

SECOND CAMPAIGN FOR THE SENATE

Interview #10

Thursday, July 12, 1990

RITCHIE: Last week you gave me an overview of the whole Central Arizona Project and took it up to Johnson's signing the bill. That raised a question for me: what was Lyndon Johnson's role in all this? You had talked about Kennedy, but Johnson was president during that whole period when CAP was coming to gestation, and I wondered whether he took an active interest in the CAP?

ELSON: Oh, yeah, he did. At one point near the end he came out with a big endorsement of the Lower Colorado River, whatever the project was called, but it was mainly the CAP. But we had problems with the Bureau of the Budget all the time—there was a great guy down there, [Elmer] Staats—mainly because they wanted to change some of the criteria in the memorandum that they used for analyzing Bureau of Reclamation and Public Works Projects. We always had fights over that. Then of course he was working through the Secretary of the Interior, it was really his responsibility, so Johnson was listening to a lot of that. But I couldn't say that he really played a big role. At the right time he did the right things that were asked of him. His endorsement wasn't totally the way we would have liked it, but he did come through when we needed him the most, in urging the quick enactment of the project. That was either in '67 or '68. But we had difficulties with him on the Mexican treaty.

RITCHIE: You said there was a telephone call from the president.

ELSON: Yeah. Of course, the senator was here when that whole treaty was negotiated and again he had laid quite a record about that whole subject way back. The Welton-Mohawk Project in Arizona was being blamed for all the salinity that was going down river. There was no question that it was contributing to it. Of course, Mexico is on the tail end of the river. Anyone on the tail end of the river gets the worst of everything. As I mentioned, our claim was that they were over-irrigating and not using the water for leaching as they should. They were cultivating well over a hundred thousand acres, and a lot of those so-called small Mexican farms were really being financed by Anderson-Clayton. So you had that mix of interests.

Then there was this guy in the State Department who headed up the Mexican desk, who was very ambitious (you would have thought he was representing Mexico more than he was the United States) by the name of Bob Sayre. He later became an ambassador to somewhere. A very bright guy.

We took a very strong position on that, particularly when they wanted to bypass Morales Dam (that's the last dam on the Colorado) and cut a channel and get all this water. We were saying they took it from any and all sources. Then they talked about a salinity plant and all the other things that were doing it. But it got to be a hassle. I know on this one occasion Carl Hayden was at the White House discussing this subject. In between his leaving the White House and returning to the office, Lyndon called and told me that Carl Hayden had made an agreement with him on the salinity question and hoped I wasn't going to cause any problems [laughs]. I said, "Well, Mr. President, if Carl Hayden's made an agreement with you, that certainly takes care of it. I'm hardly one to cause any problems." I thought it was rather unusual. When the senator got back, I told him about it. He said, "Bull." We didn't make any agreement. He's pulling one of his tricks." Later on we got it all worked out before the project was authorized, and got it charged to the general taxpayer—I mean the cost of doing all the work, and the bypass channel.

But it seemed to me that there was always a problem. There was never unity. There was always a very delicate balance with the Upper Basin states, and of course Scoop and Maggie, particularly Scoop, they weren't going to let anything happen. You could hardly study the transmountain diversions from the Columbia Basin into the Upper Basin or Northern California. And then with California, because of Northcut "Mike" Ely, we were always suspicious. When I look back on it, I'm just continually amazed that the damn thing was ever done.

Through that period, from the time we got the Supreme Court decision to eventually its enactment and signing at the end of September in '68, I'm pretty proud of the way the senator handled it. He was attacked at home, though no one would really openly attack him very much. He still knew the direction he wanted to go. We were forced to give up more than he certainly wanted to, particularly the dams, also the guarantee to California in times of shortage. But as he played it out against the changing scene during those years, you can look back and see that he made some very

good decisions in not moving things when the pressure was on for him to move them in the Senate. He always knew the battle was in the House and trying to force the House, and Wayne Aspinall, and the Californians, and the Upper Basin, to move something along that we could all live with. He made some very critical decisions and we caught a lot of hell for it.

And of course during all that time there was always this undercurrent of rumors about the senator's health and his frailty, that I was really manipulating him, and this sort of thing. They were always worried in Arizona that he was going to drop dead any day and wouldn't be around, and they'd lose that opportunity. They said he wasn't using his power the way he should, and everyone was second-guessing him. Particularly from '65, after I had lost the election and come back, through '68, was just a nightmarish time for him and for me. I'm surprised that we kept our sanity through it all. But at the critical times he did exercise that power.

You know, he was on the Interior Committee, and when it came time for mark-up, we marked everything up and passed it out for the last time, I was in with him in all the executive sessions. We had our notebooks, and as we were marking it up, out in the hearing room was some of our taskforce and attorneys. When we got in a critical situation I'd go out and talk to them about what we were going to do and not do—"anyone have any objections?"—and go back into the mark-up. Again, that was an awkward position, because when you had people around like Clint Anderson, and Tom Kuchel, and Jackson, and all that—but Jackson was really the one who made sure that I was there to help the senator. Where I could almost participate in it, even though there were other staff members in the executive session, but they only responded when they were called on. But I was almost included like one of the senators, which really is, I'm sure you can appreciate it, an awkward position to be in when you know you're just a damn clerk. But I did it.

The senator had forgotten more about the damn river than most of the men in that room ever heard. Some of the men on that committee could really be nasty [expletive], particularly Clint Anderson. He could be a mean [expletive], and was. But a smart son-of-a-gun too. I would give Scoop Jackson great credit for not only going out of his way to look out for the interests of Carl Hayden and Arizona but trying to resolve all the differences and work well with his staff, and some of the people on the committee,

and then his personal staff. His office was right around the corner from ours so we were always meeting in the hallway, and when Scoop would call and say he wanted to come around, the senator would say, "No, I'll come around to your office." The senator was always good at that, he'd go to the other person's office. But Scoop would come around to ours and we'd have these conferences going on, and most of the time I was always included in all those, and so was his AA at the time, a guy by the name of Sterling Monroe. We really worked well together, and they kept up fully apprised of what was going on, and what Stewart Udall, the Secretary, was telling them, and what Anderson was telling them, and what the Upper Basin, [Frank] Moss and some of the others, because you had practically all the western states represented on that committee, both from the Upper and Lower Basin. So I give Jackson very high marks.

When the mark-up came, Carl Hayden had some proxies—either the senator had them or Scoop had them—and so poor Tom Kuchel knew he was outvoted. He would rant and rave and say this was unconstitutional, or "I thought this was a democracy." I think that was his theme. The senator said, "Well, that's what we're exercising right now. You're watching democracy at work." As he voted these proxies [laughs]. It was exciting, gee, you couldn't help but be excited about all of it, but it was always tense. Here we were talking about serious, long-range problems. I felt uniquely honored to be there with them and part of all that, watching and participating in it.

RITCHIE: It must have shocked a lot of people when Hayden, who had this image of being so genial, really did use the power of appropriations. I can think of at least three times in that period when he threatened. One was the cutting off of funds to the Federal Power Commission if they approved a dam, another was threatening Aspinall. . . .

ELSON: With Frying Pan-Arkansas.

RITCHIE: And then also threatening Ronald Reagan, the governor of California, with cutting off some funds for northern California water projects.

ELSON: Oh, yeah.

RITCHIE: And Reagan backed down like everyone else did in the face of that.

ELSON: Well, though he was not known for anything like that, I think everyone respected the fact that he had that power, if he wanted to exercise it. And of course the senator had that long, long record of helping every other state in the west—in the Union, for that matter—but helping everyone else with their's. When his time came he sort of expected a little reciprocity. I don't know how much responsibility or credit I should take, but early on—I mentioned that memorandum that we drafted when Charlie Reed died, and Bill Gookin and I were putting together all those figures, way back—I had gone through and identified every project, what their weaknesses were, and when their appropriation was, and the additional authorizations needed, and then had outlined where the senator could bring some pressure to bear if he wanted to as things moved along. Pretty much outlined it.

The senator was really reluctant to take all those actions but could also see that it was needed, so we had some pretty sharp exchanges and letter writing. If you see his files, there are some unusually forceful letters that are not quite like Carl Hayden. A lot of those I helped draft, but there wasn't one of them that he didn't add to, or make better, or rewrite in such a way that it said what we wanted to say and more forceful, and yet in very tactful language. But you couldn't miss the message in some of those exchanges, whether it was with the Department of Interior or to whoever we might have directed them. And then in the Appropriations Committee there is no question he had the support, even though again in the committee there were a lot of westerners there. But he had their total support.

There's no question in my mind had he decided to attach CAP as a simple thing or a part of a minimal regional program on the public works appropriations bill which had passed that he probably could have done it. That's when we had seen Mike Kirwan with John Rhodes and the senator, and I was at that meeting, where if they had had to go to conference and we would have bypassed the House Interior Committee completely. Then we had a strategy, had the conferees not agreed to it, we had a back-up position. He was prepared, and I think we could have not had a public works appropriations bill that year. Or it would have been a lot different one than had reached that point. It was sort of a game of chicken in many ways.

He was not one to abuse the power that he had. I never saw him abuse his power, because he would rather persuade and work with people, in the long run. Again, it was

that long view, and yet he knew that he was running rapidly out of time. So I think for that reason he was willing to take some extra measures that were not like him. He knew with his long-term view of the world that he wasn't going to be around to help and it was coming to an end. So when he had to use power, he used it. He was criticized for not using it earlier, sooner, but the way the entire thing unfolded and with the lack of unanimity not only in our own state but in the whole region, it's just amazing to me that you got all these parties agreeing to anything, even the time of day. I'm sure we had meetings like that where we couldn't agree on the time of day or even where to meet.

As I say, until we reach some really critical situations, it's probably the last big public works reclamation project that will be enacted. He was very disappointed about losing the Bridge Canyon dam, because over those forty years he had gone to great lengths to make sure that those sites were available, and listened to all those environmentalists and "tree-huggers" that some people call them, I don't. I told you about building the steam plant. It didn't, in my opinion, help the Indians that much. It's the biggest damn open-pit operation in the country now. And it's polluting everything. Then they wanted us to use nuclear energy, and what a disaster that has been. The one big nuclear plant they do have in Arizona now is a mess. No one really said there wasn't a need for the Central Arizona Project. After awhile everyone was saying "Yeah, you ought to have it, *but*." And that included those who were opposed to the dams. So we had to go along with using the steam plant as the vehicle for financing the thing. As I say, there were a lot of bodies along the way.

RITCHIE: One person I wanted to ask more about was Wayne Aspinall, who really in the end became the chief stumbling block to the project. What was it about him that Hayden couldn't cut a deal with him, somehow? Why did he become such an obstacle?

ELSON: Well, I think he definitely was looking out for the Upper Basin. That was his first priority, and certainly for the state of Colorado. He also knew that a lot of his projects that he wanted authorized were questionable under any criteria. Some of them were really questionable. I think he saw the Central Arizona Project as a vehicle to get his projects authorized, where if he had to do them on his own, or as part

of an Upper Basin thing, it might not be possible and certainly extremely difficult. I think he latched onto this as his vehicle.

He was a man who worked at his job. He was a chairman, he ran a very good committee, he had some very talented staff people working for him. He knew the subject well. He was a crusty old guy, but I always sort of liked him because he was a tough hombre too. He spent a lot of time on it. And he had his own home situation to always worry about. I think that until he could line up his things, he didn't want to see the CAP go moving along on its own, or something else with some vague reference to development in the Upper Basin, because some of his projects weren't in order. There were a lot of studies that had to be made, and needed to be put all together and make them ready. I think that was one reason why we could never sit down. Of course, he took pride in his superior knowledge of the river.

The way he ran his committee was: the Senate does its thing and we do our thing. They always sort of threw that up in your face. There weren't any of the informal meetings that we should have had, probably, but didn't have. I think he deliberately didn't want to have some of them, so I don't think you can blame it on us for not trying on occasion. Then he was playing all the cards, too, and he distrusted California also. I think those are some of the reasons why it was difficult to get him to move. I'm saying that when the senator said, "I'll go along with certain things if you get the House to report out a bill, then we'll see what happens." That was early on, '64 or '65 somewhere in there. Then we took other actions.

I don't think that Wayne ever thought that the senator would ever do anything like that. But I think he got the message loud and clear, particularly when he threatened to cut off eleven million, or whatever it was, for Frying Pan-Arkansas, which was really something very important to him. And we had the votes. There's no question, had he pursued that that would have been knocked out. That got his attention. But he was a difficult man to work with, and of course you had Floyd Dominy, who was the Commissioner of Reclamation, was telling him one thing. Stewart was telling him another hand. Everyone was always feeding him. But he had a very good staff that filtered out some of this. His chief guy was really very good. But Aspinall was quite a guy, and he certainly looked out for the Upper Basin. Without him, there probably wouldn't have been any project, in putting all the pieces together. He certainly

deserves great credit. With John Saylor [R-PA] over there sort of mouthing not only the coal interests but the environmental interests, and everyone making an emotional thing. John Saylor was a real character, he was really something else. But Wayne Aspinall was a good chairman. He ran a tight committee, a very tight one [laughs].

RITCHIE: One of the people you've mentioned a lot is Northcut Ely, who was the California lobbyist.

ELSON: Right.

RITCHIE: And Arizona had a lobbyist, Morley Fox.

ELSON: Oh, well, Morley wasn't really a lobbyist, no. Mike Ely of course was a very good lawyer, who always represented those irrigation districts and metropolitan water district, and southern California water interests. He was very bright, and still is, still goes to the office. He had a very agile and devious mind, and was involved in the law suit all along. He knew the river very well. He was born in Arizona. And he worked at it, it seemed like twenty-four hours a day. He was good, but after awhile people were suspicious of his motives and you weren't sure when you cut a deal with him that it would stick, or something wouldn't come up, or you'd be blindsided from something.

He probably got more credit for doing things that he probably didn't do, but maybe encouraged them, that would put roadblocks in the way, because they had the aqueduct and as long as the water was flowing down the river they kept using it, until we eventually got the diversion works bill. Of course, with the way southern California was growing there was no question they would need water, but they were wasting so much water, in the Imperial Valley and all over. They just deliberately diverted it and used it to build up a record. But all of southern California, you would never have had that development without the Colorado River. San Diego wouldn't be there today, the city it is, if it hadn't been for the Colorado. But then all the farming interests were just using great amounts. Did you see the movie "Chinatown?"

RITCHIE: Yeah.

ELSON: That sort is a small little play of what the water wars were about. They'd do all sorts of devious things in the name of securing water rights. So Northcut Ely was just a very formidable foe who was a good legal talent.

But when you ask about Morley Fox, he was not a lobbyist as such. He played it very low key and just sort of attended hearings, tried to keep everyone informed, pass on information, and report, but I don't think he ever really lobbied anyone as such. That was done by members of our taskforce or the Stream Commission and the members themselves, the House members, Rhodes and Udall principally, and then over here ourselves. But Mike was a big, big part of this whole southwest picture. That would be a good source of a book or two, tracing his games.

RITCHIE: The reason I asked was because here were the states sending lobbyists on issues like this, and yet you would think that the members of Congress are really the lobbyists for their states.

ELSON: Yeah, right.

RITCHIE: How does a member of Congress work with this other representative of the state. Does this complicate matters?

ELSON: Well, for instance, to this day one of the persons who got damaged the most, that helped us a lot, that the senator had great confidence in, was Bill Gookin, who was at one time with the Stream Commission and state water engineer, and had gone through the law suit. You needed those experts to counter all the stuff that was being thrown at you, particularly in hydrology, and in engineering, and dam studies, and proposals. We put Bill in a very awkward position at home, with people that he had to work with. I'm sure the people on the Arizona Power Authority and some other interests at home really got him. Later, they almost ruined his career and business, when he set up his own business. I really felt bad about it, but we needed experts like him.

We would use some of the lawyers that were available to us who were with the Stream Commission and Central Arizona Project Association, but they really didn't have them, it was more this taskforce that was formed. We used a number of lawyers,

some were good and some were bad. We had one who was a drunk—I'm not talking about Charlie Reed, either. But we had some very fine legal talent of our own. And for instance for the Yuma area there was one lawyer that pretty much represented not only the city of Yuma but a lot of the irrigation districts there, by the name of Joe Mansfield, who was in the law suit. We worked very closely with him, he was very good. But again, that was almost like an intrastate battle, trying to protect their interests as opposed to the metropolitan area of Maricopa County and Phoenix against those who already had some usage. Again, the Indians, you'd work with those lawyers.

As I said, we had some very good help ourselves, but the one person that stands out that we really relied on during that heavy time, particularly on the engineering side, was Bill Gookin. The senator would also rely on, and had a lot of faith in, Floyd Dominy, though Dominy was put in some awkward positions by the Secretary. Floyd was one of the more agile people on his feet, but he always was helpful to us, and so was his department, a number of people down there that we received some information from. And California had their lobbyist as well as their lawyers, so there were meetings always going on, all the time, between various representatives of the states and different irrigation districts. You were sorting out all these people. We sort of narrowed it down to a few that the senator decided we would run with them and with his knowledge of the river, and all the southwest, and all the water projects.

He wasn't going to get into a lot of meetings and battles and things like that, though we had many of them. Like he sent me, when Brown was governor, to deal with the state water engineers and their legal department. There you had the northern California interests against the southern California interests. It was a good lesson in political reality because of having to know what was motivating a lot of members to do the things that they were doing, or what was going on in their states, and the status. That's where I think a lot of the background work that we did early on paid off, picking out vulnerabilities of individuals, and how you might reach them, and get their attention, and get them to be reasonable gentlemen. It was just a lot of hard work. It would seem like you would be making progress and then the next thing you'd know something would come unglued. It sort of reminded you of dealing with a big bowl of Jello. You'd press here and something would come up over there, and you could never quite get control of the bowl. I don't know what your question was about—Northcut?

RITCHIE: I was wondering about the relationships of these lobbyists and the members.

ELSON: I always said, if I couldn't have the money that was spent on postage for all this, I'd take the money that the lawyers, and engineers, and studies that were made on this whole thing. My God, I'd hate to think of the millions, and millions, and millions of dollars it must have amounted to. We probably spent as much on that as we did on the project [laughs].

RITCHIE: One of the reasons I raised the question is because Senator [Robert C.] Byrd, who is chairman of Appropriations now, was outraged last year when it turned out that West Virginia University had hired a lobbyist to try to get a federal appropriations. His attitude was: I'm you're lobbyist, you come to me if you want money for West Virginia. And he pushed through an amendment. . .

ELSON: Right, I'm aware of that.

RITCHIE: That from now on you've got to publicly state who was your lobbyist to try to get an appropriation.

ELSON: But of course, as you recall, during those days you didn't have any lobbying acts. In fact, you still don't have to register if you don't want to, unless you're spending over half your time with a member of Congress on one specific subject.

You can talk about all your reporting requirements and everything else, but in fact, we urged on occasion some people be hired to do a specific job. You asked for help because you knew you just didn't have the resources, the manpower, to track down everything, counter all the opposition. Of course, I've always thought lobbyists were an essential part of the whole government operation. You found out who you could trust. I think the worst thing a lobbyist could do—having been one for a long time, at one time—the worst thing you could do is give a member bad information. You expect it to be partisan in a way, but at least you expect that it can be defended in some way, and any good lobbyist, at least the ones that I've respected in the past always gave you both sides. They'd tell you the weakness in their own position, or tell you what their opponents were saying, and face that head on up front.

So in my opinion to make this system work you need lobbyists. Not just to get the information, but how things affect them. I don't think without all the lobbyists who were involved in this particular project that you would have ever had one, without having all these individuals working at it, to bring about the type of climate that was necessary to bring all these elements together. I have nothing, for the most part, nothing but good things to say about all the people. Now, a lot of these people that we were using were actually paid by the state of Arizona, were officials of the state, appointed, and so they were helping with our lobbying. And then some were lent by the power companies, and the Salt River project, they made people available. And always lurking in the background you had this public versus private power fight during all this time too.

Without having those resources available we would have never gotten anything done. You just didn't have it internally to put it together, and answer all the questions, and do the leg work that was essential. I think you could say that was true of every state that was involved in any major project of this nature. But as I also said, you really spotted who might be playing games with you, and then you wouldn't use them again. That's the way Carl Hayden was. You could lie to him once, but not a second time. You were questioned very closely after that.

RITCHIE: In the end, when you look at the size of the state of Arizona, in terms of its population back then in the '60s, versus California, and Colorado, and New Mexico, and all the rest of it, do you think it's possible that Arizona could have gotten what it got if it hadn't had the chairman of the Appropriations Committee representing it?

ELSON: No. Or the whole tenure of Carl Hayden. I do not believe it, no. There's no question in my mind that we would never have had it. Not only because of his position, but because of all the groundwork he had laid over the years and the things that he had done for other states, and the record that he had developed as a builder. There wasn't anyone else around who had the power—was in a position of power—or had this long legacy. I don't care if it's Barry or anyone else in Arizona. You couldn't have done it with just Stewart Udall and his brother in the House, though John Rhodes was in a very powerful position, but they were outnumbered and we always knew they were outnumbered in the House. If California had wanted to drag

their feet there was nothing they could do about it. I just can't believe they could have done it; there wouldn't have been too many outside forces at work.

I don't think Carl Hayden could have done it alone, don't get me wrong. But I look at him as the core that made it all possible. Everything revolved around his being there and being able to have that strength, and that position, and that whole background, having done his homework all the way along the line. He was the rock that we could hold onto that made it all possible. Without the others we probably couldn't have done it either, but without him I doubt if there would have ever been a Central Arizona Project. I just don't see how it could have been done.

See, after he left, and I ran against Barry, and Barry came back, well, Barry couldn't do it. He couldn't swing it. He wasn't even interested in it, really, to tell you the truth. I mean, sure he was interested, but he wasn't going to spend the rest of his life trying to get the Central Arizona Project. I think the state would have probably then tried to go it alone, and that would have been all fouled up. I don't think the state could have built it, still don't, that's my opinion now and it was certainly then. It's just pretty hard to stick a state project in the middle of a federal river, and have it operate and work and pay off those bonds that they would have had to sell. Then Stewart, who was the Secretary of the Interior all those eight years, he was supposedly the secretary of all the nation. He couldn't have done it alone. And Mo—we had a chairman over there in [John] Murdock, way back before we went to the Supreme Court—and he got blindsided. With California's numerical strength, there were just so many ways that they could have delayed it indefinitely.

As I look back on it, there was this giant of a man sitting there. And though he was getting older, and didn't have the stamina that he had before, people were still a little reluctant to want to take him on, head on, particularly when it finally dawned on them that he was willing to play some games that other people were noted for playing, and that's taking some retaliatory action, which was totally against his career and his tradition. But he wanted it pretty badly.

RITCHIE: The CAP finally got passed in the fall of '68. Johnson signed it, and called it "Carl Hayden Day."

ELSON: September 30, 1968.

RITCHIE: That was right at the time when you were running your second campaign for the Senate. How important was the CAP to your campaign in '68?

ELSON: Well, it was probably more important in '64. But in '68 it was important because I had been a great part of it. Of course, I had made a lot of enemies in the process too, because everyone accused me of being high-handed, and there were interests in the state that were nervous about me because I was always so opposed to the state and the Arizona Power Authority going it alone. But by the time this was enacted, you've got to remember what an awful year 1968 was, and to campaign as a Democrat in the state of Arizona.

I remember it started off, this would be January, I was down at the White House seeing President Johnson, in the Oval Office. Just the two of us there and that Japanese photographer that he had, Okimoto. We were mainly talking about politics, and the Arizona delegation and my campaign, because again I was going to run, and was urged to run. This was on a Tuesday, I think, and I was taking a group of campaign advisors down to Acapulco. The Immigration and Naturalization Service had arranged a spot for me down there where I could have a quiet meeting for a week with my advisors to decide how we were going to run this campaign, how much money we would need, and all the other things. My wife was out in Arizona, my family had been out there since the fall before. My wife was over in LA, having a minor operation, and I came back from my meeting with Lyndon Johnson, came back and told the senator about the conversation, and I was leaving the next day.

After that conversation with Lyndon Johnson, I would have wagered that Lyndon Johnson was going to be running again. Of course, from my standpoint, having Lyndon at the top of the ticket in Arizona was better than any alternative. We talked about the Arizona delegation. Well, I think I first went to Phoenix and then left to meet my wife in California, and then I was leaving from there to go to Mexico. I remember walking into see my wife at this hotel. She said, "My God, what are you doing here. Haven't you heard?" I thought, "Oh, [expletive], Carl Hayden's dropped dead and it's all over anyhow, and there goes the CAP, there goes the campaign, there goes everything." She said, "No, didn't you hear that the President's announced that he's not running?" This was

what, on a Friday? Something like that. I said, "Oh, my God!" Anyhow, that's the way it all started!

I nevertheless went on down to Acapulco. While I was in Mexico I remember there was no phone in this beautiful place where we were staying. I had to go a neighbor's to use the phone. I had a call from Hubert Humphrey and all that about all the political maneuvering. But that's the way it started. At that meeting when I finally got everyone together—because it was a fun as well as business, political trip—I think to a man they all were urging me that it probably wasn't a good time to be running, particularly in view of what happened. But by that time I had already moved people around, I had already spent money that I had raised. Then you've got to remember, later that year you had Martin Luther King's assassination. I was here, over at the Carroll Arms when that all happened, and then you saw the city in flames. Again, people thought it was a conspiracy. Well, that didn't help anything. Then in June, Bobby Kennedy got assassinated. Then you had that great convention in Chicago. As a Democrat I could just see everything going to hell. But by this time I was committed to the campaign.

RITCHIE: Were you at the convention?

ELSON: No, I didn't go to either convention in '64 or '68, and the reason is that both conventions were late and we have a late primary, which comes in September, sixty days before the general election. So I was out campaigning. You don't get any votes at a convention, unless I could have arranged somehow to get myself as a speaker, nationally, but I wasn't about to do that. It wouldn't have mattered anyhow. But I didn't go to either convention. In '64 there was no need to go because it was going to be a coronation with Lyndon. It would have been just a fun time, but who wanted to go to Atlantic City? No, I was out campaigning both times.

But when I look back on that year, you had all this CAP stuff going on. It was just a nightmare for me. By that time I had filed and won the nomination big, and Barry, who had been out of office for four years, I think he must have talked to every high school class in the state of Arizona during those four years, and every Rotary group and everything else. I was at a tremendous disadvantage. So the CAP, though it was an advantage to me—and when you talked about merits, there was no question that Eugene

Pulliam, who was still there, felt that I was as knowledgeable as anyone when it came to water and public policy matters. I know during that campaign, when I was actually campaigning, I got to say about everything I always wanted to say, but no one was paying any attention. It was just a media blitz.

RITCHIE: You almost would have been better if it hadn't passed, because then they would have really needed to have somebody there to push it through.

ELSON: Yeah, of course that might have helped from my standpoint, but that wouldn't have mattered. I felt so much a part of Carl Hayden's strong desire to have that thing authorized, I felt as proud as he did that day when the president signed it into law. It was a big moment in my life, and probably always will be. But there were too many other factors on the outside that made the race against Barry almost impossible. Of course, in any election, you always think that you might get a break. For instance, Barry might have dropped dead [laughs]. You just never know, some other incident might have turned things around a little bit. You always have hope. You don't do this just for fun, I found that out, though I enjoyed campaigning and I loved politicking. I think I was a much better candidate in '68 than I was in '64, in my first time out of the chute. I was more relaxed and I think I presented myself much better. But Barry was such an overwhelming figure, but always controversial. It was a respectable race, but it was a losing race.

I tried all sorts of tricks to get him into debates. We had some great ads, I thought. This is jumping around, but I should tell you, the day after I lost to Barry the press wanted an interview with me at the Press Club. I reluctantly went to it. It was all over. I think the difference was 57 to 43, so it was a respectable race, I felt. And as I mentioned before, I'd rather lose that way than in a close one like I lost to Fannin. I remember going to that, I was sort of irritated. I forget who asked me the question, but it was at the Phoenix Press Club. One of the reporters said, "Well, Roy, how does it feel to have run against an old pioneer family name, a two-term United States senator, the Republican standard-bearer in 1964, and a very popular, handsome figure of a man?" I said, "I only have two things to say, and this is my last press conference. I now know what overkill is all about. And secondly, I feel a little like the guy who had spent five thousand dollars attempting to clear up a bad case of halitosis, only to find

out people didn't like him anyhow." [laughs] I said, "Thank you gentlemen, I'm going to bed." And I left. That was my last press conference.

It was difficult because the man that I was going to rely on, who I had brought back here originally, a guy by the name of Ed Davis, to do for me that year what I had done for Carl Hayden in '61 and '62 and all along. We made him U.S. Attorney, so I think in the fall of '67 he was gone. So I really didn't have anyone. And by this time the senator had grown to trust him too, and rely on him. So he went back to Arizona. He subsequently became a bankruptcy judge. That left me in a horrible position, because I knew how much the senator relied on me. When he wanted me, he'd call, and I'd come back. It was that simple, regardless of what else was going on. And with the way the Central Arizona Project was going I had to keep coming back. Originally, I was going to spend most of my time out in the state, and it just didn't work out that way, particularly during the fall of '67 and most of '68. I would be returning to Washington, and it's a hell of a way to run a campaign. But nothing I ever did would have been possible without Carl Hayden, so I certainly owed him that whenever he wanted me, I just came back. It was that simple. Thinking you might be here for one or two days, and then you might be here for a week or ten days or two weeks, and then go out and maybe be there a week and come back again. It was another one of those nightmarish situations.

When all these other events took place, it was hard to keep up a good front when you know the odds were very much against you. Except, I loved to campaign. I really enjoyed that campaign. And of course I knew so much about Barry, because we had made all our plans in '63 and '64 to run against him, so I was better prepared to run against him. But he had these great big Marlboro ads [laughs] with the canyons in the backgrounds, and this open shirt, and good tan, and cowboy hat on, these beautiful paint billboards all over the place. He had unlimited money, and I had a hard time that year raising money. I again didn't have a financial chairman that was good at raising money, so it was really another tough job. I look back on it now and all I feel is tired [laughs].

RITCHIE: There was a great article that appeared in the *New York Times*, by Sidney Schaumburg, the guy who later wrote *The Killing Fields*, comparing you to Eugene McCarthy, sort of a populist candidate up against the big gun.

ELSON: Gee, I don't know that I saw that. I must have.

RITCHIE: It's got your picture with it. I thought that must have at least raised some money from New York after they ran that.

ELSON: Well, a little because I knew some people in New York, and I got some from out of state, and from back here. Again, I got some money from staff people. It made me feel good because even then when they knew it was sort of hopeless, I still had a lot of support from fellow staff people. It really made me feel good, to this day it does.

But I remember getting frustrated when Barry would get television because he had been a presidential candidate. He would get on one of the Sunday morning shows, like "Face the Nation" or something like that, right in the middle of the campaign. He's getting all this free publicity, and then you ask for some equal time and they say it's not an equal time situation. You get all the runaround that way. So it was frustrating every time you try to do something to make it a local, state race and about state issues, it was almost impossible because of his prominence and mouthing off on all international events, whether they were accurate or not, and on national defense.

I couldn't get him into any debates. The closest, I was told later, where he really got irritated—and I guess you would call this negative advertising—was over my radio advertising [laughs], I loved them too. The same guy I used in '64 also worked with me in '68, and in the senator's campaign, was also my PR guy, a guy by the name of Al Rau. He was really talented. We were trying to do something, and short of money we were doing a lot of radio ads. He found this one guy in this one studio to do our radio spots, and came up with some really ingenious stuff. This guy could change his voice. To give you an example, we had a series of ads, one on defense, one on education, one on social security, all these things that Barry mainly was opposed to, or said we could do without.

One I remember so well, a voice would start out—and these would be actual quotes of Barry's [drops voice]: "On March 31, 1961, Barry Goldwater said in Miami, Florida, 'A child has no right to an education. In most cases he can get along perfectly well without one.'" Then his voice would change. Now, I have to interject here, Barry's

slogan up to this point on his billboards and everything he did was: "Senator Barry Goldwater, Doesn't That Sound Great!" Just on everything. Then on our ad, after quoting one of his ridiculous quotes, the votes would change [voice rises]: "Doesn't *that* sound great!" [laughs] We started playing that and it wasn't ten days later before the whole state was laughing. Barry, I was told by [Dean] Burch later, it was all they could do to keep him from attacking me, and that's exactly what I wanted him to do. Immediately, they changed all their boards, they changed their whole slogan. "Doesn't that sound great" disappeared from the whole campaign. These were super ads. I don't know whether you'd call that advertising or not, but they certainly were effective, and they were one of the fun things that were going on. And it got to Barry, apparently, and he was really mad at me [laughs].

RITCHIE: I don't know whether you can call it negative to quote a man's words back to him.

ELSON: But this guy had a wonderful radio voice, and these ads were great. We had a series of them, and they'd always end up the same way, with this sort of sarcasm. They were wonderful.

RITCHIE: You had just spent four years working, constantly, for a major project that was going to affect Arizona like nothing else ever did, and yet the average citizen of the state of Arizona probably didn't have the slightest idea what was going on back in Washington.

ELSON: No. Well, first of all we did do political surveys where they always said it was very important, but they knew nothing about it, none of the history. And of course you had this growth that was continuing all this time. They were coming from the midwest, they knew nothing about the desert, or reclamation, and water projects, and probably cared less. So it was not really a good political issue. It would have been in the case of Carl Hayden, say if he had run in '68 again, he would have in my opinion beaten Barry. We had a survey that showed that. Mainly just on the theory of getting money for it, because we could have mustered all the resources to make that the only issue: "We've got to finish the job. Now that we've got it authorized, we've got to have that money to get that thing started right away."

The CAP could have been an issue for him in his campaign, but for someone like myself who was really a staff person, there's no question in my mind that a lot of not only my Democratic friends, I mean members of Congress, and Republicans, sure in hell didn't want to give me credit for anything because I was a potential source of party politics and state politics. And quite frankly, I don't think I've ever gotten credit for some of the work that I did in behalf of this project, but I don't think it was something that people really cared about, other than they knew that there was an internal fight, and the arguments about the state going it alone. It was too complicated for the average person. Anytime we talked about it publicly, all these times that I would go out and spout off about it in the senator's name, every time I went home I was always asked about it, I'd try to keep it very simple and make it hard hitting and almost arbitrary, I guess, in that the senator was right and everyone else was wrong [laughs]. That sort of thing. Of course, having the cooperation of the press, I would never let any of the reporters get to a second question, or a technical one that might question what I was saying. After awhile as a politician you learn how to do those sort of things.

It was not a good issue, really, with the growth of the state at the time and the people who were coming in, they still had their pools, their communities were growing and they didn't see any water shortage. The farmers down in Pinal County, south of Phoenix, they were pumping deeper and deeper for their water. I think Tucson is the largest city in the world that doesn't have a reservoir for its city water supply. It all comes from wells. I don't think the people really cared, because of its complexity. The fight might have been good reading at breakfast, but by the time they got to work I don't think they thought much about it.

RITCHIE: Looking back on the CAP now, twenty years after it passed, did the project turn out the way you anticipated?

ELSON: No. Originally it was conceived as a project to supplement irrigation water, mainly for our farmers. We knew, and the senator always knew, that municipal needs would eventually overwhelm the agricultural needs. We were always going under that theory, but we didn't expect it. As I look back on right now, with all the environmental issues and other things, I have mixed emotions. I don't know whether

it's been good or bad. Mainly, if you look at it in a long perspective, the desert will eventually win, because it only can take so much.

I think Carl Hayden would be twitching a little bit to see our pollution problems, and Phoenix growing like Los Angeles did back when we were fighting all these battles. It has the sprawl and smog. Tucson is getting the same way with urban sprawl. I don't think it's what we quite envisioned, to make it into the Garden of Eden that you thought you were going to have as a result of it. But in the long pull, if there are ever going to be diversions, if there is ever desalinization so there can be water transfers, exchanges of legal rights and all that, having the aqueduct will give Arizona an advantage. I remember having lots of discussions with Carl Hayden, particularly when we got into these arguments about hydrology and what water was in the river, and shortages, he would finally say, "As long as there's enough water to keep the thing wet so that it will be ready when we do work out some of these other long-range problems. We need that aqueduct because the growth is in the center of the state and Tucson." And now we have the aqueduct going down to Tucson, so from that standpoint, just having the aqueduct was probably worth all the effort in the long pull, if people are going to remain in the southwest, in Arizona or southern California or anywhere else.

I don't know in history where there have been too many deliberate migrations of masses of people from wet areas to dry areas, or semi-arid areas. It's a real phenomenon. Now that the whole country is facing water problems because of pollution and everything else, you're getting a nation that is beginning to understand a little bit about it. If whatever has been built out there is going to continue to exist, we certainly needed the diversion works. Just from that standpoint alone I think it was probably worth all the effort. Though a lot of people can make arguments that you should have used it along the river and other places like that and it wouldn't have been so costly. But I think for the future, the people that might remain there or even to grow, you need that water. I sort of feel confident that southern California is going to work out their problems, they've got to do something with desalinization, with water exchanges, and better utilization, and all those things, conservation, or you're going to see a collapse of that economy. As I say, I'm confident, that somewhere down the line, whether it's a hundred years or two hundred, three hundred, the desert will reclaim.

RITCHIE: I was wondering what your reaction was when Jimmy Carter tried to veto all those water project out there? Wasn't CAP one of those on his list?

ELSON: Yeah. Well, I was pissed. I thought the little [expletive] didn't understand anything about the West or water. You can always make an argument about cost, and it wasn't very far-reaching. I think it was probably the Bureau of the Budget again—Management and the Budget—where reclamation projects weren't that popular. At that time, when he was advocating cutting them off, CAP had a long way to go to finish building it. It had just barely got started. I personally thought he had something up his [expletive]. If he wanted to get into arguments about subsidies, well we could certainly talk about Georgia and the military-industrial complex, and a few rivers and harbors things, lots of things we could talk about.

I wasn't in a position to do much about it then, but it irritated me because I thought it was very shortsighted. Having Mo there, and John Rhodes, really did help, and we won that war without having some people in a position of real power left over here. It could have been just a pyrrhic victory, getting it authorized. Fortunately it had momentum. But Carter just irritated the hell out of me.

RITCHIE: It's an odd thing when you look at the '50s and '60s and there were all these influential Western Democrats, Jackson, and Magnuson, and Hayden, and even including Lyndon Johnson, who were doing everything imaginable to build up the southwest and the Pacific northwest. And the heritage has been that most of those states are now Republican states.

ELSON: Yeah, isn't that fascinating! Even take Kerr in Oklahoma and all the things he did there. You look at the west, and I think a lot of it has to do with this mythology that we live on. The tremendous growth and this migration from conservative areas of the country, the midwest, and New England, and places like that, and a lot of propaganda, they start believing all this junk about "we did it all on our own." The whole shift in politics—just take a look at the South, it's not just the southwest, but that whole shift going on at the same time. It's always been amazing to me, this rugged individualism when we did everything in our power to steal everything we could out of the federal trough. We were nudging everybody out of the way. Talk about being pigs! Oink, oink, oink, we were there.

When you look back at Carl Hayden's long career, he deliberately positioned himself to develop that territory, and he was going to use the federal treasury. At the same time, he was also helping other regions of the country—you can just take the highway act and his belief in highways. There were major fallouts from all that. But he knew he had a territory to build. And yet then when all these people came in from other places they brought with them their own ethnic backgrounds and religious feelings and it became a conservative trend. Starting in the '50s, after the war, when people started pouring into the state, it started this very conservative trend. Of course, even before that, when it was totally a Democratic state, it was still pretty much a conservative state, again this belief in their own mythology, about how they really did it, frontiersmen and all that. It was wonderful. It's still going on. It's crazy.

RITCHIE: Well, I'd like to talk more about the 1960s, about Johnson when he was president, and to talk some more about your campaign in '68, and also about what you've done since you left the Senate. You brought up lobbying today, and I'd like to know about your activities there as well. But I think this might be a good place to break.

ELSON: Oh, God, yes. It's time to break.

End of Interview #10