich, Exeter, Richmond, and New Shoreham, and Little Compton, and so forth, controlled the state of Rhode Island because as I think I said before, Charlie Brayton who was the undisputed boss of Rhode Island for many, many years had a law put through in 1901 which really emasculated the executive

power of the governor and provided that he could send his nomination in for chief of the public roads division or public utilities division or tax administrator, and so forth. All the administrative powers really were in the boards and commissions that had been created, but the government had the power to appoint both-the senate could lay the nomination on the table for three days and then proceed to elect some man and so the senate no matter who was elected democratic governor up until 1935 had really no administrative powers in other words that still remained in the senate. Charlie Brayton through that shrewd move-he could see the forces of democracy prospering, getting more numerous and so forth. So he headed them all for 35 years. He retained control in the Rhode Island senate and the "rotten borough " senate appeared to me at that time that it could never be broken. It seemed to be^a physical impossibility. Then, of course, we came into the period in 1935 where, of course, we got into the Roosevelt days where Rhode Island then went democratic in 1932 by a tremendously large amount. In other words, 32,000

majority was a very big margin in Rhode Island. Then, of course, in 1934 we increased it to nearly 40,000 and so it appeared that no matter how big a victory we won on election day, no matter how many votes we elected a governor by, lieutenant governor, attorney general, that we never could get control of the senate. That, of course led to the bloodless revolution in 1935. But, of course, maybe I'm going ahead too fast. Because during those two years, 1923 and 1924, we had the so called filibuster where the republicans, of course, left the state and went to Rutland.

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Part II

Judge Quinn:

Our plans in the Senate called for, providing for a constitutional convention that would be the way that we thought we had to use to change the complexion of the legislature, in other words that to get a fair senate, you know, perhaps where Providence would have 6 senators or whatever would be fair. In other words where maybe the state would be divided into senatorial districts maybe giving Kent County, 1 senator and South County one senator, Providence one senator. In other words fair representation. But the resolution simply provided that the people on election day be given the opportunity to answer a simple question: shall there be a constitutional convention to revise, alter or amend the constitution of R.I. That, all that was senator resolution number one. In other words, shall the people be given the chance to answer that question, shall there be a constitutional convention to revise, alter, or amend the constitution of Rhode Island ? Now that was all we were asking for. That come out of the committee for a vote on the floor of the senate.

I had eighteen democrats. We had eighteen... I had an independent from Tiverton named Frank Grinnell who had told me that if I could ever get one republican vote for anything that I thought was of any importance, I could always count on him. So I really had nineteen, if I could get one republican. We had a state appointed police commission in the town of West Warwick which of course was objectionable to us, you know- home rule doctrine, and so forth. But there had been in Woonsocket, Central Falls, in fact they had them in Providence...

Mr. Smith:

Probably that fight in the thirties.

Judge Quinn:

The same fight. Yes, so that I well, I did succeed in getting the republican vote to abolish the police commission in West Warwick. That was really more perhaps a personal favor to me because it was my town and the senator from East Greenwich, Bill Sharpe was a client of mine. In other words he was staunch republican, but I always did

his legal work and he had great confidence in my ability as a lawyer and also in my integrity. And so I went to Bill and told him , Bill, I would like to get this police commission, state appointed police commission abolished in West Warwick. He said that , I think that's a fair request Bob and I'll vote with you. So I told Frank Grinnell and of course we abolished it: 20 to 19. So we could make some inroads, although very difficult. But when it came to anything that would hurt the republican organization as such, it was almost impossible for me to get a republican vote. I could get Frank Grinnell, but he was elected as an independent. He was more of a democrat than a republican, but if I could get one vote we could do some business. But we never could get it in anything that affected a state wide picture. But that's what we were fighting for: to have the judiciary committee report that resolution for a vote. We weren't insisting that it be passed. We weren't demanding anything that would hurt the republican organization directly but we did feel that we were justified in forcing them to report that resolution out of the committee

for a vote on the floor and that they wouldn't do. And so that was when the filibuster began and we were in session for 55 hours.

Mr. Smith:

Was there any question on appropriations ? As far as not appropriating any money for state business ?

Judge Quinn:

No, I think that the appropriation bill was not passed in 1924. But I think there was a provision in the law which provided that if the appropriation bill was not passed, then appropriations would continue at the monthly rate, you know 1/12 of a month for the rest of the year. I'm pretty sure that was the law.

Mr. Smith:

I was just trying to think back to Levine's book on Green. I think he laid an emphasis on the appropriations, that this was part of the struggle.

Judge Quinn:

It would be a part.

Mr. Smith:

But not a major part.

Judge Quinn:

Actually the major basis for our attack was the refusal of the republican judiciary committee- of course, they were in control of all the committee- but our attack was directed against the judiciary committee for its refusal to report out for a vote. Now we weren't demanding passage of the resolution although nothing could be fairer. This was simply to ask the people whether or not they would like it to. But we weren't insisting upon them passing it. We were insisting that they bring it out to the floor for a vote. And they refused it. Then we started to put the pressure on because frankly we felt, of course, that we were younger, physically we were abler, I'm not sure we were.

Mr. Smith:

No doubt you were.

Judge Quinn:

But in any event, we decided we were going to try to make them report that bill out for the vote. Of course, the lieutenant governor Felix Toupin was the presiding officer. He was very much in favor of my ideas and he was a very determined man.

Mr. Smith:

He was a fighter.

Judge Quinn:

He was a fighter, a very logical individual, when it came to supporting his causes. He had a ~~lot~~ of virtues. Now at times he was a little tough to get along with but as far as fighting democrats were concerned, I don't think I ever saw a better ~~one~~^{one}.

Mr. Smith:

He was later a republican, later thirties.

Judge Quinn:

Yes.

Judge Quinn:

In Woonsocket.

Mr. Smith:

War with Green, wasn't it ?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, yes. He was elected mayor of Woonsocket. I don't think he ever really...

Mr. Smith:

Was a real Republican...

Judge Quinn:

...lost faith in democracy. He was a Democrat at heart, a fighter and an admirable character. I never at least during the time when I knew him. Now in the thirties when he withdrew to Woonsocket, I knew little or nothing of him. I heard rumors in those days that he maybe he was wheeling and dealing down there in the city of Woonsocket. I really don't know anything about that. As far as I ever knew him, he was a completely honest man and he was a loyal

democrat to the enth degree in the twenties. I do think he did become dissillusioned with some of the democrats in the state in the thirties, but I really don't know much about the local picture in Woonsocket. You know, those were the days of Ernest Dupre, who was a republican leader down there and who later mayor of Woonsocket, too. There were rumors about dealings that went on locally that perhaps it would be hard for us to understand. At least, I wouldn't understand them. Of course, it was a predominately French city. I think about 87% French, as I remember at that time. But strangely enough, as far as my vote was concerned up until 1938 anyway- I don't know what we did in 1938, we got beat all over the state. But I always got a tremendous vote in Woonsocket perhaps the largest from Woonsocket. There was never any indication of any discrimination against me because I was Irish instead of French.

Mr. Smith:

When we get to the thirties, from the reading that I did, the one we just talked about, who controls the city council, the

police department, and so forth. But there were a number of towns like Central Falls police department, Woonsocket, Pawtucket, and of course Providence. Maybe we can discuss that a little further in the context of the thirties.

Judge Quinn:

Well, during the time, in the filibuster days, that is the 20's, 23 to 24, Toupin was a starlet figure. He knew what he was doing. He could justify it in any argument that was put up to him. I mean he could stand his ground and he was a courageous fellow in those days. I'd say it would be hard to find a more courageous individual than Felix Toupin. Far, far more determined than Governor Flynn .

Governor Flynn, I always found was a fine man and he fought for democracy in Rhode Island up in his section of the city. There were factions of course in the city of Providence. The Joe Gana faction and the Flynn faction, I think were always at odds. Probably, there would be some virtue on both sides but Governor Flynn, I think was a thoroughly honorable man. In fact the whole Flynn family were honorable men. But I don't think he ever had the determination that Toupin had.

Toupin was a fighter from the word ~~to~~ and it was no picnic to stand up on that rostrum for 55 hours. But we decided that we were going to use whatever power we had to force that resolution out for a vote and so we embarked upon our program of filibuster.

In other words, getting the floor; of course, Toupin would recognize me or whoever, then we would surrender. If I talked for 2 to 3 hours, we then would surrender it to Jdm McGrane, so forth and so on. Of course, Arthur Sherman would be trying to get the floor and so on and so forth, and of course, he wouldn't get it. Toupin wouldn't recognize him. So it went on for 55 hours. And somebody put a gas bomb, or chemical bomb into the ventilation system under Governor Toupon's desk. I think the same system is up there that was there then. It's a blower system with ventilators under the desk of each senator and up under the lieutenant governor's rostrum. And the only air, I guess, that you get in there is blown from under the basement. I don't know just exactly how it work, but there's a circulation of air that is blown in. And somebody put a bomb in

the system that contained bromine gas. We found that out after Dr. O'Connell came up, Joe O'Connell who is not long since dead, but who was a very prominent surgeon here in the city of Providence and a brother of Jerry O'Connell who was later a congressman from the 3rd district, then became presiding judge of the superior court and then went on to the supreme court before he died. He died, oh I'd say within the last 10 years. It was his brother, Joe, who came up and analyzed the results of the bomb and he definitely said bromine gas, which is a deadly gas. But he did say that there was not a sufficient quantity of it, enough to really kill anybody. And that was his opinion and I think his opinion was worth considerable, because he was an excellent doctor and surgeon.

Mr. Smith:

This cleared the chamber.

Judge Quinn:

It did. It definitely did the trick. Most of the members went out into the committee rooms. The republicans gathering place was

the judiciary committee room. That was the biggest committee room. That was on the right hand side of the senate looking from the rostrum. The lieutenant governor's office, of course was in the other corner, and of course in those days the democrats had control of no committees. In other words, usually the committee rooms are the gathering places for the members of the senate, like today you would find Frank Scambato and his group gathering in the judiciary. And then, of course Pete Smith would probably have a group belonging to the finance committee gather in the finance committee room. And then somebody would have labor. In other words, you'd have about 5 committee rooms, lounging rooms where you put your coat and hat, so forth and so on. They're your property as far as gathering. But we had none. We had no place to go except the lieutenant governor's office. So we had to gather in there, in Felix Toupins office. And when some of them began to get sick, I didn't know, to tell the truth Matt, whether they were really sick, whether they were just tired or exhausted from physical effort, whether their endurance was giving

out, or whether there was something dangerous up there. But in any event, we recessed for a time and John Powers, who was the senator from Cumberland, of course he was a democrat. He apparently was sick. But most of the men who appeared to be effected, if they were effected, said they were, were republicans and mostly older men. And I think there were signs of two or three of them vomiting. At least I didn't see that but that was the report that they were actually sick. This gas had got to them and so forth. I was all for, after a 1/2 hour of investigation and exploration, I was for going on. I thought it was a trick and I insisted that. And that was the only time that I thought I detected weakness on the part of Lieutenant Governor Toupin. He would not go back on that rostrum. He was afraid that it was a poisonous gas and apparently was going to kill him. I could not get him to go back on that rostrum. In the meantime, the republican organization got the senators together with the exception of one Harry Sanderson, and they got them away to Massachusetts. out of our control. That's the one time. The only weakness that I ever saw in Felix Toupin's conduct up there was that he would not

go back on that rostrum to call the session off. Because if we did that, we wouldn't let them; we were resting, but the Republicans, well they had the money. Everything was, of course, in the hands of the Republicans in those days. Providence Police was in the hands of the Republicans party; we didn't have any state police. The national guard was in the hands of the Republican party. The sheriffs were in the hands of the Republican party and they left and never came back until January 1, 1925. But, that of course, that broke the filibuster. Then, of course came the elections of 1924, and I still think that if it had only been a state elector, if we could ^{have} had a decision on the question, I still think that probably we would have won and re-elected Governor Flynn. No, let me see. Toupin was nominated for governor. Flynn was going to run for senator. I was nominated for lieutenant governor. But of course, you got into the Madison Square Garden convention fight of 1924, in June or July of 1924. That was when Col. Flynn, Patrick H. my uncle, who was leader of the Rhode Island delegation got into I guess he

got into a physical encounter with Willaim Jennings Brien. I think they actually had a fist fight on the floor. Brien, of course was a KKK supporter. He was a great man in many ways. But he didn't want..

Mr. Smith:

He had that rural agrarian ^{hierarchy} progeny...

Judge Quinn:

I think he was anti-catholic.

Mr. Smith:

I think his record bears the typical prejudice that, you know somebody growing up in say, Nebraska might have.

Judge Quinn:

Bible belt, typical Protestant bible belt.. He was a liberal, no question about that. Great man. I admired him. He spoke, of course in his campaign of 1980. He spoke from the front porch of my uncle's lawn there in West Warwick, you know. So they were friends for many, many years. But they actually did have kind of a few blows down there in the convention of 1924. But it went for 103 ballots,

Matt, as I remember it and by the time it was over, the divisions were so sharp, and the fight between the KKK and Al Smith was so bitter, they dragged out John W. Davis from West Virginia as the nominee of the party who was undoubtedly a very fine lawyer, very able man. He was ambassador to the court of St. James in 1919.

In fact, I was over there at that time. But, he was unknown, and I would say that by the time that the convention was over in 1924, in Madison Square Garden, the Democratic party was dead for that year. Now, they had a pretty good chance because the Tea Pot Dome scandal, of course, had resulted in the conviction of Albert Fall, Secretary of the Interior. He was sent to jail. Harry Duggans^{Chertys}, the Attorney General had to resign, and Denbee~~ee~~, the Secretary of the Navy resigned.

So, the three members of the cabinet had to quit because of the scandals that resulted from the Tea Pot Dome. But it looked like a very, very good chance of winning in 1924 went out the window, and I think as a result of that, of course, more than anything else, of course, our chances of winning in the state of Rhode Island went

out the window, too.

Mr. Smith:

What about the press, Judge, in the sense that I believe that the Journal implicated that it was the Democrats set the bomb and looked as if it was perpetrator of anarchy, chaos, rather than orderly state government. Would that be accurate ?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, I would say that would be an accurate statement. They certainly were against us. There was no question about that. And, of course, I think that maybe one of the strong reasons would be that Jessy^e Metcalf, who would be one of the co-owners, I mean Steve o. Metcalf had the largest share of stock in the company. Jessy^e would be next in the matter of importance. Andⁿ of course he became the candidate for the United States Senate and was elected. And of course, the Metcalf family still own the Providence Journal. It is a very rich family. Steven O. Metcalf had an income of \$336000 in 1916. I was in the Internal Revenue service in 1916 for about

three months. His income was \$336000 and Jesse Metcalf's income was \$330000 for the year 1916. Of course, ~~tht~~'s a pretty large income.

Mr. Smith:

You're talking about 5 or 6 million dollars today.

Judge Quinn:

In other words, they were very rich and the Metcalf family of course, is still very rich. Of course, Jesse's dead and Steve's dead, but the family still goes on and I suppose they still control the Providence Journal. I think the paper's far more liberal today than it was then. I think they did try to convince the electives of Rhode Island that we were a bunch of thugs and that we were violating the constitution and the law and so forth and were hardly entitled to what was called respectability now a days. But they were family was definitely was mixed up in the results of the campaign. Now, I think that John Chaffee probably is tied in with the Metcalf family. I know he's very close to the Lippitt family. Whether he's a grandson.

Mr. Smith:

I believe his uncle is part owner of the Journal.

Judge Quinn:

Oh yes, no question about that. Henry Chaffee was the chairman of the board up until four or five years ago when he died. They are interested in the paper. But, I mean whether there is any direct relationship, blood relationship, I'm not certain about that.

Mr. Smith:

Judge, was there any significance in the Peck education bill of that period- of the 23 to 25 period ?

Judge Quinn:

That undoubtedly played a really major part, I think in the campaign of 1922. "Bill Peck," as Toupin called it, of course Toupin was I think essentially French. Of course, he talked good English, was a lawyer, and all that stuff, etc. I think that Felix ^Toupin was much more French than I would be Irish. When he campaigned, he campaigned in French, well both French and English. But one of his

main gripes was I think the Peck Bill, of "Bill Peck", as he called it. And I think that it did play a fairly substantial part in the Blackstone and the Pawtucket Valleys among the French.

Mr. Smith:

Traditionally, they always wanted, they always desired to keep the language. That was a sign of the faith. In Canada, at least, the language and Catholicism went together.

Judge Quinn:

Yes.

Mr. Smith:

And brought it right down.

Judge Quinn:

I think that might have persisted. I'm sure that many French speaking families in the Pawtucket Valley still talk French in the homes and I'm sure that there are families that have been there now for at least four generations that still probably talk French in the home. They talk English, understand English; of course,

the children go to school and learn English. Of course and have the French parochial schools. The largest one is I think St. John Baptiste in Artic Center and they still have a fairly large school. Of course, they have English, and they have the other things in our kind of school. But, I would say that it is a predominately French institution and I think in Woonsocket, Valley Falls, Central Falls, Oxipawtucket, Pawtuxet Valley, French is a very important item and certainly in that campaign. That Peck Bill did play a significant part. I would say that there were probably thousands of French families that voted the democratic ticket in that election mainly because of that Peck Bill.

Mr. Smith:

Did you campaign up and down the state for the lieutenant governor in 24 ?

Judge Quinn:

Yes, I did, all over the state, everywhere.

Mr. Smith;

Did you go out as a team in the sense the general officers ?

Judge Quinn:

Yes. I would say that most of the time you would have the candidate for senator appear, maybe at 7:00 and the governor would maybe come at 8:30, and the lieutenant governor at 9:00. In other words, we'd cover the same rallies, of course not always.

At times, I might be in Woonsocket and Toupin might be in Westerly, but generally speaking, the largest rallies, why the entire state ticket would talk during the course of the evening.

Mr. Smith:

Of course, this was the age of the great rallies. People would turn out.

Judge Quinn:

Yes, they did.

Mr. Smith:

Not today.

Judge Quinn:

We used to have large rallies. I've seen rallies where you

couldn't get in in Woonsocket, in West Warwick, in Providence at Infantry Hall. Very large turnouts, and very enthusiastic turnouts. Rallies were the order of the day.

Mr. Smith:

You didn't have a mike or anything.

Judge Quinn:

No, you just talked. A powerful voice was an asset. That was one of the weaknesses of Felix Toupin. He talked too long. It was very difficult to get him to stop. In other words, he never seemed to be able to quite appreciate that there were other people that were deserving the consideration that might be waiting on the platform. Now, his arguments were logical. I mean you took issue with him, you'd probably lose out. In other words, he was a very logical debator. He definitely had no mercy on the audience or on the other speakers who were trying to come in and get out again. You know that was a weakness that he had.

Mr. Smith:

Did you feel a tide running against you because of the 24 con-

vention ?

Judge Quinn:

I think as I remember it, Matt, that we felt that it had hurt the chances of the party nationally that definitely we couldn't win after the Madison Square Garden convention. I still think we felt that maybe we had a chance locally because of the local issue, but that was the day of the straight ticket. You didn't have the voting machines and you had the paper ballots with the eagle and the star on the top and the tendency was to put the cross and the circle on the top and I'm satisfied that the national picture hurt us locally. No question about that. Whether we could have run or not, I don't know, but it made it very difficult.

Mr. Smith:

Did Al Smith come into this state twice ?

Judge Quinn:

In 1924 ? He came in 1928.

Mr. Smith:

I knew he was here in 1928. I didn't know if he came in...

28 he came in for Geary I guess primarily.

Judge Quinn:

He was running for president. He was the nominee for president but I think that Geary would play a part because I assume that the Geary family in one way or another probably contributed liberally to Al Smith's campaign. I don't know that but I would assume that that was true, because old General Hamilton was supposed to be a product of Tameny Hall. I think he personally was a friend of Al Smith and I guess, the Geary family was personally friendly with Al Smith. I really don't know whether they gave him substantial contributions or not, but he definitely was supporting Geary, friendly with Geary and, of course he came here to campaign. I spoke from the same platform as Al Smith in 1928 in Infantry Hall. Of course, he was a powerful campaigner. Of course, Geary was a very poor campaigner. But Geary was running for senator and Felix Hebert, the fellow who

was the judge in 4th district court, who put all my clients in jail or at least tried to was the candidate against him. That was the French in other words, he was on there because of the French vote and of course, the election was very close in 1928. Smith carried Rhode Island by about 1700 votes. And I think Felix Hebert beat Geary by approximately 1700 votes. In other words, it was a very close election.

Mr. Smith:

Archambeault was running in West Warwick.

Judge Quinn:

Alberic Archambeault was