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we were representing all of the people - not Negroes, but all of the people of Mississippi. Because, as I know, the tragedy that happened to him affected everyone, white and black, Indians, Chinese, Japanese and all. Because they know, too, that until all of us are free and we are free from this type of intimidation, that none of us are free.

RPW: What effect did this have on the white people in Mississippi - I mean, not the murder, now, but the fact of the official funeral in Washington? Do you know what effect it had?

CE: No, I don't know - I had a lot of calls and quite a few friendly letters, stating that they thought it was a very dramatic thing, and they thought it was a wise decision for us to make to have him buried there.

RPW: The white people in Mississippi?

CE: Yes, the white people in Mississippi. Although they were - they remained anonymous and they didn't give their names and the addresses, but they did call. I often get calls from many whites, telling us to keep on, to keep it up, don't give up, keep it up, because victory will be ~~xxxxx~~ ours. But I - and people wonder why I come back to Mississippi. Actually I never left Mississippi. I was just vacationing, should I say, until the time was right for me to return. But I promised Medgar and I promised my people when I left that I would return, and I returned to carry on the job that I felt that Medgar and I - I don't know why - could do better than anybody else in the world, in Mississippi, because, as I

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said before, it's something that we wanted to do, something that we felt that we should do. We didn't do it for fame nor fortune. We did it because we feel that every American has something he can contribute toward equality for others. And we - I could have been a wealthy man today - Medgar could have been a wealthy man. But we didn't choose that. We chose to stay here and to stay a part of our people, to stay poor with them, but try to become - to be able to become informative, and be able to keep them informed and to help to raise the standards of all the Negroes and all of the people of our state, not just myself or Medgar and his family or one or two others. Because we could have so easily turned our back to the situation, and Medgar would have been alive today, and I could be with my family, and we could be living in the luxuries of the other world when - forgetting all about that there are thousands upon thousands of my people who need us.

RPW: I know it's true to a degree, and everyone says so, and it's written about, but there was and to some degree is now a split between the prosperous Negro, the middle and upper class, and the masses of Negroes. How much does that prevail in Mississippi now?

CE: Actually, it prevails all over the United States. There's no point in us fooling ourselves. We know it prevails in Mississippi because - as Medgar and I always felt, that this is something that has to be a part of you, and most of our wealth people are - feel that they have no part to play in this. I have everything

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that I want, why should I destroy myself, or why should I deprive myself of my, should I say, treasures, or my happiness and my comfort, to worry about some drunk down the street there, or to worry about some illiterate down the street there. Why - I prepared myself, why can't they? And as I said before, it's something that has to be a part of you, and Medgar and I, I keep repeating, had the same opportunity these people had. And I'm not being braggadosia - we had a chance to be rich - and I still have the chance, if I wanted to. But I don't choose richness. I choose to be a part of people, to be among the people, and to be - to have something to offer people, and to be able to help people who need help.

RPW: Has that split between the prosperous middle class among Negroes and the general masses of the Negroes been lessened in the last few years here?

CE: Yes, I would say so, in - particularly in Mississippi. Some of our leading supporters now are some of our wealthiest Negroes. I'll admit they don't stand up and holler this from the treetops or from the ~~mansions~~ housetops as loud as I may do it, or as loud as Medgar did, but they are supporting us one hundred percent. And actually I think that there are very few Negroes, rich, poor, beggar or whatever the case may be, that are not with us in ~~the~~ this movement. I have never been turned down for anything I have asked them for, regardless of who they are - bootleggers, whether they are legal operators or illegal, they still

support us indirectly.

RPW: Have the Black Muslims come into Mississippi?

CE: (laugh) No, they haven't, and I have often wondered why.

RPW: They're in Louisiana, of course. They've been active there.

CE: I understand they are, but I wondered what happened why they haven't been in Mississippi. As I said before, there's room for all of us here and if they want to come in I am sure they can get accommodat@d. But I don't think they will come in.

RPW: They're not on your side, of course.

CE: No, they aren't on anyone's side. The Black Muslims are on their own side. They are extremists, and as Medgar and I have said many times, we don't believe in extreme groups one way or the other. I don't believe any more in black supremacy than I do in white supremacy. I want every man to have an equal opportunity, and every man to be treated as an American, not as a white or black, not as superior or inferior, but as an American, and that's it. And I think that a man should be characterized and should be judged as an individual. Whatever he is, let him be that. It's not my duty or not the society's duty to classify anyone. Therefore, I don't believe in the Muslims and I don't believe in what they stand for. I'll admit that we have a few things in common. For instance, they feel that they should have an opportunity to do what they want, but I don't believe that - I don't want to be in an all black state any more than I want to see an all white state. I don't want to have the right to knock

you down and kick you around because I am a Negro, any more than I want you to knock me down and kick me around. I don't want you to not harm me because I am a Negro, and I don't think I should feel as though I should not harm you because you're white. So you see we have many differences there, and I don't agree with them at all.

RPW: I understand from people in the movement in Mississippi and elsewhere in the South that there are sometimes resentment of varying degrees of intensity by the local Negroes against the whites who come in to work with the movement, to work with the various organizations, who come in either from adjoining states or from the North, or even who are local people, Mississippi people, to join the movement - white people, young white people - to join the movement. There are varying degrees of resentment against this, not always but often enough to be observed. I am told this by various Negroes in Louisiana and Mississippi.

CE: Well, that's true. It's true in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida - for the simple reason - and it's quite understandable, I think -

RPW: It's understandable, yes. I want to know, what are the reasons.

CE: The reasons are - number one, the Negroes just don't trust whites. And the reason they don't trust them is because we Southerners have been built up and mistreated so badly by whites that it's hard to believe that any white man, unless you are in-



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organization - in our organization - that we don't feel that way. We're glad to have them.

RFW: Yes. You have been attacked by Adam Clayton Powell on that point, too, of course. The attack on the NAACP was on that basis, of having this - the white membership and the white officers.

CE: Well, Congressman Powell is a very good friend of mine, I must say that. He was a very good friend of my brother's. And I think that, as I said before, in fighting for this freedom we must also realize that a man has a right to think and to react the way he pleases as long as it does not intimidate or incriminate anyone else. Now, I don't know whether he actually feels that way or not. I've seen - I've read where he said things, but, on the other hand, he has offered to come and speak for me here in Mississippi, and maybe there are some things that he don't approve of, but I -

RFW: This is Jack Greenburg's department.

CE: Pardon?

RFW: Like Jack Greenburg's department - the NAACP education and defense fund.

CE: Well, as I said before, I guess maybe that's an individual thing, and I don't have too much comment on - against or for it - Congressman Powell - I think he's a wonderful man and I think he has done a lot to help to advance the cause. But I imagine that, as any other individual, that there are some things that

he likes and some things that he doesn't like, and that there are some things he approves of and other things that he don't approve of. Now, maybe he feels that there should be a Negro head of the NAACP, but I don't feel that it necessarily has to be a Negro at the head of NAACP. I feel that there should be a human being at the head of NAACP, whether he's black or white. It doesn't matter - what we are fighting for now is equality, and I feel that if I'm going to discriminate against you because you're white and say you can't be a part of my organization, then I'm destroying all the things that I'm fighting for. The things that I do speak louder than the things that I say. So I don't think - and maybe he actually meant that - maybe he did - but that he didn't want whites a part of - because I'm quite sure that he associates with many whites.

RPW: Oh, yes, he does.

CE: And I'm quite sure that he - men in his - in his very beginning into the political world, that somewhere a white man must have helped him to get in a position where he could get the support of the Negroes in Harlem.

RPW: Maybe he thinks the Negro voter of his constituency wants to hear this.

CE: Well, as I've said before, people have reasons for doing things. I will say that - back to the late Senator Bilbo. Now, Senator Bilbo was no more against the Negro than any other white man. But Senator Bilbo knew, in order to stay in Washington and get that fat salary that he was receiving and live on a flower bed

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of ease, he had to come back and lambaste and discredit Negroes. Now, Senator Bibb as an individual did more for individual Negroes than any governor that we have ever had.

RPW: You mean ones he knew or -

CE: Ones he knew. And he's a man who contributed more - he began to contribute to building the state institutions - new buildings at Alcorn. During his administration we received more than any other time until modern - until recently.

RPW: Do you think he was acting as a matter of trying to head off the attacks on "separate but equal" by making the Negro schools more nearly equal, or at least improving them?

CE: That's possible, but -

RPW: That's been true pretty generally since the Supreme Court decision.

CE: It's possible. This was before then that he was doing this sort of thing.

RPW: This was before that. He could predict that, perhaps.

CE: Yes, and maybe he could see that that was coming. Now, why I'm saying that Senator Bilbo wasn't as vicious, actually, within as he pretended he was, because there are so many implications, so many incidents where it's been proven that he was not only a friend to certain Negroes, but he was even intimate with certain Negroes. And it has been rumored that he even had children down in Poplarville now by a Negro woman -

RPW: Yes, I've heard that.

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CE: - so you see, he couldn't have been as bad against Negroes as he pretended. But he used this on the ignorant whites because he knew they wouldn't know any better - that's what they wanted to hear. And so I'm saying all that to say this, that a lot of times our leaders, our people who are out front, people who are being listened to, will say a thing to please the ears of the listeners. Now, it doesn't mean he actually feels that way. I could even go to a more recent thing but I won't do it now because maybe it may hurt him, but I think it is going to be proven even in Mississippi, in the near future, that things<sup>that</sup>/have been said by certain persons were only a means of acquiring certain positions and they really /<sup>don't</sup> feel that way.

RPW: That's sometimes said about the present governor.

CE: No comment on that.

RPW: I haven't asked for a comment. You can strike the record any time you like, you see. It's very strange, we think of the South as one thing, you know - or Mississippi as one thing, like - yesterday I read the editorial in Commercial - not Commercial Appeal - the Scimitar - of Memphis. It was a fairly intelligent editorial on the civil rights bill. Did you see that editorial?

CE: (not clear)

RPW: It just said this - it said they had better pass this bill because it's the will of the United States and it's for the benefit of all. It said so flatly, with no equivocation. A big

editorial in a prominent place in the Memphis paper. Right there yesterday. This is not even popular in Jackson, I'm sure.

CE: No, they - you know how the attorney general has already said that if the bill is passed, as far as Mississippi is concerned it never existed.

RPW: Yes, he said that. But now Memphis is not far away, and Memphis -

CE: Two hundred miles.

RPW: - West Tennessee, is in many ways lumped together with north Mississippi, it's the Delta capital.

CE: Right.

RPW: Yet that paper will say that.

CE: But you see - that still goes back to - I tell my people all the time - in Memphis there are many registered Negroes -

RPW: Yes, there are.

CE: - many voting Negroes. Therefore, the politicians and the newspapers are afraid to come out any other way. And until Negroes in Jackson, Mississippi, and Mississippi decide that we are going to become registered voters, these politicians are going to always  
attorney general when they  
said this had we had a hundred - the two hundred thousand Negroes voting in Mississippi, he wouldn't have said that.

RPW: But a few years ago I was down at Glendora, just at the time of the murder of young Melton by Kimball. And later on people there - I interviewed the widow of - just after the event - and I

talked with many people in Glendora. The people in Glendora almost to a man were horrified, and they signed a manifesto, you know, expressing this. Yet the trial came along and there was a quick acquittal. We know that story. But in the Clarksdale paper when the acquittal took place, there was a front page editorial saying this was a miscarriage of justice, saying we had flunked it again. Now that man who wrote that editorial in Clarksdale, Mississippi and put it on the front page, was not doing it in a town where Negro voters were in power.

CE: Well, that was an individual.

RPW: An individual, but he had nerve.

CE: A man who had nerve to stand up for his convictions - but there are such a few of them in Mississippi.

RPW: They are few, yes.

CE: Such few. And as I said before, until Negroes get registered and voting you will always find that type - that few - and a scant group who will eventually come out and speak out the truth.

RPW: I've heard fifty white men in Mississippi at one time I know say they admired that man. Now, many of those were segregationists by ordinary standards.

CE: You know, it's a funny thing about this white - Mississippi white man. He admires any man who stands up for what he believes. Now, they admired Medgar - sure they admired him. They didn't particularly love him, but they admired him because he stood for what he believed. Now, that's what I tell my so-called informers

and snitchers and Uncle Toms, we call them - that no one respects that type of man. No one respects you. I believe in any man, and that's why, when I go all over this country, people criticize me when I say that in Mississippi we are freer than Negroes are in Chicago and New York. The reason I say that is because we know where this man stands - there's no question about it. We know what he's - what to expect of him. In Chicago and New York, you wonder. They rub you down and they grin in your face and they stab you in the back.

RFW: You can project what you said about the admiration of courage in the Mississippi segregationist even, to say that he's ~~anger~~ easier to deal with in a way even if he's putting a gun on you - he still respects you because you're standing up to him?

CE: That's right. Sure, I've said that, and I've always said that, and that's why - that's what I live by.

RFW: Then there 's some basis for dealing with him in the end, then?

CE: That's right. Because, see, once you convert him it will be like when Christ converted Peter, you' have a converted man who is on your side. But the sympathizer who will go along and pat you on the back all the time, and feels sorry for you - in the end he will still be patting you on the back doing absolutely nothing. And once we can prove to the Mississippi whites, the staunch segregationists, that what we are ~~gn~~ fighting for is right and just, then Mississippi will be the best place in the world to live.

RPW: When do you think that crack is going to come, either on or off the record, either way.

CE: It can be on the record - it's all right - I don't mind saying it. I think the crack will come when more Negroes and whites become concerned about the state and the nation and realize that what we are doing here is useless and it's fruitless and it's going to destroy all of us. And when Negroes become more and more determined to become registered voters and to become recognized and to become accepted, through their own efforts.

RPW: When do you think you can send a Negro to the legislature? Anybody can guess, of course, but how would you date it - approximately?

CE: Well, I would say it would be at least a decade.

RPW: A decade.

CE: ~~That's a long time~~ I'd say at least that.

RPW: Some say '70, some say '68 - you don't -

CE: No, I doubt that. I think it will be at least ten years before we can send a Negro to the legislature, even to the state legislature. Because, you see, whether you want to admit it or not, this is a long drawn out thing. We aren't going to settle for nothing, but we're certainly going to take time to get it all.

RPW: What does Freedom Now mean with that realization?

CE: Freedom Now -

RPW: Interpret the slogan for me as you feel it.

CE: Freedom Now means that we don't want to wait until tomorrow

to start getting the things that we are entitled to.

RPW: To push for it, you mean?

CE: To push for ~~the~~ the things we are entitled to. We are going to push for them now. We are going to ask for them now. And we hope to get some reaction - some favorable reaction now. But we know that no social change comes over night, but for God's sake start making some change.

RPW: Yet I have encountered people - mostly, I must say, younger Negroes, who would say no time is going to be involved - tomorrow morning or not at all. Now or never. Now or death, you see. Or another type would say, well, I know it takes time but I just can't bring myself to say so.

CE: Well, actually - you said they are young people, and they - I'm glad to hear them say that because it lets me know that they are willing to go out and fight for what they believe. But they will learn, as all of us have learned, that nothing comes today. Even the birth of a child, it takes nine months to mature - seven to nine months. To become a man, it takes from one to twenty-one years.

RPW: Or one to never, sometimes.

CE: Or one to never. So, you see, it's a thing that we must - but it doesn't mean that we aren't growing every day. It means - it doesn't mean that we aren't getting - our eyes aren't becoming open and we're not being able to walk, we're not being able to crawl or walk or talk. Every day we get something new. But it -

there's no point of us fooling ourselves. Nothing comes now. But we want some action now, and we want to start working in the direction ~~ma~~ of freedom now. And I think that - this is my interpretation of it - I can't speak for anyone else - now that has to be clear - that Freedom Now means that we are not going to sit by - hours by any longer and not do anything about the injustice that has been inflicted on the Negro and minority groups. We're going to demand that we have the right to register and vote now - not tomorrow, but now. And let's start getting the Negroes registered voters now. And if we can't get it, we're going to use every legal means possible to get our rights. That's my interpretation. Maybe I'm wrong, as I said before - it's just like if I would go out and call my wife up and say, look, I want a whole chicken for dinner - now. Well, I've got to be a mighty big eater to go and eat a whole chicken with all the trimmings. But what I mean is, prepare the chicken and I'll eat all I want and all I can now, and ~~thamka~~ then tomorrow I'll eat the rest, and the next day eat the rest. But I think that there's no point in ~~such~~ feeling ourselves that - you just don't get it now. But we're going to have some effort - we want some compensation - we want part of it now. I'm willing, and Medgar was willing to make progress - not drag our feet but as hurriedly as possible.

RPW: This is an important point to have on the record from a person in your position, because it's misinterpreted by both Negroes and white people sometimes. The slogan is taken as more

than a slogan, it's taken as a notion of abolishing the historical process entirely, you see. It sometimes is - and the white man will say, it's impossible and therefore resists. The Negro student - usually a student will say, it means now - we're going to have it tomorrow morning or there's going to be blood in the streets.

CE: Well, as I said before, neither one of us never appreciated and we never did advocate violence, and I still say that.

RPW: Yes, I know your views on that.

CE: And I still say that it's going to take time, but we're not going to sit and wait for time to solve our problem. I don't want anybody to get that impression. But we're going to fight for everything that's ours - now. But we know it's going to take time to acquire. I'm building a brand new home here. I can't build it today or tomorrow - it's going to take time. But every day they're working on the house. And I want that house completed - I don't want to wait no hundred years to complete the house - don't get me wrong - but I know they can't build the house and complete it tomorrow. I don't care how much money it costs -

RPW: There's no magic.

CE: - how much money - I'd say here, here's a hundred thousand dollars, I want my house built tomorrow. That doesn't mean a thing. It's going to take time.

RPW: There's no magic.

CE: There's no magic. And that's the same thing with our rights. We want progress every day - something - and we don't make no bones about it - we want progress every day.

RPW: I was talking a few weeks ago with a young lady who is extremely brilliant. She is second in her class in law school at Howard University. And we were sitting having lunch with a group, and she started the conversation and said to me, I have more hope working out a way of life here in the South - this was in Washington where we were talking - and she has been all over the South - she's been in picket lines, she's been in jail - she's been through it - she says, I'll have more hope of working out a decent arrangement here than I have in the North. She says Detroit and Chicago and New York scare me to death. She said, at least, there's something in common in the background, the common history of the Negro in the South and the white man in the South. She said, we have some understanding, some recognition of each other as some human shared history. She said, this seems something to build on even if the policeman is shooting at you. Does that make any sense to you?

CE: It does. It does make sense. As I said before, when you break down these walls of the staunch segregationist, I still believe that you have more assurance of a lasting freedom than you will have in the pseudo-type they have in the North. I have to agree on that, and I think, regardless of how much I'm different - I feel differently from the others, that's my belief, and a man

has to have a belief. We've always had that. That's why Medgar and I were willing to stay in Mississippi and die in Mississippi. But we feel that there is a hope for Mississippi, and there's a chance that some day that Mississippi will be a better place to live for all people.

RPW: I wish you'd speak now to any point that's on your mind - anything that's on your mind. Let me drop questioning and you just say what you - anything that happens to occur to you that you think is important to say.

CE: Well, the most important thing that I would like to say in my closing - and I guess this is a closing -

RPW: Yes.

CE: - is that I hope and pray that the day will come when Negroes and white ~~men~~ alike in Mississippi can sit down and negotiate their differences and draw - reach some conclusion without interference from agitating whites as they may call us and agitating Negroes too if they think that we're - some segregationist groups agitate. And I hope and trust that a line of communication can be established between the political powers, structures of our city and our state and the local citizens. And when that day comes, then and not until then will things in Mississippi or any place else be accepted by the masses and enjoyed by all. That's about all I have to say. I hope -

RPW: Do you think there's a - say the power structure, as it's called, of Jackson, were to decide to negotiate you could trust

them to negotiate?

CE: Well, I - as I said -

RPW: If they decide now they won't negotiate this.

CE: Well, I believe if they decide they will negotiate, I always believe a man is innocent until he's proven guilty. If they will sit down and say they will do something, I'd be the last man to say they wouldn't do it. I believe that they have the conviction and the courage to they are fighting, and say they aren't going to negotiate with us. And I think should they see it - deem it necessary to negotiate, I do believe that they would do some of the things they say. It has been proven. They said they would give us six policemen and they gave them and we got them. They didn't give them to us because of violence and if we would do them, but they did do what they said. They said they would give us eight crossing guards and we got them. So you see, it's one thing about ~~the~~ the Southern white man - those who are in position - in most cases once he says he'll do something, if you can get him to stand up and say he'll do it - not in all cases, mind, but in most cases - if he's a leader or he's in a position to make decisions - once he commits himself you can just about trust ~~him~~ what he says. Not in all cases, now - but in most cases. You can just about trust him, because he's going to fight so hard to not to do it, and I found out one thing about some of them - now, like in writing, I like to be sure the emphasis is on this - I'm not speaking of all - that if they give you

their word - they hate to be made out of a liar.

RFW: You mean, by the time they stand up and make the agreement they have already crossed the line - that is, within themselves?

CE: I think so - I think so. Now, they aren't going to give in until they have to - that's one thing for sure. We never would have got the police here unless they saw it as deemed necessary. We'd have been fighting yet. But they found that they had no choice and that we were not going to stop until they gave us something. And this is not all we want. We want more. As I said before, I'm a great believer in that things are just not done over night, but give us some of it every day and every week and I think we'll be able to get along. Because bloodshed has never solved any problems. I think a good example of violence is Birmingham. Birmingham was the worst disaster - the worst thing that could ever happen in America. And actually, the whole line of communication has been destroyed among the whites and the Negroes and no one is getting any place. They've got to get together in Birmingham and in Jackson and in Tougaloo and in Greenwood and Clarksdale. You've got to be able to get together on the local level and solve their problems among themselves. And until that day comes it's going to be a hard place to live, it's going to be critical for people to -

RFW: That is, a federal troop solution is not a solution, then, you say - is that it?

CE: Well, to tell the truth -

RPW: By itself, I mean.

CE: By itself - no. It's good in some instances - it's good to have for protection.

RPW: I can believe that.

CE: But what we're going to have to have in Mississippi and anywhere is an understanding and a feeling and will to accept each other on the local level. Now, sometimes troops may help to bring about that but I still say troops won't change the hearts of people and won't change the minds of people, but I think that if we continue to push for what we are pushing for and stay right and keep on fighting the way we are fighting now, that there are many hearts going to change and when those hearts are changed, then Mississippi is the best place in which to live.

RPW: But troops sometimes change hearts a little bit, don't they?

CE: Yes - I agree with that. And also it's good protection. I feel that we'll need troops in Mississippi before this thing is over. I hate to think that, but I do feel we're going to need troops here. We need federal protection now.

RPW: Well, you needed troops in Oxford.

CE: Yes. We need federal protection now. Why I said the troops have to change something different on that, because once they get to know the Negro - sometimes troops can help them to get to know the Negro because it gives them a chance to associate and mingle with them and then they begin to know us, because even the Northern whites - a lot of them don't

them - most of them don't know the Negro. You have your ghettos and your Negro sections and your white sections, the same as you have here. Look at the trouble they're having. So you see, it's a fact of lack of understanding among both races throughout this country of ours, what's causing this hassle and this turmoil.

And until, as I said before, hearts are right - and the churches can play a great part in this, in making people understand that they are human beings and they're individuals and every man has the right to be respected and looked upon as an individual.

RPW: How much of ~~x~~ the churches in the South are losing their hold on the younger people now?

CE: I don't have that - I couldn't say, and be accurate in it - but I can say -

RPW: Sure - nobody has statistics.

CE: - but I can say that - this, that I think the churches themselves are losing some of the younger people because of the lack of interest that is shown towards the movement, and a lot of them are very reluctant to speak out and to give the youth a hand and give them a leadway to go out and to do things. Therefore, they are turning from - some of them are losing memberships, and they're turning from the church to the civil rights movement because of the activities there.

RPW: Negro colleges have been in a very peculiar position sometimes, too.

CE: Yes - state colleges, yes. But your private institutions have been very helpful. The state colleges, naturally, are controlled by

the state segregationists - the power structure - and they use that as a weapon to keep the officials of the colleges suppressed, because, now, if you do this you won't have a job. As I said before, in my previous statement, that most persons are concerned about themselves, especially those in high echelons, and they won't give up their personal things in order to - and sacrifice themselves in order to benefit others. Therefore, they have the state official aid to control our state institutions - so far - but that isn't going to last much longer, either, because the people are beginning to realize that - I don't have anything anyway, so what have I got to lose. And that's about the attitude they're taking.

RPW: This has been great.

CE: Thank you, very much.

RPW: It's been very valuable.

CE: Thank you. I hope it can be of some -

RPW: Well, it will certainly be useful - extremely useful.