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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF

ROBERT W. COX

BY

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THOMAS G. WEISS: Today is the 25th of August, the year 2000, in Toronto. This is Tom Weiss interviewing Bob Cox.* Good morning. I thought we would just start by going back to the beginning. I wondered if you could tell me something about your family and educational background. Tell me specifically what factors in those years you think eventually influenced your own approach to labor, to international organizations in general, perhaps to ideas in international political economy—if you could go back and do each of those, and go back to the beginning.

ROBERT COX: Well, I was born in Montreal, in an English-speaking environment. My family had been for several generations in Canada, so they were not recent immigrants in any sense. My father was an accountant. He was the son of a man who had become a lawyer, working particularly in marine law, but who died at a relatively early age. My father was still a child, and he was then educated through relatives at a place called Ridley College, which is a private school in Ontario. He did a year, I think, at the Royal Military College, Kingston, but he came out of that and became an accountant. His mother, who was already widowed, and was more or less on her own, managed to take a course in secretarial work and became one of the first employees as a woman secretary in the Canadian government. She was the one who really supported the family in the early days, because there were these three youngish children, of which my father was the eldest.

So, that was his background. He was working as an accountant in Montreal at the time I was born. Montreal in those days was very much a segmented community. First, there was the linguistic division between French and English. And there was a religious division between Catholic and Protestant. So you had, in a sense, the three communities that were virtually self-

* Sophie Theven de Gueleran was present throughout the interview.

contained—the Anglo-Protestant and the Irish-Catholic, both Anglophone; and the French-Catholic.

Now, as you can imagine, that could be a really claustrophobic type of environment growing up. And I think as I was into high school and certainly moving towards the university years, I became very conscious of this sort of exclusionary situation. I took a great interest, in particular, in the French-Canadian nationalist movement, which was right on the other side of town. I used to take the street car down to the east end of Montreal and go to political meetings. I was very much of a lone figure—I was just by myself—but I was interested in this. At the same time, it was regarded as very strange behavior on the part of most of the people, including family and relatives that I knew.

So, in growing up, and as I came to university—I went to university on a scholarship—that gave me a sense of, if you like, the existence of two cultures that live side by side but did not really get along with each other. And as I went through university I studied history. I think my academic formation has been almost entirely in history. I did take a course in politics, but that was the only course I ever took, and it wasn't called political science in those days, either. So, I have never taken a course in political science, though I have been a professor of political science these last years. But, I think the main feature in my life in those days was that sense of the existence of a nation that was living alongside us, but that most people I mixed with did not really know about. I was interested in trying to find out more about them, but I was certainly not integrated with them in any way. I was not part of any movement or organization; I was strictly a lone figure in that interest.

When I graduated from McGill, I had a B.A. and I did a year to write a Master's degree, which in those days was a research degree. It was not a degree you took courses with. And I did

a thesis on the Quebec General Election of 1886, which was the first time in which a real nationalist movement emerged in Quebec. It had been a sort of important change in Quebec politics, which had been divided between the conservatives, known as the “Blues,” and the liberals, known as the “Reds,” in Quebec history up to that time. This was a kind of break-away from the Rouge, the liberal party, which was expressing a much more nationalistic French-Canadian point of view. It coincided with the rebellion in the west, the Riel rebellion. So, Riel became an icon in Quebec. He was a heretic, as far as the Church was concerned, but he was identifiable with this nationalist movement in Quebec. He was then hanged by the conservative government of John A. MacDonald [First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada], so that nationalists were then split away from any sense of possible working and cooperation with the federal conservative government. It did not develop from there into a continuing movement, but it was a kind of recurrent phenomenon in Quebec politics since that time.

So, my interest in that thesis was to really explore the ideological and sociological roots of nationalism in Quebec. Now, when I completed that thesis, I was called into the office of the president of McGill University, an Englishman whose name was Cyril James, who was particularly interested in economic history. He said that he had been contacted by the ILO (International Labour Organization), which was recruiting, and would I like to go for an interview. So, with his sponsorship, I went and interviewed with the ILO and they hired me. And I went in at the lowest professional level, as a research assistant. They were based in Montréal during the war years. It was a sort of an accident of history, if you like.

Later on, when I was in what they call the cabinet, the director-general’s office, in Geneva, I had the opportunity to look back into some of the records of the director-general’s office and I found a rather interesting explanation of how the ILO came to be in Montréal at that

time. John Winant, who had been the governor of New Hampshire, a Republican, had been much admired by Roosevelt, who was then governor of New York. They had these governor's conferences, apparently, and the two of them managed to strike a sense of compatibility at that time. Winant played a role—I think he was involved, if I'm not mistaken about this—in the introduction of social security in the United States under Roosevelt. It was under Roosevelt that the United States joined the ILO. The United States had stayed out of it because of the whole isolationist movement and the rejection of the League. This was a kind of tentative move towards joining up with the internationalist organizations structure with the League. You couldn't touch the League, because of the political background. But the ILO was sort of a way of tentatively getting involved.

I think they managed to get that affiliation through by putting it in with a joint resolution, which also gave a pension to the widow of one of America's war heroes from the First World War. I think the congressional attention was focused on the war hero, and then the ILO sort of passed in with it. But, the U.S. then joined the ILO. And as the war approached, Roosevelt put Winant forward as somebody who could be at the head office in the ILO. I don't remember whether he came in first as a kind of deputy-director, or whether the post was already vacant at the time. I would have to check back over the records of that. But, it turned out that when the war came, Winant was the director, then subsequently director-general, of the ILO.

Winant apparently had a sort of mystical streak. One of the interpreters in the ILO, a Russian woman, worked with him for a while, and said that she used to read him poetry in the evenings. They would sit and he would listen to her reading poetry. But, as part of this mystical streak, he must have conceived that it was his mission to bring the ILO to the United States when war came. And all of the tactical plans that had been made were that the ILO was going to

move, of all places, to Vichy. And they'd sent a lot of the documents already to Vichy. And Winant telegraphed to Roosevelt saying could he bring the ILO to the United States. He didn't get a reply. And he telegraphed again, and he got a reply from [Secretary of State] Cordell Hull, and Cordell Hull said, "Well, you can transit through the United States but you can't stay here."

So, Winant had a friend who was a very well-known neurological surgeon at McGill, a man called Wilder Penfield. And he asked the advice of Wilder Penfield, and Wilder Penfield had access to [William Lyon] Mackenzie King [then Prime Minister of Canada] in Ottawa. And through that contact, King said, "You can bring the ILO to Canada. They can stay here." So, that is why they were in Montréal. As I say, this was an accident. I was in Montreal; I had grown up there. I knew nothing about the ILO. But the ILO was there in Montréal as a result of that series of accidents. And I was interviewed and I was taken into the ILO.

That was the beginning of my affiliation there. I think for me, it was a kind of sense of relief that with the ILO, after a few months, I was moved to Geneva. For me, it was being moved out of a situation which was, as I say, claustrophobic and not terribly congenial in terms of the relationships within my own community. So, the idea of international work, I think, was really born out of the coexistence of two nationalities in Canada, in Montréal at that time. Geneva was an intellectually much more comfortable place for me to be at that time. So, I would say, that is some part, at any rate, of the explanation of my origins with international work.

TGW: You had written, if we could just follow up a bit on this two cultures idea, that you thought that your own individual efforts to bridge these two cultures was good training for working in the United Nations system. But, then you said that it was an unusual and sometimes resented attitude within international organizations.

RC: Yes.

TGW: What did you mean, exactly, by an ability to work “between”—what are the two cultures, and what were you trying to bridge, and why was it unusual?

RC: Well, let me tell another story about my training as a history student. I remember that one of my history professors told a story about how there had been a great debate among English historians, between Lord Acton and Bishop Creighton. Lord Acton was a foremost Catholic historian, but he was also somebody with a very strong sense of the absolute values of moral truths. And in his history writing, he was very critical of the Renaissance popes because they were not behaving according to the absolute values of Catholic morality as he understood it. Bishop Creighton was the protestant bishop, who had a much more relativistic attitude about morality. And he said, “You (Acton) were criticizing them on the basis of values that were not really their values, because their values were the values of the time and the place in which they lived. And they were acting perfectly in conformity with what was expected of people in that kind of a power situation.”

So, that sense of relativity of values was something that I brought to it as a result of my historical training. Yet, when I was with the international organization, I found that in that community of people who worked for international organizations, there was quite a predominance of absolute values. And very rarely were there people who were trying to, let’s say, insert themselves into the minds of other people to see how they saw the world and how they were reacting to situations. In that sense, I felt that somebody who has that sense of relativity and is trying to put it to work in assessing even just little situations that you become involved in personally, as well as big political situations—that there can be a sort of resentment that flows from those people who believe things are right, against somebody who will begin to question whether they are right in some absolute sense, or not—something to be compared with

what somebody else thinks is right. You get that both because people come with their own national sense of what is right and proper, but also there was, especially with the whole experience of the League of Nations—and I met that among some of my legal colleagues—a sense that you have built up a kind of set of international precedents that define how things are to be dealt with in a particular situation. All you had to do was look up the book, find out what the precedent was, and apply it. There was then, a sense of absolute values that had grown up through the League of Nations and the ILO and so forth.

So, there were those two kinds of values: the absolute, against which anybody who had a more questioning and more relative point of view was regarded somewhat askance. That is, I guess, what I had in mind there. Put another way, and I think I have mentioned this also, in all the twenty-five years that I was with the ILO and involved as an international official, I could begin to think of myself as something more like an anthropologist. That is, you live with the tribe, and you understand the tribe, but you are not really of the tribe. And that is okay as long as you keep that pretty much to yourself. But, as people begin to see that you are not really one of them, 100 percent, then there is a sort of resentment that can grow up about it as well. Maybe that is an attempt to answer that question.

TGW: When you were in school—since so much of your subsequent work looked at labor relations and problems of economic development and clashes—what are your recollections of the Depression? And what was it like in Canada? The reason I ask this is that certain people see the Depression as a monumental event. To many persons whom I have talked to who were in Jamaica or Rhodesia, the Depression was a non-event. Basically, life went on. What was going on in Canada, and what was going on in your schooling that you remember?

RC: Well, my family was not impoverished, but nevertheless definitely felt the impact of the Depression. During the time that I was growing up, my father was employed, but he had been through periods of unemployment, previously. So, that was part of his experience, and you do not hear about directly, but it is part of the life of the family that that impact had been there. When I first went to school, I went to the public school and then my parents put me through examinations that were offered at Lower Canada College, which is a private school in Montréal. I was awarded a scholarship and went to Lower Canada College for four or five years, which was mainly then being associated with children of families who were relatively affluent. The teaching was good. I think I learned a little bit of Latin there, which I would not have learned quite so well in the public school. I remember that one of my English teachers was a man who subsequently became quite famous as a novelist in Canada (Hugh MacLennan), and who was interesting to listen to.

So, I think the experience was good, but I was there as a scholarship boy, and I think then the family hit more strained circumstances, and even with the scholarship I was not able to continue there. So, I went into the public school. So, I had that experience of the Depression which was not one of serious deprivation, but nevertheless something you were aware of as being there and as having affected you. But, I think in the long run, what it did is to inculcate a certain sense of self-discipline and living without too many of the unnecessary accoutrements of life. I would contrast that with the generation that grew up in the years after World War II, where everything was expanding and so forth. That sense of discipline was not necessarily there, because the environment was different. So, I would say the Depression had a certain effect on my general attitude towards how to live, perhaps more than any other way.

TGW: But you did not encounter [John Maynard] Keynes until you got to—

RC: No, I did not study economics at university, and I guess I encountered Keynes more in my work with the ILO. You asked earlier about labor. I was not, I guess, directly in any way involved with labor, although in doing my research on Quebec history in the 1880s I discovered there the emergence of a labor interest in politics. I guess I was interested in politics, and it was labor's involvement in politics that struck me at that point. And, as I was in the ILO, I became more geared toward the idea of labor and politics than labor from the specifically trade union grievance-associated perspective, although the two get obviously very closely mixed. But it was the political angle that attracted me. And, being in labor, then, that was the angle that I was most interested in.

TGW: Well, I can understand that the ILO was not a subject treated in schools. Was the League ever? Did discussion of the League, or its failures, its plusses and minuses, come up anywhere in secondary school or in university?

RC: I remember the war in Abyssinia when I was still in the private school. But the whole thing then was dealt with mainly—I remember it was the physical education instructor who had us organized into teams. One would be the Abyssinians and the other would be the Italians. It was like playing cops and robbers. That was about the level of it.

TGW: These were international civil servant students? Sort of keep the peace? No blue helmets?

RC: No! I don't think there was very much in the way of active educational interest in the League, in my experience.

TGW: You mentioned politics on a number of occasions, but you chose to study history. Then you came back to history later. Was that an obvious choice?

RC: Well, I tell you, originally when I had this scholarship to McGill, and I thought, if I were going to have a political career, I would need to have an independent professional status, and I knew that I did not have the time or the money to study law. So, I thought, well, there were a number of chartered accountants who were in politics. So, maybe if I took accountancy, I could get that done quickly and have a political career. I went in to study accountancy in my first year at university. I went into—they didn't call it a business school, they called it a faculty of commerce in those days. But, it was so boring that I could not stick to it. Within months, I decided this was not for me and I switched to history, which I had always been interested in. In fact, even in high school I used to have arguments with the history teacher who was teaching this sort of strict, what we would call the "Whig theory of history"—progress and liberalism. I would be inclined to take up the other side, and he never appreciated that very much. I think history was regarded as training for civic virtue in those days, not as understanding the past.

In any case, I was interested in that from the beginning. In university, this is where I discovered E.H. Carr. One of my professors came in the last couple of years and introduced us to E.H. Carr, and through E.H. Carr, of course in *The Twenty Years Crisis*. I began to get some idea of the League of Nations, from a critical perspective. Carr also wrote *History of International Relations Between the Wars*, which was another insight into the role of the League. He was of course a great critic of the League. So, I got it from that perspective, which was not entirely appreciated when I joined the ILO, because the senior people there were people who had been trained under the ideology of the League, and Carr was definitely not one of the people they admired. I guess this was the origin of my arguments with C. Wilfred Jenks.

TGW: Well, we'll get to C. Wilfred later. Were you tempted to get a Ph.D.? Why did you choose to stop? Was it an employment opportunity?

RC: I chose to stop because I didn't have the money to go on. Let's put it that way. I needed a job. My father by that time was past working. They were living in fairly straightened circumstances. I needed to have a job from the point of view of giving a minimum of support there. Also, I was interested in getting married, and that was another factor. All that added up to the ILO making a good offer. But, it was also an interesting offer. I didn't just go there for the money. But, it was very fortuitous that the offer came at a time when it was needed.

No, I kept on some correspondence with my professors, with the idea that I would have an opportunity somehow—maybe writing an external degree—and I actually did quite a lot of work on the theory of decadence in the late nineteenth century. It was a history of ideas, if you like. And I still have documents that I have written. I have a lot of unpublished manuscripts, and that is one of them. And I had even, some few years later, entertained the idea of taking a year and going to the London School of Economics (LSE), because they had a formula for doing a doctoral degree that could be done without three years of supported research. But, I never really was able to carry through with that, mainly because of the commitments to the work that I was involved in.

Then, at a later stage, there was Jacques Freymond, from the Graduate Institute of International Studies (*Institut de Hautes Etudes Internationales*) in Geneva, who said, "Why don't you come and teach a course at the Graduate Institute?" He raised a little money from the Rockefeller Foundation through Kenneth Thompson, and I was able to take a leave from the ILO and be supported by him to do a year's teaching. By that point I had gotten to the stage of thinking that I was still interested in having an academic career. This was an avenue, but it wasn't going to get me a degree. Nevertheless, it was going to get me some experience. I guess that was the beginning of getting involved in it.

The next thing was, Harold K. Jacobson (Jake) took a year's sabbatical leave in Geneva. I didn't know Jacobson at that time, but it was Inis Claude whom I had met several times who introduced us. We had been at conferences together, and Inis said that Jake was a good friend and an interesting man and he was going to come to Geneva. So he, in fact, introduced us and that year in Geneva we began working together. In that connection, then, I became linked in with the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), which had a committee on international organizations, which was with Inis Claude, and Ernie Haas, and Harold Jacobson, and several others. So, I got involved with that group, and the whole idea of the doctorate—people said, "You're too old for that anyway, just forget about it. Come in some other way." Then, when the breaking point came between me and C. Wilfred Jenks, it was Columbia who offered me the appointment to succeed Leland Goodrich.

TGW: That was still a period, then, when you had this missing credential. Did it matter?

RC: Well, it didn't to Columbia. I think it would have mattered to anybody else. I think they felt that they were sufficiently sure of themselves that they could take that risk.

TGW: In some ways, I think it is too bad that that period is now over. Actually, two of my wife's best instructors at Princeton did not have Ph.D.s. Arthur Schlesinger and all these people didn't really need this, but you actually now do.

RC: You do, yes. I guess in the field that I became involved in—that is international political economy—Susan Strange and myself were the two ones who did not have PhDs.

TGW: Well, that says something. What do you recall of the conference leading up to the founding of the Bretton Woods institutions or the United Nations? What kinds of discussions were going on in the student canteen, if there was one, related to this? What kinds of enthusiasm or idealism or notions were floating around?

RC: Well, I can't really remember any active discussions at that time, but I do remember the sort of ambience of those years, which were that, with the end of the war, we were going to rebuild the world. There was that tremendous sense of something new and something good that was going to happen, and a great deal of optimism. It flowed into politics as well, in Canada. There was the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the old CCF. It really took on a burst of life. They did not become a power, except in Saskatchewan. But, they did generate the policies that were then taken over by the Liberals in the years after the war, and created what we have had of a welfare state in Canada.

In Quebec, in the nationalist movement, there was another thing that I was involved in marginally: the formation of a group called the *Bloc populaire canadien*. In those days, a French-Canadian nationalist was a *canadien*, not a *québécois*. That transformation of the geographical meaning, if you like, of nationalism came about much later. But, this was led by a young man whose name was André Laurendeau. He had been a prize student of one of the old-line nationalists, a priest [The Abbé Lionel Groulx] who wrote a book entitled, *La naissance d'une race*. The concept of race was still carried over from French right wing literature of the late nineteenth century into Quebec. The *Action française* was a great intellectual influence. This very right wing form of nationalism was quite intellectually powerful at that time in Quebec, and this young man, Laurendeau had been one of his prize students whom he really thought would be his successor. Well, this prize student went to France in the late 1930s, during the time of the Popular Front, and he became completely converted to a more left wing perspective. He came back with notions that were not at all exclusivist in terms of what they call the "*pure laine*," the French-Canadian whose origins go back to the 17th Century and the families generated since then. He was very much open to the idea of immigrants coming in and

reinvigorating the French-Canadian nationality. He then became the leader of this *Bloc populaire canadien* in the provincial elections.

I remember one friend of mine, Gordon Rothney, who was a history professor, an Anglophone—the only other Anglophone at the time who was interested in this. The predecessor to Concordia University was then a YMCA University called Sir George Williams College in Montréal. He was a history professor, and he was running as the candidate of the *Bloc populaire* in an Anglophone section in the eastern townships south of Montréal and I went there to campaign with him in, I guess it was the 1945 elections. So, that was again a sense that things were moving to the left, even amongst this [French Canadian nationalist] tradition that had been intellectually dominated by rather extreme right wing points of view, and that was completely transformed at that time, just as the CCF in English-speaking Canada was becoming more influential.

So, there was that sense of a movement towards a more open, generous, socially-conscious way of thinking of things. That was what I saw of the milieu that was changing in those post-war years, rather than anything more specifically connected with the United Nations or Bretton Woods and so forth. Those were things that I came to look on afterwards, rather than at the time.

TGW: What were the other people who were recruited in those early years, who were your age or your level? What was motivating them? Was there still the sense that they were rebuilding the world? There is always a mixture of, I suppose, personal interest—you need a job, et cetera. But I am trying to get my fingers on what were in people's heads and what were in their spirits, so to speak, in 1945, 1946 or 1947. How is that different from twenty years later, when you were hiring people?

RC: I would say that the people of my generation who came in at that time—the numbers were quite small, but they were significant in terms of the totality of the ILO at that time. I would say that spirit I just mentioned was the common motivation, but they came from a lot of different backgrounds. One in mind, who still continues to be one of my best friends, was an Indian who was recruited about the same time, who had grown up partly in Japan. His father was an Indian businessman in Japan. He was in India. He lived through that period of crisis in the separation of India and Pakistan. He is a Muslim, but he stayed with India, in Bombay. And I think that his commitment was involved in that whole transformation of India into India and Pakistan, and the [Jawaharlal] Nehru movement—the idea of, in a way, the secular idea that would dominate over the communitarian problems that were active at that time. He was also, as an educated Indian, a specialist of Shakespeare. He had been an Indian educated in one of the more privileged circumstances of India, at the Doon School, which is toward the Himalayas. He had grown up learning mountain climbing, and he continued to be a mountain climber as long as his body would stand it. So, there was that aspect of it—the new world was, in a sense, liberation, the formation of new countries, independence, and so forth.

Another man was a Frenchman, who had been, during the war, deported, as were a number of people, to become workers in Germany. He, out of that, had become committed to the idea of Franco-German partnership. The war experience was something that he turned around. Having lived among Germans in Germany, he felt that there was something there to be done.

Another was a Belgian, and a great friend of mine who just died a couple of years ago. We shared an office together, and I think he was one who was genuinely committed to the League ideal, but perhaps even in the more legalistic form as I was describing earlier—that you

build up these precedents of international law and you apply them, and that was the way things could be resolved. It was much more concerned with the legal side than with negotiating political differences, accommodations and that sort of thing.

So, there were all of these different strands among people I knew at that time. But what I think is common was the sense that there was this opportunity to build something better and we all had this great chance of working together. And that was a spirit that didn't last for very long. I don't know whether it was fifteen years later, but by that time people were talking about pensions and about their privileges and all of the less attractive features of international service. But that was not characteristic of those early years. It definitely went through that sense of a change of spirit. I don't know what you can attribute the change to. There was change in the nature of the organization, as well. We were virtually all, you might call "generalists," when we were recruited. We were recruited in order to become officials of an international institution, and to work for the strengthening of the institution and the purposes of the institution. But, subsequently it became much more a case of specializations and you wanted people who were technical specialists in this, that, and the other thing. And one could say that perhaps their commitments were towards their specialty rather than more towards the institution. That is one possible argument. I wouldn't like to push it too far, because I think people who came in as specialists also, many of them came in because they had the sense that they were working for a broader purpose. I have heard that argument, but I would not put the emphasis too much on the one side or the other. I think a lot depends on the individual's concern.

TGW: What happened to you in relationship to the Canadian army? You were already enrolled in university?

RC: That is right, and I had a one-year deferral. If I had not been in university, I would have been conscripted. But, being in the university I was deferred for one year and by that time it was all over.

TGW: Do you regret not having what for most people seems to have been an extraordinary experience?

RC: I guess I never did, although there again it was a matter of some dissonance on my part, with what was a more general attitude. Maybe in part it was again a kind of reaction. My mother's family had been decimated in World War I. She had quite a number of brothers, and two of them were killed in World War I. There was not, I would say, a kind of revulsion against war as a result of that, but a kind of glorification of heroism, if you like. That was the spirit I grew up with, and I suppose I began again with this kind of sense of criticism, perhaps unwisely, but nevertheless became rather alienated by that overpowering sense of commitment to something that ought to be more questioned. So no, I did not regret that, really, but maybe subsequently I realized that it was an experience that other people had and I did not have. Maybe there is a little bit of a regret in that sense.

TGW: In your own work, you describe your early thoughts about how decisions were made and then, later on, there is an obviously more comprehensive approach. What happened to cause this change from focus on more problem-solving to a rather larger view of the structures underlying the institutions that were trying to solve problems?

RC: Well, if you put it down to an event, I would say it was 1968. I was in Mexico when the events broke out in France, and in the Mexican papers, of course, everything gets attributed to the CIA. Some of the papers were saying, "This is all a CIA conspiracy, that all of this is happening in France." But when I took a ship back and landed at Cannes, they put down a

tender to get off the passengers who were landing there. When I got into Cannes, France seemed to be completely closed down. But I did manage to find a place on a Swissair flight that was going to Geneva, somewhat later in the day. And I guess that whole experience was the kind of social upheaval that was completely out of line with the gradualist approach that the ILO had been taking. It was a completely new experience. So, I think it was probably the beginning of a sense that what we were doing in the ILO was not coming to grips with the more basic social issues. Of course, it all calmed down afterwards and life went on as it went before. But that sense of questioning remained and developed, and I think perhaps gradually gave me the sense that what the ILO was doing was not really geared to the more fundamental social issues.

Now, it is very hard looking back. One can perhaps imagine things that were not there. But, I look at the events of 1968 as a turning point for me taking a little bit more critical perspective. The opportunity that coincided with that was the idea for this Institute for Labor Studies (ILS) that David Morse supported. I had many discussions with Morse about that, and we set that up. And the idea there, in my mind, was that an institution that has become successful in its routine becomes, in some ways, a prisoner of its success and goes on doing the same thing, in the same way because it has worked. But, if it no longer is really dealing effectively with the issues that you can now perceive, then maybe it needs to be changed. And the idea was that you set up an institute which is geared to research primarily, but also to a kind of—training is not really the right word—educational effort among people who might be in key positions in the social policy field. Then you could develop a kind of critical mechanism to which the ILO, in its routines, might react in some way and be a means of introducing change.

And I think Morse was genuinely committed to that idea. We recruited a first director who was an Australian, but whose idea was to turn it into something more like a management-

training school. That didn't really work, and he left. Then we got Hilary Marquand, who was the former Minister of Labor in the British Labour Party government, and he was there for a year or two. Then, I was appointed as director. In a way, the ILO provided me with a career opportunity to become the critic of the ILO in taking on that job. That worked because Morse and I saw it the same way. Now, subsequently when Jenks became director, he saw the institute as something that would propagate the ILO's doctrines. That was a completely different perspective and I knew that wasn't going to work.

But in the Institute, there was a chance to initiate some studies that might become an opening towards this kind of more reflective, critical perspective. We did a series of studies on the future of industrial relations. I need to go back a step here. The emphasis on industrial relations had come some few years earlier, and I was involved in that, too. I drafted the resolutions that were adopted by the conference and spoke to the people who were instrumental in getting them adopted. The vision then was very much the American industrial relations model. And at the same time, the Ford Foundation had set up a team. We used to call them the "Four Horsemen"—Charles Myers, Frederick Harbison, and who was it from California? [Clark Kerr]. Names are getting to be a problem with me—they come to me but maybe an hour or two later. Anyway, this team was very well-funded by the Ford Foundation and they were making studies on industrial relations in various parts of the world. I think it was all part of the same movement; they linked in the ILO's work, as well. John Dunlop was in it as well.

TGW: Dunlop and Harbison I studied with, as well.

RC: You studied with them, yes? Didn't I meet you first in the ILO?

TGW: Actually, I was an intern just before you resigned. I was an intern in 1971.

RC: Yes, and we met.

TGW: That's right. Then, after you left, when I returned—this is really fast-forwarding. When my first daughter was born, and I was in Geneva, her bed was in your office because they had converted that villa into the *crèche des Nations Unis*. Well, I was curious, because it seems to me, my own exposure to the UN as an official for ten or eleven years actually changed the lenses that I use to try to examine problems. I was curious as to how you would evaluate your own twenty-five years as an insider and then an outsider—how the experience itself helped you frame issues. It seems to me that *The Anatomy of Influence*—teaming up with Jake was an interesting combination, because you can only do certain things by understanding the way institutions really work, not the way institutions really work as seen from Ann Arbor, but from a different spot on the planet. Similarly, the executive head piece—it seems to me that you have to have had exposure to be able to write those kinds of things. Am I wrong?

RC: I think you're right. Another case was Ernie Haas' *Beyond the Nation-State*. He came to Geneva. He didn't last in Geneva for very long, because I don't think he liked living anywhere but in California. But we had very intensive discussions at that time, and he attributed a lot of his understanding of the ILO to the discussions that we had then. So, yes, I think that you have to have some sort of inside perspective, because I don't think there was very much literature available. And what was there was often written by former League officials who are really telling the way things ought to be, rather than the way they most undoubtedly had known that they were. So, yes, I think *The Anatomy of Influence* was probably a good start on that critical review of how international institutions work. There was, just recently, I think a young Dutch scholar—two of them—who produced a book which I still haven't seen. * Susan Strange, before she died, just wrote a chapter for it, and she said they had picked up *The Anatomy of*

* Bertjan Verbeek & Bob Reindidan, Eds., *Autonomous Policy Making by International Organizations* (Routledge, 1998).

Influence and were trying to do *The Anatomy of Influence* again in the contemporary period. So, I think the experience was probably a valid one that way. I certainly have no regrets about twenty-five years with the ILO. I think it taught me a lot about politics. You can say “bureaucratic politics” if you like, because there is a lot of that, but also trade union politics, which is about the toughest form of politics that I have ever experienced, and international politics as well. I think that was an invaluable experience, and I don’t think it was something that could have been had from any spin-offs of the research done by insiders. I think it was probably something you had to understand from inside. I also worked with Morse for many years, and thinking back, it was a strange relationship. It was a very good relationship, but we were two quite different people. And I learned a lot from watching him—the way he maneuvered in American politics. In a way, probably his main task was to keep the United States on board, and when he left there was the sense that they weren’t going to be staying on board. There was that break that occurred at that time.

TGW: He had been in the New Deal?

RC: Yes, he was, and he had been in the U.S. Army of Occupation in Germany. He was the acting secretary of labor in 1948, when he came to the San Francisco conference of the ILO, which was the first conference I ever attended. I was there in a very junior capacity. That was the occasion when he was elected director-general of the ILO. As I say, I guess his main task was to keep the United States in line. He had fairly good success with the employers. With the governments it was always sort of up and down, and with labor it was a constant problem. That went back to the period of his being in Germany with the occupation forces. And there was an incident that had happened at that time, where he had defended one American official who had

been accused of communist sympathy. His position, I guess, was that he was defending a civil servant who was doing his job.

Now, the labor side at that time in the United States was animated by Jay Lovestone, who was the former secretary-general of the Communist Party, and who had split with Stalin and become a sworn enemy of Stalinism, and had devoted the rest of his life to fighting Stalin. And Irving Brown, who was another very strongly anti-communist labor organizer. I think somebody once told me that Jay Lovestone, although he had become the virtually top advisor to George Meany and the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), couldn't leave the United States because he had been a member of the Communist Party. I don't know whether there is anything in that or not, but he didn't travel outside of the United States. Irving Brown certainly did. Irving Brown was the man who organized the split in the French labor movement, getting the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) out of close relationship with government, and organizing *Force Ouvrière* as the labor movement that would be anti-communist and having support from the French government. And he organized a similar split in Italy, and subsequently he was very active in Portugal after the revolution in Portugal, and in Africa, as well. So, Irving Brown was very active worldwide.

Now, this incident that Morse was involved in, defending this man, turned against Morse because this man subsequently defected and went to Czechoslovakia. So, from that time on, these people who were strong in the international activities in U.S. labor said, "Morse is soft on communism." And he never lived that down. So, he was always under threat from the U.S. labor movement during virtually his whole tenure. He managed that comfortably at times, but every now and then it would burst out again. There would be some incident that would make it a factor. So, Morse's real political concern was with the United States. That was kind of an

education for me—how do you operate within the U.S. political system, and just seeing him at work.

He was really a fine Machiavellian character. He did some really extraordinary things. There was one incident—again, the details are going to be perhaps not entirely accurate, but the substance of it is the way I remember it. When the ILO conference met, one of the problems in the Cold War years was to try to have a conference that would—from Morse’s perspective—avoid Cold War polemics. And from that point of view, he would convene together a group of key delegates before the conference began and say, “Well, now, what are the issues going to be? How can we arrange this so we don’t have a flare-up at the conference?” There was in the U.S. delegation at this particular conference, on the workers’ side there was George Meany’s delegate, who was a man called Delaney. And on the government side, for the first time, came Adam Clayton Powell. He was the chair of a labor committee of the Congress, so he was on the U.S. delegation. And when this meeting was coming together, there was a problem of conflict over whether Clayton Powell would be part of this group that would be deciding. Morse felt it was very important for him to be there because he would be a moderating influence on the Cold War issues. But Delaney did not want him there. Morse managed to convince Clayton Powell that they wanted him off because he was black. That was what did it. He then was determined to be on it. But this is the way Morse would use anything that was necessary to get the result that he wanted.

TGW: I think we’ll come back to Morse in a bit. I just wanted to go back for a minute to your own change from problem-solving to—

RC: Yes, that’s right, we changed, we digressed from that point.

TGW: Very few things interest governments. Problem-solving occasionally does. My guess is that structural change and multilateralism is farther along the spectrum. If I were an ambassador, how would you persuade me that I really should be interested in these longer-term structural change issues, as opposed to the more gradualist approach?

RC: Well, I guess from my own point of view, I felt that the only way I could pursue it was being out of the organization, and the academic opportunity was the one that beckoned. And if you're thinking in long-term, then you aren't going to change people's minds who are dealing with immediate situations, because they are bringing to them the set of parameters that they use to deal with those situations. You are not going to be effective there. You are only going to be effective in the long-run maybe by educating their children. But, in terms of the more immediate circumstance there within the institute, as I say, we started this study on future industrial relations. The kind of industrial relations that the ILO was dealing with was one framed in the ideology of American industrial relations and the projection of that on the world scale. This is what the Ford Foundation was into, as well as the ILO, working together.

Now, with the institute project that I got under way, which was certainly not funded in any way like the Ford Foundation, but let's say the questions were a little different. The first question was, "Let's have a look at what production means on the world scale." And we began to try to do this quantitatively, and of course you can't do it very effectively quantitatively. There are going to be estimates. But, we did manage to put it together, by mobilizing some of our statistical workers in the ILO and talking to other people. In establishing the nature of who are the producers of the world, we came to the estimate that somewhere between nine and ten percent of the producers of the world were people who were encompassed by the kind of industrial relations that the ILO was then dealing with—people engaged in collective bargaining,

in the framework of institutions such as existed in the United States and Western Europe and elsewhere.

That then brought in the sphere the very large proportion of people who were working at home. This was the time when people were just discovering that women were actually doing a lot of work in the world that was not noted down in the national accounts, and that there were a lot of people in agriculture. So that the proportion of workers was very different than one might have imagined if you just thought of industrial relations in the context which the ILO was then dealing with.

Our work was not particularly welcome news to the people who had designed these programs, and I regarded it as a sort of shock treatment if you like, saying, “Well, maybe we ought to be thinking about some of these other things.” About that time, and [Louis] Emmerij will be the authority here, the ILO began to be interested in having an employment program. He was the one who picked that up and ran with it for a few years. It was largely the brainchild of a young Dutch economist in the ILO, a man called Bert Zoetewij. But it was developed by others, and even to the point of becoming criticized by some of the U.S. authorities because some aspects of it were somewhat critical of multinational corporations, and other aspects of it were interested in what was going on in China in terms of mobilizing people to work on public projects and so forth. Another American [Keith Griffin] who came to the ILO briefly in that connection, and who subsequently I think had an appointment at Oxford, whose name I have forgotten—he worked on rural production, maybe in Latin America as well. One of the reports that he wrote was criticized as being Maoist in its implications.

But the employment program was another thing that contrasted with the conventional ILO approach, and it was coming from within the ILO itself. So, there were these tendencies

that showed that there was some potential for a more critical approach to the rule of the ILO in those years. But, I was comfortable in leaving also for personal reasons during those years because I could never get along with Jenks. Actually, he died about a year after I left. But, I was glad to have gone anyway. I felt a sense of liberation in some ways.

TGW: You actually wrote that, also. That was the term that you used, actually I don't know whether it was the *Millennium*, or somewhere else. You said you felt a sense of "liberation." What do you mean, exactly, "liberation"? Obviously there is a comfortable existence in Geneva. One is paid more than one is worth. But, intellectually, when you say, "liberation," what did you mean?

RC: Well, the ILO, perhaps more than other international institutions, was very controlled in terms of what its officials were able to express. You'll think that I have a bone of contention with Jenks, and I probably do, and I'll probably live with it. But I think he was very much part of that. Now, when I was what they call the *chef de cabinet*—that was the executive assistant to Morse for a few years—Jenks in those days was writing books.

TGW: He was a lawyer, yes?

RC: He was a lawyer. And he was producing these books on international law. And he would always submit the manuscript for approval by the director-general. Of course, Morse wouldn't read anything that was more than a page-and-a-half long. So, I read the bloody books and I wrote the approval notes on them, because I didn't see why Jenks shouldn't be publishing these books about international law—why he needed to have approval. But, he did it systematically. He wanted to entrench that principle. And when he became director-general, there was a little interval, because in one of their more irresponsible moments, the Canadian government delegation wanted me to be a candidate to succeed Morse. I thought about it for a

few days, and then I said I didn't think so because I was already thinking that my time with the ILO was past and I wasn't going to commit myself to another ten years. Furthermore, I knew I wouldn't be elected.

But, I think that also was something that annoyed Jenks because he had recruited me and I was destined to be his subordinate for life. When I was going to publish *The Anatomy of Influence* with Jake, I had warnings from colleagues that Jenks was going to jump on that. So I said I would do it the fully open way, and I sent him the manuscript, particularly of the introduction and the conclusion and the chapter I had written about the ILO. And he wrote back a letter saying that he would not give his—what's the word they use now?

TGW: Clearance?

RC: It's a Latin term. It will come to me [*nihil obstat*]. But, anyway, there were all kinds of reasons, all kinds of political objections to what I had written. And I had written back to him saying, "I had sent this to you for your information, not for your approval." With that, then, I wrote my letter of resignation. But it was that sense of a kind of censorship that was one of the reasons. But, it was not just that. It was also the spirit which had become part of the ILO operation at that time, that you were there in the service of an institution that had certain norms that were not to be criticized but were to be promoted, by all means, on the world scale. It made me feel, in a way, like a monastic institution where you had made a sort of lifetime commitment. The idea of being able to take your distance and reflect critically upon it was not at all welcome. So, in that sense, that's what I meant by a feeling of liberation, and it was worth dropping down to at least 50 percent of my salary in order to experience that.

TGW: He actually was, if I understand the staff rules correctly, and I think I do—a staff member is supposed to proceed in the way that he was proposing that you proceed, and you were

supposed to accept his lofty judgement. But obviously these rules are interpreted wildly differently, depending on the personality of the person. Morse would have signed anything. When I was in UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development), Jan Pronk said, “Do whatever you want.” He would sign a blank letter before I even wrote the thing, to protect me.

RC: Yes. Samir Amin, who was employed by the United Nations in West Africa, used to write his Marxist books, and he didn’t have any trouble.

TGW: Yes, there is a great amount of flexibility, but the rule itself is actually—

RC: Yes, Jenks was within his rights, no doubt. It’s a question of whether he wanted to enforce his rights or not, and in that sense I knew that he did. There was no place for me.

TGW: In this notion of underlying structural problems, in one of the things you’ve recently written, you derived a great amount of strength from going back to read Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*. Why exactly, in an age of globalization, do you see the application of his lens to the industrial revolution as a similar kind of lens? Because people just are being left aside and overlooked in an age of globalization?

RC: Well, the whole thesis of *The Great Transformation*, I think, was the notion that the self-regulating market is a utopia constructed in the imagination of some economists, which, when it was attempted to be applied, resulted in growing disparities and great problems and disadvantages for a large part of the population. What then happened was that society responded to these disparities by, through the political side, mobilizing support for laws and practices that would introduce an element of social equity. This was the “great transformation”—it was this attempt to apply a utopia, and the reaction to it that then brought us up to the welfare state. Now what struck me again was the parallel with the thesis of globalization, that globalization is good for everybody. But, globalization is also having this effect of creating great disparities and

enlarging the space between the rich and the poor, and not only between rich countries and poor countries but within rich countries themselves. It's a kind of global phenomenon that's going on, and the lesson of Polanyi would be that society would be provoked into a reaction against that and would attempt to introduce some form of regulation that would be in the interest of greater social equity.

So, it seemed to me that the parallel was there. I think it was Susan Strange, actually, who introduced me to Polanyi in conversation some time ago. And I introduced her to Fernand Braudel.

TGW: So, you would see Seattle as a kind of manifestation that Polanyi still has something to say?

RC: Yes, I think it was a bit like 1968. It was not something that was the beginning of a movement that was going to move vocally forward, but it was a signal. It also showed the capacity of resistance movements to use modern technology in order to coordinate themselves and produce an effect in a particular situation. Chiapas, I guess, was another.

TGW: In this first part of the interview, we sort of wander around your past. In the next part, we'll move to the ILO more systematically. But I was struck in one of the things I read where you described yourself as a "universal foreigner."

RC: That's right.

TGW: When did you get that passport? At what point in your life do you think that developed?

RC: I suppose it may have been—it's a term I haven't used except more recently. I expect it may have come into my consciousness more effectively on returning to Canada after leaving Columbia and coming to York, where it became more obvious to me that my life abroad,

and the different kinds of experience I had, meant that I did not react in the same way as people who had lived their lives in Canada. That doesn't mean that I have any less sense of commitment to Canada as an identity, but that I feel something of a foreigner here, just as I feel something of a foreigner in Switzerland or in Brazil, or in the United States or wherever I happen to be. You know who you are, and you know you are not really integrally one of the people amongst whom you live. And I think there are probably more and more people like that. I prefer "universal foreigner" to the idea of "citizen of the world" because I think that is sort of a fantasy. Most people are foreigners someplace, at some point in their lives.

TGW: It's an interesting notion. Do you think that all of those years in Geneva, and as an international civil servant, contributed to this? Or is this a more personal notion?

RC: Well, it could go back to my early experience in Montréal, where I guess I was beginning to feel a foreigner in my Anglophone community in Montréal. So, it didn't become an unusual feeling for me to have elsewhere. Being an international civil servant may have contributed in part to that, but I don't think it's a formula for the international civil service producing people who have that sense of being a universal foreigner. I think, rather more, it enhances people's sense of national identity.

TGW: That's what I would have argued, too, in particular because geographic quotas supposedly play such a role. And particularly for senior positions, there is nothing that is more important than that. So, I would have argued that this is more personal.

RC: I think it is.

TGW: In one place, you said you were going to leave it to the reader to decide this, but I wanted to ask if you would answer your own question. That is, in this itinerary that we have been jumping around in this morning, what was the influence of events—1968 or Chiapas—and

circumstances? Or rather, was it the influence of authors and ideas that contributed to making you who you are?

RC: Well, I think probably authors and ideas are the more—you put those two things together and I think your reactions to events are determined by the intellectual processes that you have amassed through your readings and thinking over the years. I suppose there are lots of different reactions to 1968 that wouldn't have taken everybody in the direction that it took me.

TGW: From these authors and ideas, who would be your top ten or top five?

RC: It's hard to put any list in order of importance, but in order of encounter, I guess I would start with E.H. Carr and go on to R.G. Collingwood and Georges Sorel and [Antonio] Gramsci and Braudel and Polanyi. I'm sure I've forgotten somebody important. But those I would see are the outstanding influences. They tend to mix up. They aren't exclusive. I put on the peripheries, if you like, [Karl] Marx and [Max] Weber.

TGW: They probably wouldn't like to hear that.

RC: Probably not. I remember when I was at Columbia, we had these sessions of faculty put together, talking about various methodological and epistemological problems. There was that very clever Marxist, I guess he was from NYU (New York University), the fellow who invented the copy of monopoly called *Class War*. I have forgotten his name, now, but he came to one of those and he says, "It takes a very long time to become a Marxist." And I guess I never was there long enough. But, certainly the influence of Marx is present. I think it was Croce who wrote this book about Hegel, on what is living and what is dead. I had the same feeling about Marx. There are ideas in Marx that I would take, but there are other ideas that I would leave behind. I think the labor theory of value is a kind of 18th Century metaphysics. But, I think class war is a more important idea.

Oh, the one I have forgotten is Giambattista Vico. Vico knew all about class war before Marx. I remembered him because I am supposed to be gearing up to give a lecture on Vico at York in December.

TGW: I guess I would describe one of the problems with ideologues the same way that you describe one of the problems with your sidekicks in the ILO thinking that there was this recipe that you can somehow apply. And, in fact, if you're eclectic, you should be able to take bits and pieces. There is not the same soothing comfort of this comprehensive theory, but in fact you may be able to make better sense out of bits and pieces of the whole thing. I was curious about what Columbia was like in the early 1970s. You mentioned the students in France in 1968, but Columbia had been the epicenter of student problems in the United States. By the time you got there, what had happened?

RC: This is interesting because, having had this 1968 personal sense of cataclysmic change, I thought, "Well, this is going to be interesting going to Columbia," because they had been through it and I would see what the results were. Well, when I got there it was clear that the protestors of 1968 were all gone. The students were no longer in revolt. They were very much committed to their careers. There may have been a sort of lingering sense of the resentments and issues of 1968, but they were very much under cover. It was the calm aftermath that had settled down. But, every time we had a meeting, particularly an evening meeting of the faculty for some reason or another, usually somebody coming or somebody leaving, the conversation would all be about 1968 and who had done what and taken what position in 1968. So, obviously, the people who had been there and lived through it, for them it was a marking event of their lives and something that, I suppose, drew them together because they were the

survivors. The opposition had gone. In terms of the aftermath, it was very quiet and calm and orderly.

TGW: What tempted you, a few years later, to go to York? York is a relatively young university.

RC: York was established after World War II. It was one of the first new universities. Well, I had been twenty-five years in Geneva. I had been five years at Columbia. The environment at Columbia was very good. I have very good recollections of the colleagues there. Bill Fox was the principal person I was associated with. We had offices next to one another. In fact, it was rather amusing, because there was Ann Fox, and Bill Fox, and then Robert Cox. So, it was like one of those New York law firms—Fox, Fox, and Cox. It was very friendly, very welcoming and they were a very liberal, tolerant group of people. Even when I was moving in my more critical direction, everybody was very friendly. I had a great deal of liberty in shaping my courses. There was nothing that was restrictive. This was all part of the liberating experience, if you like at Columbia.

Now, there were other aspects of my life at the time. Both the girls were—one of the them was already into university and the other one was about to do her O-levels in Geneva. So, there was a question of where were they going to be and what were they going to be doing. Susan, the older one, was at the University of Toronto. She was studying mathematics and physics, and she was taking Italian as the sort of optional course that you had with this structural program. I guess she grew up with a commitment to Italy. Subsequently she did an architecture degree at Columbia but went back to Italy and developed her knowledge of Italian literature. She met a medical student, and they were, in fact, engaged for about seven years—it was very old-fashioned. They got married and they settled there.

So, her career moved into Italy but at that time everything was sort of undecided and she was in Toronto. And Janet was graduating and she was going to come to Montreal and go into the CEGEP, which was the new part of the secondary educational system in Quebec. And Jessie and I were in New York. As I said, we had been about 30 years out of Canada at that time, and I had a call from John Holmes—you remember John Holmes?

TGW: Yes, I do. But he was still in the government, no?

RC: No, he was the director of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA). He had been in the government, but that was some years previously. He was saying that there was this opening at York, and would I be interested? Well, again, perhaps it was the universal foreigner syndrome which I had not yet defined, but thinking, “Well, maybe I should go back to Canada.” This was an opportunity, and since I had been away for 35 years, I guess I had several approaches from McGill, which I did not accept at the time because there was always something else that was looming in Geneva. But, I thought, “They aren’t going to keep asking me if I don’t take them seriously now. They may not ask me again.” I went to Toronto and met with York University. I asked John Holmes what he thought of it. He said, “Well, York’s a good place. They have a strong department in political science.” He recommended it, and I guess he was also interested that I should come back to Canada. So, it all worked together and I took them up on that and decided to repatriate myself.

It was also at the time when the *Parti québécois* had just won election, and my interest in Quebec politics was still alive, even after all of those years. And I had been invited to Laval to give a lecture on worker participation in management. They have an industrial relations faculty at Laval. I had followed the election and thought, “Well, this is interesting.” Now that there is a *Parti Québécois* government in Quebec, I would not be going to Quebec, but I would be going

somewhere else where the impact of this on Canadian politics could be felt. So, there was a number of factors there that made me think, "Yes, this is the time to go." So, I took them up on it and went to York.

TGW: And the department, was it as encouraging as Columbia or as tolerant as Columbia had been?

RC: Yes, it was. I had pretty much freedom in constructing my courses there. And I began to develop more my teaching in international political economy (IPE). At Columbia I was still teaching international organizations. All of the content of it had moved much more in the direction of the sort of substantive issues of political economy, rather than the institutional approach, which had been more characteristic, I guess, of Leland Goodrich's time, because he was at the UN conference in San Francisco and his experience formed his teaching. And I was sort of moving in with my own different kind of experience and redefining what international organizations teaching could be about. But, at York, I still taught in the first years a little bit of international organization, but more and more of international political economy. I launched this new course called, "Vico to Gramsci," on historicism and social science that became the way in which I could continue thinking about more theoretical issues.

TGW: You still keep up your efforts at maintaining your universal foreigner status by shuttling back and forth to your chalet. Was this part of managing to keep your foot in a number of places?

RC: I think so. In a way, it was something of saying that twenty-five years in Switzerland meant something in my life. I feel comfortable in Switzerland, in spite of a lot of people's criticisms of Switzerland and so forth. I take it tolerantly. Also, at that time it was becoming clear that our daughters were going to be living on different sides of the Atlantic, and

having a base in Europe was also attractive from that point of view. Furthermore, I think that when I live here and read the local press and listen to the television news, I am sort of stimulated to almost European reactions. And when I go back to Europe and listen to the news there and read *Le Monde*, I am sort of stimulated to North American reactions. So, I think it is a way of keeping alive that sort of critical spirit on both sides of the Atlantic.

TGW: Why don't we pause a moment here. This is actually the end of Tape Number 1 on the 25th of August.

TGW: Before we now really move to the ILO, I was just curious about this transition from IO to IPE. There obviously was not a May 1968 in there. As you described it, you were basically hired to teach about institutions, and there were these longer-standing interests in structures and then the movement in this direction. Basically, now you would be 100 percent, I suppose, in the IPE camp as opposed to IO. You have maintained your interests in international institutions. But what kept pushing you in that direction?

RC: I think it was a kind of gradual development from what I had been doing while I was still with the institute and the ILO. As I mentioned to you, this move towards thinking about the future of industrial relations was less in terms of the sort of institutional reforms that could be made in collective bargaining and more towards what are the real problems affecting the great mass of people who are the world's producers. And I think the same thing happened with regard to international institutions. Generally, my title was professor of international organization at Columbia, which was the title that Leland Goodrich had. My twist on it was to think that this was not the time where thinking about tinkering with institutions was really going to be the primary interest or focus, but rather to ask the question about how is the world changing so that international institutions might adapt to and take further desirable directions of change as against

undesirable directions of change. So, you had to look at the big picture of world change and, from my point of view, this was mainly social and economic with politics being a consequence of the social and economic changes. When I got to Columbia also, it became evident to me that students were not so much interested in the institutional procedural aspects as they were in the issues. And when you dealt with the issues, you had to go to this larger picture.

So, I think that was the sort of gradual and fairly logical development of thinking from international organization to international political economy. And my sense of political economy was never something that is limited to what you might call the politics of economics, but was the sense that you were enlarging the range of parameters that had to be understood in order to deal with the key issues. And economics was certainly one, and an important one, but it leads on into many other things, including the environment, and including gender and race and all these other things that one has to take into account. That's why even international political economy I find a kind of restrictive term, now. It is the enlargement of the range of parameters that is really important. I think that was what the introduction of international political economy did, in effect. It sort of shook up the notion of a fairly closed academic study and enlarged it.

TGW: But, one of the things that it also did was, at least in my view, to drive people away from the study of institutions. The issues, for a long time, dominated analysis. This is almost the reason that ACUNS (Academic Council on the UN System) was created, in the sense that the study of institutions, or the study of multilateralism, which is one part of an obviously bigger puzzle—seemingly that was the baby that was part of this bathwater. As you look at the future, do you see, with changing social and economic structures, a growing role for international organizations, or about the same?

RC: I think probably a different role. I guess this is something that came out of what we were doing with the MUNS (Multilateralism and the UN System) program. And I don't think the UNU (UN University) was ever very pleased with the direction that it took, but they were reasonably tolerant and allowed it to conclude. But I think they were looking for something that was rather more directed towards institutional reform. As it was, our study was more directed towards the global issues. And, when it came to the institutional point, I guess there I was leaning towards the notion of a more bottom-up pressure that would either transform institutions or create new institutions, but would not begin from the point of view of reformist measures, so to speak. I think people were then talking of enlarging the Security Council and turning the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) into something broader, and so forth. And I thought, "well, that's fine, but I don't really think, knowing from my own experience of how international politics function, that those were really going to come to grips with the broader issues." It seemed to me that you have to dramatize the broader issues a lot more and encourage the possibilities of a kind of grassroots expression of viewpoints. And out of that might come some institution. Again, I get back to the George Sorel type of approach, that you don't draw plans for the future—the future emerges out of the conflicts in society. And you learn as you go along what is going to work and what won't work. Rather than come out with a plan from your own head as to what might be the right thing, we aren't really ready for that. We should encourage much more the involvement of people at the lower levels in thinking about their own destiny.

TGW: One of the people you didn't mention in this is Bismarck, recently rediscovered. And it seems to me, just to take slight issue with the focus of MUNS, that one of the things that has really been shortchanged in thinking about the future—Sorel notwithstanding—is the role of some kind of countervailing power, not to say "regulatory" mechanism, of market forces. And

perhaps, like the entire generation that picked up the UN system who were Keynesians in one way or another, I guess I still haven't gotten over this notion that one needs a set of institutions that can play a bigger role than they have in the past. Is that totally wrong?

RC: No, no, I don't disagree at all with that. I think my concern was that in order to reach that result, you need to have a strong social base of support. And the arousing of that social base of support is almost a precondition for any effective new regulatory mechanisms. You can't just design it out of your head and deal with the political forces as they now are, or you won't get it. But, if there is sufficient pressure from below, and if there are articulate forms of leadership emerging, then there is a basis for that. Now, I couldn't agree more that we need to move into an entire new regulatory phase. What I don't see is the possibility of doing that effectively in the world as it now is, politically speaking.

TGW: I think you're absolutely correct. In fact, one of the things that astounded me in going back and re-reading Keynes was the notion of the size of the IMF. The idea was that its reserves would be something like 50 percent of world imports. So, we have the one institution that is the most criticized, probably along with the Bank. But this most criticized, by progressive forces everywhere, this awful monster's present power constitutes about 1.2 to 1.5 percent of world imports. The disparity between our global Bismarck and the IMF of Keynes, it seems to me, suggests that one of the things that we need is a rather historical sense as to the kinds of institutions that we might need. Actually, one of my own discomforts with global governance as a notion is that this institutional part, or the regulatory part, seems to be set aside in favor of trying to figure out what we do with the NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), what we do with governance, what we do with the private sector, what we do with the media, et cetera. But there also are institutions that—

RC: I couldn't agree more on those lines. When I say that we need to stress the creation of some forms of leadership, I'm also a bit skeptical of that, too. In fact, I'm lapsing into a much more pessimistic old age because a lot of nasty things come out of arousing the grassroots. You've got xenophobic reactions. The gut sentiments that are available are not all of the most constructive and helpful kind, so that it is not all sweetness and light, that approach. I think I have emphasized that in some readings that it is a terrain of conflict. It is not just a way of ensuring good results.

TGW: Well, why don't we go back to the ILO? I'm curious, if you were thinking about ideas and the International Labour Organization, what would have been those that were driving the institution when you arrived in 1947? Were those left over from the 1919 version, or were they new ideas? What were they?

RC: Well, the dominant idea was the international conventions. And what was new, then, was to secure conventions on some of the issues that had grown out of the experience of the 1930s and of the war. And one of them was freedom of association, and another was freedom from forced labor. So, the drive was to create conventions that would be regulatory mechanisms in those fields, and that was very much a direct reaction to the experience of fascism. That was the part of the general movement of wanting to make a better world, wanting to make it more difficult for those fascist tendencies to arise again. I think, though, there was a growing sense that a lot of the regulation was framed in the context of the industrially developed world. Not so much the United States, because regulation was not popular there, but the European countries had developed a lot of labor law and that was probably the model for the ILO.

But, it was beginning to be questioned whether what they were doing was what met the salient needs of the former colonial territories and the newly independent countries, and what

initially came to be called underdeveloped countries. That led to a kind of shift in emphasis within the ILO, and it was largely Morse's work to shift it towards technical assistance type of operations. There was Truman with his Point IV idea, and that was picked up by the ILO and by the United Nations in other ways, as well. Let's say more of the resources began to be put into the development of institutions, but there again the institutions were modeled on those that existed in the developed countries. Even in terms of personnel, with decolonization it was striking the number of people who were working in the departments of colonial affairs who then transformed into United Nations and ILO experts. So, you could say in a way that it was still the same personnel with the same set of ideas who are active in the work of international institutions.

Now, that is an easy thing to say because you can't see what were the alternatives—and I don't think there were alternatives at that time. But it was a case where you have institutions and they work, and they were directed in a somewhat different direction in terms of the problem-solving aspect, as well as the creation of new international standards. And the same personnel, whether they had been governmental people before and were now international people, were carrying on.

But the whole problem of coming into independence, and the meaning of independence, I think was really something that had to be defined over a longer period of time. I don't know whether it's even happened yet. I'm sure there are lots of people who have been aware of that problem and have developed thinking in response to it, and there are other people who have used it in a sort of populist political way. It is one of those situations that is not solved in a period of a few years.

TGW: You say that decolonization, and the emphasis on development or developmentalism, was then the kind of big umbrella under which the ILO functioned?

RC: Yes. For a number of years, I think it was, in terms of budget, it was where most of the resources went. There was still a very strong concern for the international regulation aspect of it, the conventions and recommendations. That has always been a very powerfully entrenched part of the ILO, and I expect it still is. But, certainly in the time I was there, it was still strong and was fundamental to what you might call the ideology of the ILO. But, the pragmatic part of technical assistance was what had grown. It had grown also in a way of being rather fragmented into a variety of different fields, so there wasn't the same coherence there. But, then when the employment program came along, that was in a way an attempt to give it some coherence and to develop a doctrine and policies and to structure technical assistance around certain objectives—and also to deal with certain critical questions, such as the question whether some ILO policies were not negative with regard to employment creation, and how you could reconcile creating employment with the whole standards side of things. It was a question that had never been asked before, but now had to be asked.

TGW: Did this employment notion, or world employment, or the fact that there may have been a negative correlation between ILO orthodoxy, if that's the right word, or traditional practices and activities, and the new goals—did this come from inside the institution, or outside the institution?

RC: I think probably mainly from outside, but with some kind of resonance inside. I mentioned Jolly as a fellow who would be very close to that, because he was involved in some of the ILO missions in Africa. These were very much hinged on that question of whether the traditional policies weren't negative in terms of employment, and whether a completely different approach wasn't desirable. Now, people like that and that center at Sussex, were rather instrumental in developing a new concept, a new ideology. And people inside, like my former

colleague, Bert Zoetewij, would be one who would be a point within the organization who could press those ideas. He didn't have a lot of success for a while, but being a Dutchman he was obstinate and kept it up. I think he was able to make some significant impact on ILO policies.

TGW: Was the ILO different from other parts of the UN system?

RC: Yes, very different I would say.

TGW: How and why?

RC: I think, in part, it had to do with the continuity from the League of Nations period. Not that the ILO and the League were very close; I think that there was a lot of tension between the two. And I don't really know much about that background, except that the reputation was that the League of Nations people were very much diplomats and the ILO people had the reputation of wearing red ties and not being quite as proper. There also was a budgetary factor. I think the ILO budget was adopted with the League budget. One of the big achievements of the reincarnation of the ILO after the War was to give it its own budgetary independence.

Then there was the tripartite aspect. I can remember in the early days I used to attend those meetings of what they called the ACC (Administrative Committee on Coordination). Jenks was the primary ILO representative there. Then they had their summit meetings with the Secretary-General and the directors-general, but mainly the work was done at that sort of second level. And he was the great defender of the ILO's autonomy within the system and did not like to be assimilated to other specialized agencies. He was always bringing out the tripartite characteristics as the thing that made the ILO different. It was not just an organization of governments.

It made it difficult for the ILO to cooperate in a lot of ways within the United Nations system. They were always given a kind of exceptional status. During the time I was there, that

was always maintained. Now, Morse took a more conciliatory, cooperative attitude. But in a way, Morse was also an outsider, in spite of being a director-general there for twenty-odd years. Jenks was the insider, and Morse was somebody who, firstly he was primarily preoccupied with keeping the relationship with the United States on a safe course. And he was the one who was bringing in outside ideas, like the technical assistance program and so forth. So, the insiders really had to come to terms with him. That is, the insider-traditionalists had to come to terms with him, because he was the boss after all. But, he was always in the position of being something of an outsider. He had come in at the top; he didn't grow up through the organization as the others had. That sort of distinctiveness of the ILO, the fact that you had this hard core of traditionalists, I don't think was the same in any other organization that I can think of.

TGW: Did this make the institution less likely to accept outside ideas, or did Morse and the alloy mean that the ILO was about the same as the others in terms of—

RC: Well, during his tenure, which was a long one, I think it is when the outside ideas had some impact. I can't imagine the ILO could have continued just under the rule of the traditionalists, but the fact that they were there and were strongly entrenched and had a very well-disciplined group of officials to carry it on meant that the ILO was different in that respect from other organizations. They could assimilate ideas, and they could even assimilate them to the fact of observing a larger part of the budget. But, there were limits.

TGW: And the tripartite structure, what did that do to ideas, let's say the employment missions that we've mentioned to Africa that brought back new information? How would the three-headed monster react to this? Would each part react differently? Did they react in unison? Or was the idea that after they had reacted differently there would be some unity?

RC: That's a difficult question to answer and I don't think there is a clear answer to it. But, each of the elements—the workers' side and the employers' side had their own interests to look after. The workers' side would be critical of some of these employment missions for not dealing with the interests of the trade unions in the country. And the trade unions in the country might not be very representative. They might be largely supported, financially and otherwise, by outside trade union organizations, so that the interests projected by the workers' group would not necessarily be the interests of the workers in that country, but the interests of the internationally organized labor movements. And the employers, I think, were probably less concerned about those employment missions, because by and large they were not advocating things that employers would necessarily object to. So, I think the question of the labor side was perhaps the more significant, with regard to a kind of constraint, if you like, on ILO policy development.

TGW: The ILO remains unique within international institutions by being somewhat more "pluralistic." I think that is probably the correct adjective to attach to this. No one has tried it elsewhere. Would this be one way in the future to, if not to make democracy work, at least to make institutions somewhat more representative of a variety of views, to inculcate institutionally through the design of the debating structure, other voices?

RC: I think the idea is an interesting one. Whether it is possible to achieve in any effective way is a more open question in my mind. The image I'm thinking of is something like the corporatist state, which was very popular with fascists in the 1930s, that you have the entrenched interests represented in some kind of consultative body, but you have an overall direction by the state. It is hard to see how it would work in practice. I would think that, since I don't see the demise of the nation-state as something that is likely to happen in the next generation, probably the way in which popular forces concerned about social equity issues can

become effective is through their national politics, and having that then reflected in international institutions.

I am not convinced of the idea of a kind of representative body of NGOs, because I think NGOs are very skewed in terms of their actual representation of, let's say, the grassroots. Some are more effectively representative than others, perhaps, but you cannot just assume that because they are NGOs they represent humanity at large.

TGW: Alternative ideas, I'm curious about the mechanisms. Let's take the specific care of these employment missions or any other bit of dissonant information that came into the ILO. How did they work their way in and through the bureaucracy? Was there usually an individual, like your Dutch colleague, who picked it up? Obviously, bureaucracies are not monoliths; you have the factions. How was this new information treated, and how did it eventually become part of policy, or at least as a challenge to orthodox policy?

RC: Well, it could initially be stimulated by somebody from within, like this chap I mentioned, Bert Zoetewij. But, he wouldn't be able to change policies on his own. It could only happen when somebody like Morse would bring in somebody like Emmerij, and create an administrative unit with a budget that was designed to do that. And you put somebody in charge who would want to do it. Then it could happen. But it was not likely to happen as a sort of growth from within. There would be a response from within, but then the impact had to come from outside.

TGW: So, to use some of your own language, the former set of ideas which assumed some sort of control or hegemony were then challenged. What do you call the result of that? Is this a new kind of hegemony? A new kind of orthodoxy, which stands until we have something newer?

RC: I don't think it ever reached that level of strength. I think it was always a kind of addition. I think the employment program went through various phases after I left. It was, as I think I suggested, criticized, particularly from American sources, as being inconsistent with free markets, and being associated with ideas that may have come out of Mao's China, and so forth. There was a big ideological campaign against it, and it was changed. I think at one point—it would be after Emmerij had gone—that someone was put in charge who was, in effect a traditional ILO official. Whether the program continued to do what people like Emmerij had hoped it to do or not, I could not say because it was long after I had gone. And I haven't really kept up any kind of continuing relationship with the ILO, so I can't really comment effectively about what's happened since then. But I am aware that there was that sort of transformation in the employment program subsequent to Emmerij's tenure there.

TGW: In some ways, it seems to me that that idea, as well the one that was somewhat associated to it—basic needs—in some ways were significant, if not fundamental, challenges to the way the planet operated and the way employers looked at the world and the way governments looked at the world. So, if these had become part of the new orthodoxy, it would have been something like a revolutionary change rather than co-optation. But, it seems to me that it remained at the level of mild co-optation as opposed to—

RC: That's right. The institutional structure just posed limits, and the political structure within it posed limits to what could be done. As an outside observer I can see big changes coming in the mid to late 1970s, when the whole emphasis on technical assistance, or the whole program of developing the capacities of new states to organize themselves and plan their economies then hit the wall of the free market doctrines, and the whole ascendancy of neo-

liberalism in the world. It seems to me that, in the late 1970s, there was that meeting in the south of Mexico—[Pierre] Trudeau went to it and [Ronald] Reagan.

TGW: Cancun was in 1981.

RC: 1981, yes. And that was preaching the magic of the market. It seems to me that from then on, the priorities of the United Nations have been the support for neo-liberal concepts of the economy, and humanitarian and political intervention in conflict situations. That's a big change from the emphasis in the 1960s and early 1970s on the development of structures capable of managing and organizing the economy.

TGW: As you look at that fairly brusque change, is it neoliberal ideas that have at least contributed to this or is it really the way the world operates?

RC: Let's say the powerful forces, I guess at the top of the United States government, that see the future not in terms of economic aid, but in terms of what they might call "liberating economies" by the free market.

TGW: I guess in this project we tend to look at certain key events as providing a jolt to the system, the UN system, as well as to ideas. One of the ones that we have been skating around and is probably, at least in my view, the most significant was decolonization that changed the numbers, changed the priorities. How did this look in 1947 to you, in the sense that decolonization was supposed to have taken 50, 75, 100 years, depending on which imperial power you were speaking to. How did that look in 1947 with changes in India and Pakistan, then Burma— that first wave of independence? Did it seem that this was going to accelerate, or not?

RC: I would think so. At what rate was an open question. It was not until about 1960, I guess, that Africa had that great year of independence. So, there was a long stretch, but it was a long stretch in which the idea was certainly alive. Geoffrey Baraclough wrote that book about

contemporary history, * and has a chapter in it about the revolt against the West. And I think it seizes some of the spirit of that period, that you were expecting that this would happen and that there were these forces that were becoming more and more articulate. How they were going to work out was certainly an open question. And there were many dire predictions about what the consequences would be of rapid independence, and a lot of them were justified. There was the Congo episode. These were events that marked the thinking of people in international institutions, but, more broadly than that, of the sort of politically aware people concerning the role of international institutions.

[Dag] Hammarskjöld, I guess, was a key figure in that whole period, and became kind of an icon because he did stand so much for the integrity of the international civil service and its role. Then he became the martyr, in a sense, the way he died over the Congo event. It was a very visual picture, very important in marking one's ideas.

TGW: What were the dynamics within the ILO, and perhaps of your traditional kind of ILO structures? Clearly these new countries were going to have a tripartite structure, if you want to use the same word, that was very, very different from that in the West. Did this seem also as a sort of threat to the institution, or was it a recipe that seemed to make sense?

RC: I think, for me and a few others, it was a real challenge to the whole idea of tripartism, since the reality of tripartism was that in these newly independent countries, unions were being created by outside forces. They weren't a natural development of the self-consciousness of labor within those countries. They were creations of the AFL-CIO, or the ICFTU (International Confederation of Trade Unions). And, of course, the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU were at loggerheads fighting each other, so that labor was at war internationally about creating a series of clones in these newly independent countries. Then, of course, there was the

* *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (1964).

natural politicizing of existing movements by nationalist political parties, so that what valid forces there were, were very much geared to nationalist politics. At the same time, you had these clones of western trade union organizations that were being supported from outside in a number of countries. So, there was a very mixed bag and, I think, it did not fit very easily within the concept of a tripartite structure which assumes a stable, long-term development of organized labor, organized employers, government regulation and so forth. All of that happened in parts of the world, but it certainly had not happened in the countries that were now going through these early stages of independence. And whether the doctrine should be just reinforced vigorously, which was the point of the traditionalists in the ILO, or whether you had to think more critically about some other approach was an open question. You could not think of another approach and still be consistent with ILO doctrine.

TGW: Shall we pause here?

RC: Why not? I said we should come to lunch at about 12:30, so I guess you're right.

TGW: This is the beginning of Tape Number 3, Tom Weiss interviewing Bob Cox on the 25th of August. Actually, we were speaking about the impact of particular global events on ideas. One thing that was fairly traumatic in New York—I don't know whether it was in Geneva—was McCarthyism and its impact both on the attitudes of people and the willingness to run risks. What exactly happened in the 1950s in Geneva?

RC: That was a particularly acute issue in the ILO because of Morse and because of the fact, as I mentioned to you, that he was under this accusation on the part of, in particular the AFL-CIO, of being soft on communism. At the same time, as genuinely a matter of principle, he didn't think that a government should be admitted to interview its nationals on the ILO staff; that would be an infraction of the principle of the status of the international civil service.

Hammarskjöld had just recently made, I think at that time, his speech about the international civil service. Do you remember that one?

TGW: Actually, that was later, in 1956.

RC: In any case, it more or less defined the doctrine, which was the doctrine that Morse felt was the correct one. So, there was this big issue of what should be done about it. My memory does not go into the detail of how it was handled, but I think he did manage to handle it in a different way from both the United Nations and UNESCO, where they did acquiesce in interviews of the staff members of American nationality. I wish I could be more precise about the way Morse managed to handle it differently, but I know he did. And I'm sure you can track that down somewhere. But, it was a particularly acute, sensitive issue for him, because of the primacy in his mind of his relationship with the United States.

TGW: You have written this in various places; maybe we should focus on David Morse for a moment. How did he sell this notion of making Soviet participation? You mentioned that he wanted to keep the United States in, but obviously making Soviet or Eastern Bloc participation palatable is also part of the story. It is a difficult assignment for anyone, but I would have thought—I don't know whether an American was better at this than others.

RC: I can remember, I was in the cabinet at the time when the Soviet Union had applied for membership, and they did so with a reservation. I think the reservation seemed like a technical thing at the time; it was a reservation about the jurisdiction of the International Court. I guess they had their own doctrine why they wanted that. It did not seem to be a fundamental issue of substance, at any rate. But it was an issue of principle, and Morse took the line that they had to accept in whole, not with qualifications. And I remember being entrusted with the task of taking a letter to deliver to the Soviet embassy in Bern to turn down their application on those

grounds, sort of welcoming their initiative but at the same time indicating that it had to be an unqualified acceptance of the constitution without that reservation.

That stayed things for a while, but ultimately it was resolved and they came in without those reservations. Morse won his point on that. And he undoubtedly would have been under severe criticism from the United States and other western countries had he acquiesced in the exception that the Soviets wanted. Now, later on the question came of the appointment of a Soviet assistant director-general. Ultimately, that was the issue on which Morse resigned. He didn't make it specifically stated in his resignation, but in fact he had more or less negotiated that there would be an appointment and it was equitable because the other major countries had assistant directors-general of their nationality. And it seemed accepted as part of the system that these major powers would have their nationals in that sort of position of importance, at least of symbolic importance because what the importance really would be was how influential those people would be once they were in the organization. There were assistant directors-general who were not particularly influential, and there were others who were very influential.

But it was an important symbolic issue, and it was one on which Meany and the United States government were very strongly committed, particularly Meany. And I think the United States government was because of Meany. I don't think the United States government had that much interest in the organization, other than its importance to the AFL-CIO. But, Meany had his tentacles everywhere. He had his men in the State Department. He had influence in the Ministry of Labor. And he had his own direct representation. So, he really had access at the highest levels in government, and if he felt very strongly about something, the United States government would feel strongly about it, too, unless it was something that was really important in a substantive way where they could differ.

So, I think Morse was left in this position of recognizing that it was legitimate that the Soviet Union should have an official appointed at that level. But, at the same time, he realized that this was going to be an impossible political issue for him. There was also a mix-up at the time with Jef Rens who was the deputy-director-general. Morse—and I can't remember the details now—withdrawed for a while and then came back. I'm not quite sure how the sequence of events were, but during that period that Morse had withdrawn Rens saw himself as the logical successor. When Morse was persuaded to come back, he was persuaded by the American Attorney General at that time, a labor lawyer who was interested in the labor movement. I can't remember his name now, but he was influential in the government, he knew about labor, he was not above resisting the influence of George Meany. And he persuaded Morse to come back. Well, in coming back, Jef Rens felt very disappointed, and Jef Rens was more or less allied, particularly to European labor, and thought of himself as being a kind of labor spokesman within the organization.

So, there was that complication. That was the point when Morse hired that management consultant, McKinsey and Company, to come and look over the ILO and recommend a sort of rational management organization. That was when, of course, I learned that you don't invite a consultant in when you want good advice about management. You invite them in when you want to do something, and they're going to help you to make the recommendations that will result in a structure coming out which is the one you wanted to begin with. McKinsey did that job very nicely for Morse. The whole idea was to sort of get around the Rens problem by finding a place for Rens, but also making sure that there were other people in the top structure of the organization that would counterbalance any discontent that he could mobilize in his corner of the organization.

That involved the U.S. labor movement, and complicated the whole question of the appointment of a Soviet assistant-director-general. Ultimately, Morse resigned. He didn't say, "I'm resigning because this is an issue." He said, "I am resigning for personal reasons," and this, that and the other thing. But, I think he was aware that if things went ahead on schedule, and he were to make the appointment, that that would result in a huge blow-up with his American support. Jenks was then elected, and Jenks then made the appointment. And Jenks said, in making the appointment, "I had nothing to do with this. It was all organized by Morse before I became director-general." So, he thought he had gotten out of it. But, he didn't really get out of it because he had the animosity of Meany to deal with after that. But, it didn't matter so much because he was not an American. I think Morse got himself out at the time when it could have been bad for him and it could have been bad for the organization because of the fact that he was an American and was then taking on an influential segment of the United States participation in the organization.

TGW: But, subsequently it was bad for the organization in the sense that what Morse had been working for actually ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of the United States. Was that a surprise at all?

RC: No, it wasn't a surprise. It was almost a logical continuation. I think the appointment of a Soviet assistant-director-general had some sort of symbolic importance. Because once the Soviet assistant-director-general was there, he had absolutely no influence at all. He had an office and a secretary and that was about it. Symbolically it was important, and it was something that the opponents could hang on to as an issue.

TGW: Do you recall anyone within the organization discussing this as more of a general harbinger of what American attitudes might be over the long-run toward international institutions? The ILO wasn't really all that different from other institutions, right?

RC: Well, the trouble blew up in UNESCO (UN Education, Social, and Cultural Organization), of course, fairly quickly over the New International Information Order (NIIO). That was severely criticized—the British left as well as the Americans over that issue.

TGW: Yes, and Singapore.

RC: I don't think that there was the sense of a general prospect of doom for international institutions in general as a result of that. I think most people regarded it as a specifically ILO problem. My analysis at the time—and that was after I had left the ILO—was that the United States was more influential in the ILO after they had left than while they were there, because the ILO thenceforth was doing everything possible to bring them back and not doing anything that the United States might object to. I think that was at the point when the Employment Program became emasculated.

TGW: I was trying to recall what the U.S. attitude toward the Declaration of Philadelphia had been. It seems to me that that was a kind of “non-document,” if that's the term, for the U.S. government. It wasn't really very important in San Francisco, even though it had occurred a couple of years before. Is that correct?

RC: That would be hard for me to answer. In ILO circles it was regarded as very important. It was regarded as the new constitution for the new era. And in American terms, I guess it was a statement of the New Deal. There was that kind of support. And that was followed fairly quickly by a toughening of American labor legislation in regard to the organization of unions and strikes, and so forth—the Republican Congress adopted some

legislation that was sort of downgrading the importance of organized labor. Subsequently, there was the Bricker Amendment issue that came up with regard to the ratification of international instruments, and the unwillingness of the Congress to bind the United States to any kind of international commitments.

So, that negative approach was growing progressively and a lot of Morse's time was spent trying to mobilize support. He was quite successful on the employer side. There was a man called David Zellerbach who was an influential employer from the California region, I think, who organized a new employers' association in the United States that was a much more New Deal-oriented kind of employer thinking in relation to the established employer organization. Anyway, the one that appointed the U.S. delegates was much more conservative and in line with the sort of emerging tendency in the Republican congress to be negative toward both contributions to the ILO and to the role of international labor standards.

This other employer organization was really promoting a much more New Deal-sort of tradition, and Morse was very much behind that development. So, he was constantly working within the American political system to build up support. It wasn't just a case of dealing directly with the government. It was a case of making sure that the government had people pressing them to do the things that he wanted for the ILO.

TGW: You have mentioned Morse on several occasions as being a consummate, successful bureaucrat. He knew what he wanted and how to get it. As a New Dealer, was he better placed with Democratic than Republican administrations, or was it just his network of contacts?

RC: I don't think it really was a party matter, because most of the opposition actually came from people on the Democratic side. The AFL-CIO was his *bête noire* in the United

States, and they were staunchly behind the Democrats. There were people like Zellerbach who were what you might call “enlightened Republicans” who were his principal supporters, often. So, it was really across party lines, finding people who could be influential.

TGW: Shortly before your own departure from the organization, the Bretton Woods system collapsed in 1971. What kind of impact did this have on the ILO, or international institutions, on the ideas in particular that were being kicked around?

RC: That is not an easy one. I think the World Bank, as one of the Bretton Woods institutions, had become important in the development field, and the ILO had been interested in trying to get support from the World Bank, and even in working in cooperation with the World Bank on its development projects. Now, I don’t think that ever went very far, but it was certainly a hope on the part of people in the ILO that they could have some support there. The IMF, I think they were operating in a completely different sphere and had no real connection with the ILO, nor much resonance within the ILO in terms of people thinking about the IMF. I don’t recall any conversations or discussions that would have linked the ILO with their work or with the policies that they were following.

I don’t think, either, that the ILO was part of the criticism which grew up against the IMF. In a way, that represented the sort of criticism of social activists and social forces that were among those that I thought that the ILO had ignored. These were people who were provoked by the negative effects of IMF policies and the ILO was really not part of that. They were really not in alliance with those groups at all. I don’t think the trade union movement had much connection with it at all.

TGW: That was a question I was going to come to later, but why don’t we look at that now? There is a disconnect, almost, between the social role, which is, at least as I think about

the Declaration of Philadelphia, it sort of expands the notion of what is within the ILO and how wide is its reach. One would have thought that they would have been among the earliest and most vociferous of the critics of the Bretton Woods system. That wasn't the case.

RC: No, it never happened. And I don't think that the whole idea of expanding the social sphere was really understood within the ILO. There were fine words, but I don't think anybody really thought through the implications of it, which would have in effect taken them beyond the tripartite structure, because the ILO was locked into the trade union movements. And the trade union movements were really not part and parcel of the social movements that would have grown up as a result of the response to IMF-type policies applied in poor countries.

TGW: That's interesting. I wanted to just go back a moment. It's hard to stay strictly chronological. What do you recall of Bandung (Asian-African Conference)? In retrospect, this looks like an important gathering of Third World countries that was a precursor for much of the way debate was then framed during the 1960s and 1970s, and later. Do you recall whether this was on anyone's map in 1955 or 1956 in Geneva?

RC: I think it fit into the whole expectation of the emergence of the Third World as a stronger political force, with Nehru particularly as somebody who was already institutionally within the ILO. [Josip Brosz] Tito in Yugoslavia—they were a kind of borderline. There were people who were very interested in Yugoslavia and worker self-management within the ILO, but it was still part of the communist world. Within the United Nations, I remember, in those early days the Yugoslav representatives were very critical of the ILO as being something that was tied to the capitalist world. But, within the ILO there were people who were genuinely interested in Yugoslavia. Nehru was an easier case. Chou En-Lai was again beyond reach in terms of

association with the ILO, because they were quite out of it and it was many years before any overtures were possible towards mainland China.

So, I think Bandung, yes, intellectually, mentally, people would register that this signaled an important development, but perhaps not one that could be translated into specific measures or affiliations for the ILO at the time.

TGW: When did it become obvious that developing countries as a bloc, whether you call them the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), or some other appellation, were going to make a real difference in the way the ILO did business?

RC: I think the 1960s were the time, after independence. I remember we had—we of the ILO, identifying myself momentarily, at the same time intellectually realizing that I shouldn't—a regional conference in Addis Ababa, of African countries. And I remember at that time getting into a, not an argument with Jenks, but an issue in which he took a different position than the one I had taken in advising Morse, although he did it not directly with me which would have been beneath his dignity, but directly with Morse. The position I had taken was that in all those questions about credentials—who's going to be representing the workers, and so forth—my thought was at that time that you had a new organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and, if the ILO is going to operate in Africa, it might be sensible to pay some attention to that organization and to involve them in the process of sorting out these basically African conflicts about African representation.

But Jenks was lividly opposed to having anybody deal in any way with the Organization of African Unity. The ILO had its own traditions, its own principles, and so forth and we ought never to get involved in that. Ultimately, he was obviously more persuasive than I was at that time. But, I could see that as initially a kind of line of confrontation that the trend toward

regional organization was something that the ILO would only accept on condition that its own principles and practices were maintained and would not seek any kind of mediation or meeting of minds with these regional organizations. I think that continued to be ILO policy with regard to Africa.

TGW: What happened when the initial meetings were held of UNCTAD beginning in 1962, and then obviously the conference itself in 1964? The Group of 77 (G-77) as an economic and social force transformed the way UN debates were held. How did this look from the lake towards the *Palais*? Did this seem as if this was a natural development and that it would in fact penetrate the ILO eventually?

RC: There was a lot of resistance on the part of the industrially advanced countries. There was the view that in this Group of 77 were basically irresponsible countries and that they should not be allowed to unduly influence the direction of policy. I don't have it clear in my mind about the date, but I went for a mission in London, a talk with the minister of labor who was in the Labour government at that time. He said, "You know, the unions are losing interest in the ILO because there were all of these irresponsible Africans who have all the votes and are able to influence their policy. And if it goes that way, the industrial countries are just not going to pay much attention to the ILO. The ILO is a dead duck." That was his view. That must have been in the early 1970s. But certainly that was a strong view.

And I noticed also that when the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) was set up, they organized a kind of labor consultative group as well. It was obvious that that group had more influence with the European countries than the ILO had. So, I had this sense myself of the ILO being gradually marginalized in world labor. I think that had gone on. And when you see the rather futile efforts of the ILO to make its voice heard, vis-à-vis

the World Trade Organization (WTO) today, I think it had sort of reached that level of irrelevancy. But as institutions that are created, with regular national contributions and national delegations, they don't die. They just become a little bit irrelevant.

TGW: So, did the Non-Aligned Movement of which the "irresponsible" Africans were a part, or the Group of 77 writ large—

RC: That's not my view, incidentally, so don't tie me down to feeling that the Africans were irresponsible. In a way, I think it was the Europeans who were somewhat irresponsible for not seeing where they were going!

TGW: Was this then seen, from the OECD or western point of view, as simply strengthening the numbers in this Cold War contest in which the ILO was part?

RC: Yes, I think that played into it because the role of the Third World in the Cold War was obviously very suspect in western quarters. I think this was part of that sort of general perspective, apart from anything specifically ILO.

TGW: Did any of you back then speculate about what an eventual end of the Cold War would have meant for the ILO or ideas?

RC: I don't think anybody envisaged the end of the Cold War. Even for the CIA it came as a surprise.

TGW: The timing, yes. Actually though, what difference does it make for international negotiations in terms of openness to ideas?

RC: You would think that taking away that sort of dualism that the Cold War implied, that it would open the way for the expression of a larger number of different views of the world. The Third World—I think nobody talks about the Third World anymore, very few people at any rate—is not one sort of bloc. It is a range of diversity that, in ideological terms and in terms of

economic organization, and in social terms, it is extremely diverse. I think that one might have expected that once that rigidity of alignments was removed, that there would be more expression for that diversity. I can't really say whether that's happened.

I think if it has happened, it has probably meant that the dominant national forces consider it to be somewhat less important. The UN can represent diversity, but when it comes to an important issue, the UN is sidelined. Think of Kosovo for an example. I mean, as long as it is doing something that is not harmful to major national interests, that's fine. You can tolerate the expression of diversity. But, when it comes down to something that they have drawn a line on, then if the UN is not usable it's cast aside.

TGW: Through this period of growing decibel levels, shortly after you leave the ILO you're in New York, but the mixture of material forces and ideas was altered substantially by the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and the oil price increases in 1973. Did this strike you as something like 1968, or was this a smaller bump on the road?

RC: I don't think it was like 1968, because it didn't really call into question the social structures of the countries concerned. It was an economic crunch. But 1968 was important to me, and I guess to many others, because it really forced you to question whether the kinds of societies we were living in were good, and whether they could be different. I don't think the same thing happened with the OPEC crisis. The OPEC crisis meant, in effect, you shouldn't use your car as frequently as you did before, but it wasn't really going to make a major difference in the way society is organized.

TGW: I was actually thinking more in terms of the constellation of negotiating forces and—

RC: —whether the OPEC countries would become influential?

TGW: It was shortly thereafter that the NIEO (New International Economic Order) came directly on—it was no longer possible to ignore them.

RC: And the NIEO was an interesting case of, even during the Cold War, an attempt to assert that there were other considerations than those of the Cold War. But that was short-lived. The NIEO was killed by neoliberalism. It had a duration of about seven years, perhaps.

TGW: 1974-1981. But, when you were unpacking the NIEO, you looked at it in several ways: as a specific set of demands, as a negotiating process, as well as about a more general discussion about what's a desirable structure and what kinds of information do we need to move ahead? With this kind of hindsight—twenty-five years of hindsight—do you think it was successful, or unsuccessful, in changing minds?

RC: I think what it did was delineate a series of policy positions and ideological positions which continue to be valid with a different balance of forces among them. I think Craig Murphy wrote an article, was it just this last year, he went back to the article I had written which must be about twenty years old now or maybe more. And he was sort of trying another article of the same kind, just in recent times in the contemporary world. So, what it suggested to me was that the analysis of the forces at work was still valid but that their relative strength had shifted a lot and particularly the shift toward neoliberalism has been the one that has come out as the determining factor in recent history. Now, how long that will be the case is to me an open question because I still have the Polanyian view that it is likely to provoke a reaction, but when and where the reaction will come is another matter. In fact, we see evidence of the reaction here and there—we were talking about Seattle; we were talking about Chiapas. The French strikes of December 1995 are another example of the potential for response, but which has not yet built up into anything coherent and continuous.

TGW: I wonder, in thinking about an alternative response, if you're looking toward the future, what would be the main intellectual challenge to the UN or the UN system? Is it dealing with the neo-liberal orthodoxy?

RC: I would put my bets on what you could call "deep ecology": the sense of the interdependence of humanity with nature, and the constraints on the survival within nature. I think that out of that could come the kind of alternative thinking that would affect the way we organize society, the economy, and even politics. But, that's a long road and, as I say, I'm inclined to be more of a pessimist than perhaps I was in 1948 so I wouldn't make any predictions. But, if you asked me where is the intellectual crux of a change of thinking, then I think that's maybe where it could come from.

TGW: As opposed to the marginalization of those who were set aside through globalization? I guess I'm thinking that precious little hard criticism has come from the UN system in relation to this dominant—sometimes called the "Washington consensus," sometimes called the "Maastricht consensus"—this dominant neo-liberal view. And who benefits and who does not from globalization?

RC: I don't follow the UN very closely anymore, but my sense is that the UNDP (UN Development Programme) is probably the segment within the United Nations which is most aware and which has done more policy thinking about these global problems in society than any other part. My feeling is that the UN has had the advantage, the UN system, of allowing for the development of bits and pieces of organization that could work on some critical thinking about problems. I have again a seven-year thesis, that these parts of the institution have a life of about seven years before they get clamped down on. My memory about names again is escaping me,

but I think it was the Dutch economist who was very much associated with development thinking—

TGW: [Jan] Tinbergen?

RC: Tinbergen. He was instrumental in supporting that body that was set up in Geneva to study social and economic policy.

TGW: UNRISD (UN Research Institute on Social Development).

RC: UNRSID. And that, for a while, was one body that performed that function. I think our institute in Geneva was another body. And I think they usually develop a series of studies and analyses that could be intellectually important. I think Gunnar Myrdal's tenure at the early years of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was another case like that. The looseness of the organizational structure of the United Nations has permitted these things to exist, but they don't exist for long because budgetary constraints usually are used as a means of closing them down if they are not directly changed by political influence, as was the World Employment Programme at the ILO. This is why I am in favor of lax budgetary management at the UN. This again is contrary to United States policy, which wants to centralize budgetary control. I think that has very grave political implications, because the more slack there is the more room there is for initiative coming from disparate sources to develop thinking and institutions, maybe even with a sort of practical role that can help move ideas and practices forward. But the tighter and more centralized the budgetary control, the less chance there is of that happening. So, when you look at these budgetary issues, they aren't just budgetary. They are fundamentally political.

TGW: But is it the financing that does this, or is there a kind of natural cycle in institutions? Maybe we should have a sunset clause for all institutions?

RC: I think that is probably true, too—that the life of original and creative thinking probably has a seven-year limit as well. But, it is also a fact that they get started with a certain amount of permissiveness, I think that is the word that used to be used about social practices. After a while, people who are in a position to object to some of the ideas make themselves felt. So, there is both an internal and an external factor that determines that seven-year limit. Seven years is just arbitrary, but it is not something that can go on forever. The UNDP may have gone longer than that.

TGW: You're thinking of the *Human Development Reports*?

RC: Yes. I don't remember when they began.

TGW: 1990.

RC: Yes, so we're up to ten years now.

TGW: When a new institution is created—I'm thinking that during your time at the ILO, UNCTAD, UNIDO (UN Industrial Development Organization), and UNEP (UN Environment Programme) came on the scene with new areas and new perspectives. Are they a useful jolt for existing institutions like the ILO, in terms of following what's going on, in terms of new ideas emanating from these places?

RC: In the ILO they were usually perceived as a threat, something to be guarded against. They had a different structure. They didn't fit with the tripartite concept, which I think is perhaps the initial strength of the ILO but it will be its downfall in the long run, because it introduces a kind of rigidity in its thinking and its possibilities of action. I think that's what has led to a lot of the suspicion directed against other organizations that have come into being. There is not that sort of welcoming idea of, "here's a new initiative that we could link onto." There is, "what is it going to mean for our structure and our area of competency and so forth?"

TGW: But when these new institutions raise new perspectives—inequality in trade relations, or the importance of industrial policy, which is clearly a concern for labor, or the importance of the environment as an issue—couldn't an organization like the ILO also think of this as an opportunity?

RC: Yes, they could. But at the same time, I think what has happened is that these ideas are picked up by organizations like the OECD. They have a more limited membership, are more cohesive, and are able to take up something like industrial policy and to deal with it perhaps with a broader consensus among their supporters than the ILO would be capable of. I think that is part of the problem.

TGW: In thinking about another shock to the system, which I would throw in as part of an explanation for the demise of the NIEO, would have been the debt crisis and the need, subsequently, for approval in finance that led to the necessity, really, for structural adjustment. Here is another set of events. As you look back on the 1970s or 1980s, how did they influence really what international institutions were dealing with or looking at? Is this an opportunity or a threat?

RC: It seemed to me that when you raise the question of debt that looking at it from the point of view of the industrially developed countries, the impact was fiscal constraint—the attempt to balance budgets, which meant cutting back on the kind of aid that would have been implicit in any large-scale program of development of what was then called Third World countries. So, I think the debt problem as it affected the rich countries was as important as the debt problem affecting the Mexicos and Brazils and so forth. Now, as to the opportunity it had opened, the opportunities were really interpreted as following the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank, which were completely contrary to the kinds of policies that the ILO was

supposed to be recommending. So, it was counteractive to the whole idea of the New International Economic Order, and of the ILO's work in the post-war period. It just had to be accepted as the realities of the late 1970s and of the 1980s.

TGW: An interesting "what-if" question always occurs to me here. If OPEC had, in fact, had somewhat more foresight than states usually have, or coalitions of self-interested parties usually have, and had been able to work out an arrangement with the non-oil exporters, would this not have changed the constellation of forces for negotiations as well as structural change?

RC: My recollection is that there were some initiatives in that direction.

TGW: Yes, there were.

RC: There was some restricted group of countries. I think Canada had a role in chairing one of those meetings at one stage. But, I don't think anything came of it.

TGW: No, nothing. So, that's why the "what if," because it seems to me that that was a particularly auspicious moment that passed us by.

RC: If it did, I imagine the controlling factor there was the fiscal restraint all over, and particularly in the industrially developed countries. There was nothing they were prepared to offer.

TGW: It seems to me that there was not much that the OPEC countries were willing to offer.

RC: No, there were symbolic efforts of OPEC countries to offer some form of assistance to less-developed countries, but I think it was more for show than for reality.

TGW: That's right. Earlier I had said my impression is that many of the people whom I have met who worked in international secretariats during the period we're talking about when you were there were basically Keynesians who believed in the importance, as well as the

potential effectiveness of state intervention—how big or how small. Do you think that is a correct characterization?

RC: Yes, I think probably it was the dominant way of thinking in economic terms. I think it was only in the 1970s that the Milton Friedmans and others came to challenge that, and they were more successful in some countries than in others initially. But they came, really, to dominate the scene, particularly through OECD. I think there was some famous report—I've forgotten the name of it, it must have been in the mid-1970s—that represented the new consensus, that was very much more in the Friedman-ite line.

TGW: I think, at least for me, the main switch was not only the importance of the market, but it was also the relative importance of domestic policies versus international policies. I think the report that was done by Eliot Berg for the World Bank in 1981 that came down very hard on the side of African ineffectiveness and inefficiencies in government was quite an important moment in changing the tenor of debate.

RC: He had some personal background in research in Africa, too. I remember some of his earlier articles in that respect.

TGW: As you think back to the kinds of discussions that occurred in the ILO, what about tactics? Do you have any views about the importance of straightforward confrontation, which was part of the operational style of certainly the mid-1970s with the NIEO, versus accommodation? Does one of these seem to appear to be more sensible than another as a way of proceeding?

RC: You probably have to have a little confrontation before you get to the stage of accommodation. That may be a sequence. Morse certainly was always in favor of accommodation. He was a peace-maker and he was inclined toward all sorts of euphemism

about development. He resisted using the term “underdevelopment” and called it “developing countries.” It was always a positive look on things, and an attempt to bring things together. He saw his role as being that. But it would only bring them together because there had been confrontation. So, I think the two go together historically.

TGW: You mentioned Morse’s emphasis on semantics—which phrases are politically correct or not. Is this an important part of the deliberations of international institutions, is it inconsequential, or is it simply window dressing?

RC: Well, I suppose it has a role in reaching agreements that are not really agreements. Every meeting has to end with a statement that everybody will agree with and the only way you can do that is to have the statements partially meaningless, but with a good sound to them. So I think in some ways, the legal work of people in conferences is to draft things so that they can be interpreted in different ways to satisfy conflicting points of view while at the same time appearing to be an agreement on a given term. So, in that sense, yes it is a part of the whole negotiating process.

TGW: As one thinks about these ideas that come up during conferences, what actually—if this is a fair question—is the importance of the idea itself, or is it only the idea when it coincides with a particular set of material forces? We’ve mentioned OPEC in 1973, which would have not been possible earlier, though some of the ideas were around earlier. Is there a question of sequencing? Do these ideas develop and are they are important but they only take a certain form once the constellation of other political or economic forces have changed?

RC: Yes, I think that is probably true that you have to have some kind of a shock to the existing system that allows ideas to be interpreted in such a way as to deal with them. So, ideas are never pure in the sense of being acted upon in terms of the way they have been thought. But

they can be wrapped around situations that material conditions produce so as to at least have a certain plausibility of moving things in a certain direction. And I guess part of the business of international institutions is to do that, and to try to have some clear sense of what is the desirable direction while at the same time not allowing the conflicts to become disruptive and prevent any kind of façade of agreement. Do I sound too cynical?

TGW: No, not more cynical than I. I would like to go back and explore a little bit one of the things that we talked about at lunch, namely the quality of the international civil service. You mentioned differences in recruitment patterns. I wondered if we would just tease that out for a moment, and what difference this meant in the early years, in the middle years, and perhaps today.

RC: Again, you have to see that my direct experience is about twenty-five years old and I haven't really any experience of the recent couple of decades. I think in the earliest years, that is the immediate post-war, as I mentioned they were recruiting generalists. And many of the people who came as delegates were also generalists. A Brit from the labor department might be from the labor department but his education might just as well be in medieval history. The idea was that if you reached a certain intellectual level of training, you could deal with any complicated problem that was put to you in a sensible way. Now, I think by the time the whole emphasis on development came about, there was a need for people who had more specialized training—either economists, or engineers, or doctors, or whatever. So then you got an intake of much more specialized people, and then a problem within the institution arises, that of the relationship between the generalists and the specialists. Generally, the specialist would think, "I'm the master of this field, and who is this person who doesn't have any background in my field telling me what to do, or controlling my movements?" Even among specialists, I remember

we had a case in the ILO. We had an occupational safety and health division, and the chief of the division was a Swiss engineer and there was recruited a South African doctor. And the South African doctor virtually refused to work under the authority of a Swiss engineer, not because he was Swiss but because he was an engineer. You have that kind of a problem which would never arise in a group of generalists, and it made dealing with policy just that much more complicated. And the nature of the organization is different because the ILO especially was an organization that tried to lend upon its traditions and wanted to absorb everybody who was a recruit into those traditions so they became primarily an ILO identity. Whereas these people were there maybe for a short contract, and their identity was their professional skill. That ambivalence within an organization raised some problems.

TGW: Over time, over the twenty-five years, did you notice a change, if you could judge the quality of the people who were working there? You mentioned earlier that they were perhaps less idealistic, now we've introduced more technical. But if one were judging the same kinds of trends, I presume whether in industry or universities or anywhere else, we'd probably say some of the same things. But if you were trying to measure folks, would you say that they were basically solid or left a lot to be desired?

RC: Well, one of the factors that came in and was particularly the case with the post-sixty, the great number of new developing countries, was the importance of recruiting people from the countries to the staffs of the organization. Now I don't want to fall into the easy road of saying that these are people who were not properly trained and were by and large incompetent—I think a lot of people would say that. But I think the issue is rather more important than to just dismiss it that way. There was a lot more political patronage that became evident. That is, you had to recruit from a certain country. You didn't know much about that country. You didn't

know about their educational institutions. In some cases they had been disrupted during years of internal warfare, independence movements, so that the qualifications of people might have been acquired through struggle on the ground but not through certificates of education that they had achieved elsewhere. So you really had no means of judging accurately the level of competency of people who were being recruited, which meant that you relied upon the governments to nominate people who would be taken. Governments then naturally assumed that it was their right of nomination and that they were the ones who were appointing people, not the organization. And there was a lot of truth in that.

As a result, you got some people who were good and you got some people who were not good. And you had, internally, people within the organization who would alternately look upon some of these people as incompetents and marginalize them within the organization, or putting them somewhere where they couldn't do any harm, or considering them as potentially networks of influence with their countries and cultivating them in that respect, even if they weren't able to do anything or likely to do anything favorable in terms of the work within the institution. Which is not an invalid position to take if you need to have influence and they could be a channel; but often I think there was bad judgment in that respect.

One case I came to remember, we had as an assistant-director-general, a man called Abbas Amar, who was a highly competent person. He had been minister of education in [Gamel Abdel] Nasser's government in Egypt. And he had been educated in England, with a British degree from I don't know whether it was Cambridge or Oxford. But he was a very competent man, a very serious man, in his judgement. And there was recruited a relatively young man from Sudan or Somalia who was a prince of a kind in his country, and this man proved himself to be a thoroughly disreputable character—carrying on in Geneva with loose women and getting into

debt and doing any kind of thing in his personal life to besmirch the reputation of the organization. And Abbas Amar, who was a man—a certain kind of puritanical quality as a convinced Muslim. He just couldn't abide by this young man and the way he behaved and the fact that he was parading his identity as a prince to manage to get away with all of these things. Jenks, on the other hand, saw him as a prince and therefore as somebody who could be influential. He was rather inclined to give him all kinds of preferences and benefits, which led to a sort of antagonism at the assistant-director level between these two men with regard to this one case. To me, the case is unimportant but it illustrates that there are different attitudes within organizations towards the usefulness of people who may not be technically very competent, and may even be thoroughly immoral, but are nevertheless assumed by some people to have an advantage.

TGW: Is it fair to ask whether the international civil service that you know compared favorably with a solid national civil service, or compared with a decent college or university in terms of the quality of the people who were working there?

RC: Well, I think it was a lot more diverse. I think the ILO had a staff, many members of whom were extremely competent, extremely devoted, committed individuals, and when I left the ILO I left behind a number of not only friends, but a number of, even though not necessarily personal friends, people whose integrity and whose competency I have great admiration for. So, there was that level of competency. There was also this sort of varied mix of people, some of whom, being specialists, were doing a particular job. They would never be people who would have very much of a sense of what the organization was about or some of the broader purposes. Then there were a lot of bounders who were just there as political appointees and were a drag on the organization. And I guess in many national bureaucracies something of the same is the case,

although being in a more homogenous environment it is perhaps easier to avoid too much disparity.

It is very difficult to get rid of people in an international organization if they're not useful, either in terms of influence or in terms of their competency at work. That is less so in the case of national organizations. I have the greatest respect for the French civil service. The thing that I love about the French civil service is that they are so self-critical—not of their own person but of their colleagues. But they are all highly educated, highly competent and with often brilliant ideas. I think the British are also very well-disciplined. They're very different in style, but one can admire the British civil service. The United States is the same way—a lot of competent people. The ones you see are competent; whether there are others you don't see who are less competent I could not say. But I think in those diverse national experiences, the level of civil service is very good.

I think in the international civil services I have known, at the level of greatest competence, they are certainly up to the standards of the major national civil services. But there is a lot more variety and a lot more of what we used to call dead wood. How do you feel about it?

TGW: I would have said the same thing—that the best are equivalent to the best, but there are many more people who are mediocre and who survive for all of the reasons you have explained. And that is complicated, in addition, by differences in styles and cultures and languages and backgrounds. It is a more complicated exercise to start out with. You wrote also that in the ILO family, that there was a premium placed on conformity. I guess this is the issue we are talking about. Do you think that was more acute than in other parts of the UN? Is there ever a premium placed on non-conformity?

RC: No, but I think there may have been a greater tolerance of diversity in some of the other organizations. I think that continuous tradition from the pre-war perhaps solidified the idea of a central doctrine in the ILO. Some of the people who really represented that tradition very forcefully and influentially within the ILO made it very strong. I think in my experience that was not quite to the same degree the case in the other organizations that I have had some contact with—the United Nations, UNESCO, perhaps, to take two that I have perhaps had more contact with. I had a little bit with FAO, but not that much.

TGW: In even this limited exposure with these other institutions, to what extent does the good of the pieces overwhelm the good of the whole? That is, you have not used the term “turf consciousness,” but you have mentioned the ILO’s “sphere of influence.” To what extent does this explain much of the behavior within the UN system, in relationship to accepting or rejecting ideas, or accepting or rejecting technical assistance monies or anything else? To what extent does this loosely-connected, feudal arrangement work against the good of the whole?

RC: I think in the ILO case, there was a strong emphasis on its independence. This I am sure was a constraint to more open cooperation with other agencies and more concern for, let’s say, not allowing that UNESCO go ahead with training when it was the training of workers, or making sure that your competence in your turf was defended vis-à-vis these other organizations. Occasionally, when there was money to offer, this would be the case where you might find some cooperation with regard to the World Bank for example. The World Bank would put money into a project and say to the agencies they would cooperate in this project within a certain sphere that would be their competency. In that way, I think, you would get cooperation. But otherwise I think the consciousness was to defend your turf. You go in with this 1948 or 1949 view about the world, and then you come back a few years later thinking, “are we really interested in the

world or are we interested in defending our turf?” That becomes part of the unraveling of that spirit of idealism that was prominent at the beginning.

TGW: After the fact, you wrote that “my official role in the ILO had become an accessory to what I would soon call ‘hegemony.’” What did you mean by that?

RC: I wrote an article about “Labor and Hegemony,” and I guess this was at a point when I was beginning to take a certain intellectual distance from the set of thoughts and practices that I had grown to become part of in my work in the ILO, and to think of what role they are playing in the world. I could see that role as being the entrenchment of, in effect, global capitalism. This is where you may say the Marxian influence rears its head. It wasn’t entirely a question of Marx, perhaps, but it was a sense that the dominant forces had penetrated the international institutions, and in my case, particularly the ILO, so that they were not going to be able to be used effectively to counter those dominant influences. And if I were interested in this larger picture, then I was better off outside of it, at least to think through the aspects of the conflict and to think whether there was something outside those institutions that could be activated to become a more effective exponent of social equity—let’s put it that way.

TGW: If you were going to draw up a balance sheet for somebody who was interested in ideas and doing research, what are the plusses as well as the minuses? We’ve kind of spelled out the minuses of being at the Institute for Labor Studies. But what are the pluses there, versus the minuses, if you will, of being on the outside—in academia? Are there things you could do better at the Institute for Labor Studies than you could at—

RC: I suppose I would have had to say to myself that at the Institute for Labor Studies, with the concept of a body that was part of a world organization, but was conceived as being free to be critical, that the possibility of an influence ought to have been greater when you are

working within the institution to try to develop a sense of alternative—not even alternative policies, but at least the awareness of the possibility of alternative approaches. I guess at a certain point, I would reach the conclusion that that was not going to be effective and that the freedom of intellectual thought and writing outside might be a greater opportunity.

Now that was somebody who didn't know what it was like outside, and I realized, subsequently, that there are all kinds of constraints that affect the work of a university person. So, it was perhaps a little bit of idealistic imagination, just as going into the ILO in the first place represented a certain amount of idealistic imagination. But I don't regret it, and I think in effect that I probably have had more influence through my students than I have had with anybody in the ILO, or with any government representatives in the ILO. So I think probably the balance is, as far as my own experience, on the outside looking in.

TGW: You actually wrote that at fleeting moments of wanting to be a “gadfly” in the institution—I think was your term. But whether one could exercise intellectual freedom within this context really depended upon the director-general. Are there other things that would actually influence that? For instance, if there were independent funding, or if there were an assignment for four or five years and then you had to disappear, you had total independence. I'm thinking about the inspector-general who looks at finance. Would there be ways to stimulate the kind of freedom you were seeking within an international institution regardless of who was the director-general, or not? Or is this just an impossible assignment?

RC: I can only speak of my own experience there. I think that the level of independence depended upon my personal relationship with Morse, which in a sense then convinced me that this was not a very sound institutional posture. If it is dependent upon the relationship of two

individuals, it is not very strong. I certainly realized as soon as the director-generalship changed that I could never continue the way I had and it was time to get out.

TGW: Do you think that that would be less the case—I'm wondering whether the Cold War context changed a lot of things. Did it alter the possibilities of writing or speaking one's mind? Is there more room for maneuver now?

RC: Well, I think again that the factor of loose control that I mentioned with the UN budget is an important condition for freedom of thought within the United Nations. I see that there have been people who have worked in the United Nations, and who have been able to develop their thinking without that sense, perhaps, of severe constraints—at least for a period of time. My experience was a particular experience. I wouldn't like to make it a general rule. But there are other conditions that could allow for that degree of independence of thought, although probably only for limited periods of time. Maurice Bertrand, speaking of the inspector-general, now he's a case of somebody I found very interesting. I got to know him only after he retired. He sends me books that he writes every now and again and he picked up some of the things that I had written, which is what brought us together. There is a man with an independent point of view. We didn't always agree about everything, but I think we could agree that having that independent point of view is an important possibility.

TGW: Yes, he was part of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), right? I'm thinking also of this new position, which was filled by a person named Paschke, for five years, which was to look at mismanagement and abuse of funds and these kinds of things and to have someone who was in some ways not beholden to the institution, had a fixed term. There was no question of staying on or not staying on. During that period of time, you would have the freedom to pursue your writ or your mandate, and afterwards you would disappear.

RC: This is a condition I never have experienced, but it sounds good. This was to look at the internal management, and I think if you are going to do that then that seems like the only way to do it honestly.

TGW: What is your impression of the other—quasi, I suppose—-independent units doing research within the UN? In no particular, we have already spoken about the Institute for Labor Studies. But you mentioned briefly the Research Institute for Social Development; UNITAR (the UN Institute for Technology and Research), which had a certain profile and has now disappeared; the UN University (UNU), which you have had something to do with; and, I suppose, WIDER (World Institute for Development Economics Research), as one of the better components—

RC: I think it is probably the better example, yes. I don't know. The UN University is a strange body. I didn't have much experience with it on site, in Tokyo. But I think it had rather severe constraints from a budgetary point-of-view, because the Japanese government gave them a building and then told them they would have to pay for its maintenance. And you got all sorts of strange things, like the rector having an apartment on the top floor, that meant they had to keep the elevators running on a 24-hour basis. All of this was eating up a large part of the budget, and by the time they finished maintaining the building there wasn't really much left for programs. They would have to raise money for programs independently. It seems to me that it's a kind of good idea, but one that wasn't really worked out fully. Furthermore, it was definitely subject to political intervention and influence. This is why you could start a project, and you might even complete a project—but you wouldn't necessarily continue a project. The former vice rector, Mushakoji, was a very interesting man with a very creative mind. I think he launched a number of projects that were then regarded as being too critical. And although he had

a very respectable retirement, his projects were more or less closed down and he was eased out of that function.

So, I was definitely aware that there were political limits to what could be done at the UNU. However, I think WIDER seemed to be much more free. I don't know whether it was budget, or what it was. But they seemed to be able to carry on with a greater degree of freedom. So, one has always to look somewhat skeptically at all of these institutions and their funding arrangements and the control arrangements that are set up for them. In the case of the institute at the ILO, the original concept was that it would be funded by an endowment. And the French government gave a major contribution to launch that endowment and a few other governments came along afterwards—but not very many. So, the endowment never really funded the relatively modest operations and they were dependent on the ILO budget for some sort of continuing annual support. The U.S. government was adamantly opposed to a foundation, to an endowment fund. Again, there the question of political control was important. I talked to people in Washington about it. One of the most interesting conversations I had at that time was with Jay Lovestone. I thought that I had better get in touch with some of the people who were influential on the labor and foreign policy side, so I talked to Jay Lovestone. It was really to see what he was like because I had heard so much about him, not that I expected him to give us any money. But, it was a fascinating conversation for an afternoon—it was all about the coup in Indonesia which killed about a half a million people. But from his point of view, it took Indonesia out of the communist sphere. So there was again a moment, not of enlightenment, because I didn't expect it would be different—but it was a confirmation if you like.

TGW: In the midst of your tenure in Geneva, you took a year off, as you mentioned earlier, in 1964 to go to the Graduate Institute. What led you to do this?

RC: I think that was the time I had written the article called “The Executive Head,” which was one of the things that gave me the reputation for being a controversial person. A lot of people in the ILO context resented that article. I don’t know quite how they would articulate their resentment, but the whole idea of dealing with it as a sort of political situation rather than a purely bureaucratic institutional role—I think that offended some people. And there were instances in the article that could arouse some objections. From the French side, there was a big issue for Harold Butler [pre-World War II Director of ILO] over the appointment of a director to the ILO’s Paris office. It was something that was absolutely miniscule in terms of world importance, but it went up to the highest levels of the French government to assert their right to appoint this person. It turned out to be somebody who became very involved with the Vichy regime. This was the kind of thing that people could say, “Why is he writing about that? Why is he digging up these things that seem to reflect upon our motives?” So there were a lot of people who had this objection.

Now, that really got me also into the context of this group of American scholars who were interested in analyzing what goes on in international organizations. This is the Innis Claude, Ernie Haas, Jake group. So I was sort of moving into that sphere intellectually, if you like. And it became convenient for me to take a leave of absence, and Morse was very supportive of that, to become a professor for a year and give a course on international organization and another course about labor and international politics. And it sort of took me out of the day-to-day ILO set of concerns and enabled me to think more broadly about international organization. The Carnegie Endowment had a group functioning at that time in Geneva under John Goormatigh, and they involved me in some of their meetings and I met another group of people who were interesting—Pierre Gerbet, for example. It was Gerbet who asked me to do a paper about

decision-making in the ILO for a conference that he was organizing. That became the model for the book that Jake and I wrote, *The Anatomy of Influence*. I was beginning to think and work in that context during that year, and that was a kind of intellectual relief for me.

TGW: You described this article as a “sacrilege.” Was it what you said, or how you said it, or your right to say it that rubbed people—

RC: It was a combination of all of those things. If Jenks had been the director-general, he would never have allowed that to be published. He obviously resented the fact that I had published it. Morse, of course, was prepared to agree to anything. He had no idea of having a kind of restrictive attitude towards what I would write in my own personal capacity. In fact, some people thought it was quite interesting and instructive. I think even the fellow who was then the head of the GATT, Windham White, talked to me about it and said it was a very interesting article. It confirmed a lot of the observations that he had made from his own experience. So, it wasn't regarded as being abusive in any sense. But I think some people resented the whole idea that you could make a political analysis of this role in an international institution. It was just offensive to them that that had been done.

TGW: The notion of swimming against the tide, or calling into question shibboleths, which is, if I understood it correctly, the original notion of the institute—it seems to me that it would be sensible almost to institutionalize that within virtually any inter-governmental institution to keep the place on its toes. Would you agree?

RC: Yes, that was my idea, really. I think the institute in origin was my idea. I talked with Morse about it, and obviously I was too young or not of sufficient status within the organization to become the director of it at the beginning. So, we got other people to do it. We got Milton Gregg, who was a former minister of labor from Canada, to come and write the report

that would become the basis for founding the institute. We didn't need a report, except for the reason that it is useful to have this kind of build-up. This is bureaucratic procedure, if you like. In order to start something, you don't just go and start it. You have to demonstrate a need for it, and get some support from outside for it and so forth. So, Milton Gregg performed that role and then we brought in the Australian fellow, but that didn't work because he didn't really have the same concept of it. So, his tenure was short-lived. Hilary Marquand, I think, more or less grasped the idea and at the same time I was still close enough to it that I was part of the thinking of it in those early days. But definitely that was the concept—that you have something within the organization that opens the possibility for reflective self-criticism.

It seemed to me that institutionally that is not a bad idea. And that was what it was for. Morse understood it, I think partly because he was the outsider who had come into the ILO—although he had been there for about 20 years. But he still was somebody who had come in from the outside and was constantly under pressure from this traditionalist faction within the organization and realized that, in fact, a lot of the initiatives he had taken had to come from outside. And something like that would be institutionally useful.

TGW: There was one point in something that you have written—you said you saw a contradiction or a clash between tripartism and universality. What exactly did you mean? You took the twist that it was easier to move into technical assistance and technical services in order to overcome this contradiction.

RC: Well, this was part of the Cold War, really. There was a big issue for a number of years in the 1950s pitting the concept of tripartism against the concept of universality. The basis of that was, could the Soviet Union become a legitimate member of the ILO when they didn't have trade unions and employer organizations that were independent of the party state? That

was the real issue behind these words that were the focus of the issue. All kinds of arrangements were concocted to try to overcome that, mostly in a procedural way. There was something called the Ago Committee. Ago was an international law specialist from Italy who was a member of the governing body. And he was put in charge of a committee to try to bridge that gap as to how could Soviet representatives be elected to the workers' group and the employers' group when it was clear that the workers' group and the employers' group were not going to elect them. I couldn't possibly re-articulate to you the nature of the intricacies of how this was attempted. But that was one of the continuing issues for a number of years, which finally seemed to be overcome—God knows how, but it was—when the Soviet Union became more or less accepted as a member in the ILO, but only reluctantly accepted. And the issue was broader in the notion that the tripartite concept was a concept of social structure of a country, which corresponded to some countries but certainly not to all countries, or even to the majority of countries after the independence movement. So, how could you be universal and at the same time enforce this condition of membership of being tripartite? There had to be a lot of compromises along the way.

TGW: It really is sort of nineteenth century western trade unionism imposed on a structure of international institutions.

RC: Yes.

TGW: To the extent that one may groom for the Soviet Union and lots of other countries that more resemble the Soviet Union than any Western country with a trade union movement, wouldn't this actually mean that the ILO was not advocating tripartism or not reproducing global capitalism, but looking for an alternative?

RC: I think it was constantly fudging the issue. The issue came down squarely against the Soviet Union, but if you were thinking in terms of—I hate to use the word “objective”—but nevertheless of the realities of the world, you could make the same case about Mexico. There were no independent trade unions. They were all part of the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*). Employers were also allied to the PRI. The difference was that international capital would work with Mexico, and they couldn't work with the Soviet Union. I think that is really the reality of it. It was what the Western world could get along with, in terms of penetrating their economies and having relationships with them. They could ignore a lot of things in one-party states, but they could not ignore, or were not prepared to ignore, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries.

TGW: I am interested in this Ago Committee. Clearly there was dissonance within the institution itself. You bring in someone from western trade unions, from a western country, with this set of lenses to come up with a proposal. What happened in the bureaucracy itself while this report was being formulated, and while it was then subsequently being distributed and discussed? How did bits and pieces of the bureaucracy get mobilized? Were they mainly along national lines, that African staff members supported one part and the Soviets joined hands? Or was there anything overriding this? Were there any common interests in the institution?

RC: I think that the common interest, so far as it was articulated, was the director-general's interest in accommodating the situation, overcoming the negative attitude towards the Soviet Union. But that had to be done with the recognition of the political realities of the firm opposition of the workers and employers to electing Soviet members to their group, and to their opposition to the credentials of these members at the conference. I would say that the bureaucracy was hoping for some resolution of the issue in support of the efforts of Ago and his

committee. There wasn't any opposition that I am aware of within the office that was holding out for tripartism exclusivity against the recognition of the Soviet right to full participation in the organization. But the problem was how to achieve that, and that was not an easy question to answer.

Now the ILO has two institutionalized sections within it, one for relations with employers and one for relations with workers. They are staffed by people who come, on the one hand from the trade union movement and on the other from the employers' organizations. Although they are ILO officials, their allegiance is to the ILO but they are there because they have good contacts with these other organizations. And I think both of them would be sensitive to the opposition of their groups, but at the same time trying to work this out. Not sort of digging in their heels in firm opposition to the whole idea, just understanding why their members were opposed to it and at the same time hopeful that something could be worked out on a consensual basis.

TGW: As part of this process, one thinks about an idea taking an institutional form. We have talked about separate institutions, but another way that ideas take form is when within an institution itself a new idea leads to a new unit or a special team, or what have you, when an idea gets embedded. One of the things the project will try to figure out is what's the relative value of an idea taking separate institutional form versus becoming "mainstreamed" throughout the institution. That is, is one a better indication that an idea has made it and become successful? That is, is it better that we have a separate UNEP (UN Environmental Programme)? Is that an indication that we are taking the environment seriously? Or is it better that one has an environmental ministry? On the other hand, is it just better that the World Bank occasionally

takes the environment seriously? So, on balance, how do you evaluate an idea once it penetrates an institution?

RC: I guess the reason why new institutions are created is that those people who feel that the new idea is important are doubtful that they are going to be able to put it into action through the existing institutions. It is the rigidity of existing institutions that leads to the idea that if you want to start something new, you have to create another institution. Then the hope of some people would be that by creating another institution, you can inject some part of that idea into the existing institutions—that they should play along with it. And they should be influenced by its existence and take account of it in their programs and work out collaborative relationships and so forth, which is sort of an ideal formula. But it also runs up against the problem I mentioned with the ILO, of defending your turf.

So, I don't see that one solution is the right one and the other solution is the wrong one. I think probably you wouldn't get very far with the environment without making a big splash of a new institution, and without having a summit conference in Brazil. In fact, these summit conferences I think have perhaps taken the place in some way of setting up new institutions, by trying to mobilize thinking and opinion and injecting it into the existing institutions. So I'm not sure. Maybe the UNEPs are one phase of the growth of the system that is no longer a major phase. I think that the real thrust now comes from the World Trade Organization and what remains of the Bretton Woods. That's where the power seems to lie, and the question of what the other institutions do is really conditional upon how far they fit into that picture. That's why the ILO is sort of marginalized at present time.

TGW: Even though employment has, if anything, become a bigger issue that it was?

RC: It has, but I don't think the ILO is in the leadership for dealing with employment at the present time. Even in the European Union (EU) employment is a big thing, but it takes second-place to the Euro and the Maastricht agreement. It would be a nice thing to follow along if it were possible.

TGW: We are almost to the end of our two hour tape.

TGW: This is Tape Number 4, Tom Weiss interviewing Bob Cox in Toronto on the 26th of August. There were a couple of things, in looking over our notes, to follow up. At the outset yesterday, in talking about an ability of an international official to move back and forth, and about the importance, in your own background, of moving between cultures, how would that actually apply to the present debate over universality in human rights versus cultural relativism? Lawyers, of course, would like to apply standards across the board rather routinely, and life is a little more complicated than that. But how would you approach that issue?

RC: Yes, that is a difficult one, but a necessary one. I am trying to approach it laterally through my interest in civilizations, which I would say means to me the juxtaposition of two visions of the future world. One of them would be what I call a "one-civilization world," which would mean in effect the extension of western civilization—Euro-American, and increasingly American, rather than Euro—to the whole globe. That would come about through absorption into the same economic system, and through the spread of the media culture, popular culture, across the world. And other civilizations of the past might be granted a sort of folklore-istic status, national costumes and celebrations and so forth, but basically everything would be encompassed within that "one civilization" concept.

Juxtaposed against that is the notion of a pluralistic world, in which there would be more than one civilization and the problem would be some degree of compatibility or coexistence with

a recognition of difference in some values, and yet an attempt to achieve some degree of “supra-intersubjectivity.” That was in my piece about Ibn Khaldun.¹ In other words, there are certain things that could be recognized as common necessities for the continued coexistence, in a peaceful manner, in this world of differences. And they might be reduced to a fairly simple list of things. One of them would be maintenance of the biosphere, on which all forms of life and all forms of civilization would ultimately depend. But you could go on from that to an attempt to at least achieve the recognition that it is important that conflict be settled in a non-violent way, and particularly non-violent in the use of weapons of mass destruction. So you could begin to sort of work out a set of basic conditions for the existence of a pluralistic world.

I think the notion of human rights would arise within that concept. There would be some sort of general recognition of basic human rights, but they would not go into all of the details that might be reflected in the diversity of civilizations. My view about human rights is that they are not so much something which on the global level can be enforced by the proclamation of a legal norm, but that they are something that arises out of conflicts within particular societies that establish for themselves their own sense of rights. There may be some elements of diversity and cultural relativity that arises there. But the attempt to say in one society that we have achieved the proper definition of human rights, and that is universally valid, would mean an imposition of that point of view on other societies that might be working their own way towards a somewhat different notion of priorities in human rights—priorities between individualism and community—which could equally claim certain rights. And in certain civilizations, the balance might be on one side or might be on the other.

¹ “Towards a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun” in *Governance Without Government: Order & Change in World Politics*, James H. Rosenou & Ernst-Otto Czempiel (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

To proclaim that the individual is the ultimate value would conflict with, perhaps, the historical development of other societies and represent the subordination of them to this one-civilization concept. Which is, again, going back to some of our discussion at dinner yesterday, why I see the notion of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) as the underpinning of neo-liberal globalization, to be a threat of the imposition of the one-civilization concept. It is a constraint upon the development of that pluralistic idea. So I see the human rights problem as within that context. In other words, an attempt to see whether, from let's say a western position, one should not attempt to think oneself into the mental processes of other cultures and to see whether, perhaps, a somewhat different concept of human rights might be valid in its own terms. Of course one can take that view to extremes and, I think, a lot of the problem about it has been the well-founded suspicion that political leaders who have been proclaiming things like "Asian values," are proclaiming them as a kind of screen for the imposition of authoritarian rule in certain countries. But I think the solution to that is not the imposition by the West upon them of values, but the encouragement of the struggles within those civilizations to achieve their own success in terms of the establishment of a set of human rights.

We have had that in a small way in Canada with the aboriginal peoples. We have, thanks to Trudeau, a sort of charter of rights in the constitution which was a kind of introduction of something that was quite foreign to the British legal tradition, but which now forms part of the constitution of Canada. And within some of the aboriginal communities, the position of women has been a critical issue. And some of the women within the aboriginal communities have said, "Well, let us appeal to the Canadian charter of rights to establish our rights within the indigenous communities." And others have said, "No, let us give priority to the independence of our communities and achieve our rights by struggle within those communities." It is difficult to say

one is right, the other is wrong. But you can see that there are two approaches to the problem of rights there. And I would say that is a microcosm of the issues on the global scale.

TGW: Interestingly, in the project to date we seem to be saying that ideas matter in a couple of ways. Yesterday we talked a lot about ideas being important for their impact on institutions once they become embedded. We also talked a lot about different kinds of coalitions being able to form—new and different groups coming together. And your answer here seems to confirm our hunch that ideas matter in two other really important ways. One is that they help in defining identities, and they help in redefining this terrible national interest—or interest in general. But they also, at least for me, are quite critical when you have a clash between ideas—as you said, the individual and the community. You have to come down on one side or another. It is impossible, except in UN resolutions where you can draft around this. You have to come down on one side or another.

But your answer also leads me to ask whether or not, after all is said and done, perhaps the most revolutionary idea we have seen in the last fifty years may not have been human rights, certainly as it comes into contact with national sovereignty.

RC: You are saying that may be *the* critical issue.

TGW: The cutting edge.

RC: I will go back to another level of discussion, if you like. I have always, fairly consistently at least in the last four decades, thought of myself as an historical materialist. But that I see not as an economic determinist. In other words, the base/superstructure concept seems to me a false metaphor, that there is an economic base and that all ideas and all of the superstructure of institutions are determined by that economic base. My notion of historical materialism is that there is a connection between the sets of ideas and institutions, and the

material conditions of existence, which include the way society is organized and so forth—not just material in the common garden sense. So that it is possible that somewhat different sets of ideas and institutions could fit with similar material conditions. Those material conditions don't determine the nature, but there has to be a compatibility, there has to be a fit. In other words, the ideas enable people to interpret the material world in which they live in a way that seems realistic to them—that there is no hiatus between the ideas and the material conditions. I think, in that sense, that the development of human rights has some relationship to the changing nature of material conditions. You emerge out of a society that is entirely rural, where certain attitudes towards life and towards other people may conform to the nature of a rural society. When you move into an industrial society where there is much more mobility, where the nature of the technology and the relationship between people and technology is different, you will find that some of the ideas that fitted in a rural society no longer fit. So there is a scope there for the development of different concepts of human relationships, and therefore a different sense of the values of what you define then as human rights—rights not being something that are universal in time and space, but rights being something that represent an acceptable, desirable relationship amongst people in the material world in which they live.

This is very Vichian [referring to Grambattista Vico]. This is the sort of notion that there is no uniform, fundamental human nature, but human nature is a continuing creation of history. And this creation of history is something that happens in terms of people adjusting to the changing nature of the material world in which they live—adjustments through conflicts among rival forces in that material world. And your values become derived from that historical experience. Therefore, they are not uniform throughout history and not necessarily uniform across space, in terms of different societies. In other words, that is the sort of context in which I

think about human rights. And when you are thinking at the international level, one would hope that in a peaceful world it would be necessary that people live in compatibility with each other and, therefore, not with violence towards each other. What promotes that compatibility one can define as the body of rights that are effective in that particular historical situation.

TGW: Yesterday, you used the term “pessimism” on several occasions to describe your attitude. However, the response this morning to these points of contact between or among civilizations strikes me as peculiarly optimistic, at least in relationship to someone like Sam Huntington, who also talks about points of contact among civilization but uses—

RC: Clash. Yes.

TGW: Do you see more potential for harmony?

RC: I think Gramsci’s phrase, which I think he borrowed from someone else [Romain Rolland], was “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.” In other words, one’s analysis of the situation doesn’t lead one to a kind of utopian vision of the future. But it does lead one to the possibility of directing action towards an improvement of the situation in which the world lives, or we in a particular society live. Why I say “pessimism” is because I am not sure that that will happen. In fact, it seems to me that there is a race between the magnitude of the dangers and the possibilities of effectively overcoming them and that maybe the latter side is losing ground.

I gave a lecture last December in Manchester about civilizations. The questions raised after that were really the question, “What can be done about it? What are the possibilities of the mutual understanding among civilizations that could lead to a compatible, pluralistic world?” I didn’t have very much of an effective answer. The sort of answer I think the questioners were looking for was in the further question, “Are the international organizations the route?” My quick answer was, “No, probably not.” Because I think the international organizations—my

experience in secretariats of international organizations—is that there are a few individuals there who have that capacity of inserting themselves into the mentality of other people, but by and large the great mass don't think that way. They think either in terms of the rules and procedures of the organization, or in terms of the attitudes that they were socialized to through their own national and educational backgrounds.

Something else is needed. Thinking further about that, as to where can one look, I would say that there is an increasing number of people in a variety of occupations in the world today who, by the nature of their activities, are exposed to other civilizations and other patterns of thought. And some of them may recognize that that is the situation they are in and not just cling to the things that they have been educated to but curious enough to ask why it is that other people think differently and begin to develop that. So you can find some people in the international secretariats, some people in the labor movement, perhaps even some business people, people in some of the aid organizations who have been working in different countries, but I don't think there is a sort of institutional formula that says, "well, this is where we look for them."

What you need, to me, is some kind of an historical movement. Thinking backwards, I guess you could think of the monastic movement in the middle ages as the attracting into a movement of people from a variety of backgrounds and different social levels who managed to think through the notion of Christendom as a comprehensive set of ideas and norms that overlaid the various national and local experiences. But even when you think of that, that then takes the form of a one-civilization movement and it seems to me what is needed now is the notion of a movement like that, but a movement that is based on a recognition of difference. That is very hard to see exactly where it is coming from. But, maybe in so far as the idea of that is spread and understood, there is some possibility of something emerging out of it. The institutions would

follow, rather than be defined as a pre-condition. That could lead me to my pessimism, because I am very doubtful that that is going to happen.

TGW: It certainly wasn't Gramsci, but I was told that the pessimist is actually just an optimist with information. So, maybe that's the difference between intellectual—

RC: Yes, it could be. Sorel defined his position as pessimism, but that was in the sense that you could see the world as a sort of set of forces. And if the world was to be changed, you couldn't do it bit-by-bit; you had to attack that sort of concentrated set of forces and imagine something that would effectively counteract them. That's where the myth comes in. There's a myth of the future society, which is different from a utopia, because a utopia is a plan, and you could do it piecemeal.

TGW: I was interested in all of the people you identified as possible candidates for your universal foreigner status—corporate folks, aid folks, international civil servants, or monks. This is a fairly rarified and elite group. My sense is that in some of your other writings you were talking about a more widespread affection for these ideas at the grassroots.

RC: Well, this is where, again, another Gramscian notion of the organic intellectual comes in. I think the organic intellectual is someone who is very close to the bases of society, the popular groups. The organic intellectual is not an elitist in that sense. He does not aspire to live an elite life, but to live the life of those grassroots elements of society with which he can identify, but at the same time to translate the aims and aspirations of those groups into something that can be joined with those of other groups. Therefore, the organic intellectuals themselves—if I can identify those particular sources from which they might come—would not be people acting in a kind of elite stratosphere, but would be of their nature people who are connected with the bases of society, the variety of different bases of society. But they would have the experience to

know that there are other people, they would meet other organic intellectuals who are the intellectual expression of different groups, but because of their nature as organic intellectuals, they would have some means of communication and understanding amongst each other. You cannot really expect that understanding to develop automatically at the lower level, because people are not in contact. You have to have people who have those contacts and that experience, but at the same time keep their connections and are able to express in a valid way the aspirations of the groups from which they come.

All of that becomes very abstract. As I say, it is very difficult to identify it in institutional terms. You cannot say "this group," because you may find a group but you will only find a handful of people who correspond to your sort of notion of the organic intellectual in that group. And the fact that they belong to the group doesn't mean that they are valid representatives in that sense.

TGW: In particular over the last ten or twenty years, what contribution do you see to the world of ideas coming from NGOs? Civil society is much larger, but certainly within the context of intergovernmental institutions, what impact has this burgeoning group of nongovernmental institutions had on the way ideas are framed, or are supported?

RC: I think it is an important area to look to, but I here again feel that it is very easy to idealize NGOs. The notion of civil society is a larger one, and as I would understand it now represents the sort of self-consciousness of social groups in terms of an awareness of their own position in their own society, and their conflict or compatibility with other groups. And out of that awareness there come various movements, and these movements are maybe sometimes used or manipulated by politicians at another level. Some of these movements are movements of generosity, in the sense of aspiring to social equity and compatibility and peaceful relationships.

And some of them are xenophobic and racist and just antagonistic towards other social groups. So, civil society covers all of these things, and as I would prefer to say, it's a "terrain of conflict," rather than something that one ought to think of as a good thing in itself. It is a necessary thing in terms of finding a base for legitimate political authority, whether it is the local level, the national level, or the international level. So it is an essential thing, and the vacuum of civil society, the lack of civil society, means that there is very little basis for that. That is why I think of the rather sad case in contemporary Russia. You have had a situation where civil society has been suppressed for a long time, has been absorbed into a political party that no longer exists in the same way. And with that gone, you don't have anything left. So, what you have are mafia organizations and political racketeering and no legitimacy in any real sense. So, I think civil society is an essential condition for stable politics. But it is not in and of itself the answer for stable politics, because the struggle within civil society has to proceed to the point where at least those forces that are in favor of social equity and peaceful relationships have some predominance and some form of continuing legitimacy can be derived out of it.

I would think, from the point of view of political studies, the study of civil society becomes extremely important. From the point of view of international institutions, a concern with the civil society basis of international authority becomes extremely important. Now that can lead you to say, "well, let's look at the NGOs because they are there." They are organized and they claim to represent civil society. But I think one has to look at it critically and say that there are some bases of valid support, but there are others that in a way distort the base. Some NGOs are formed as a result of the fact that they have better financing. Some, in the trade union movement for example, trade union organizations that are in countries where they are well-endowed are able to try to create their clones in other countries. But these are never valid trade

unions—they are something else. So you have to look critically at the nature of these organizations that proclaim themselves as representative of civil societies. And try to find ways of encouraging more authentic organizations that are more validly representative of the people they claim to represent.

TGW: I certainly would not disagree, because in areas that I have studied after wars, the civil society that exists often is a creation of the bilateral donor community, the outsider NGO donors, or the UN system. They create their own—

RC: Generates its own organizations that then are given representative status. You get a kind of fictitious base of social support.

TGW: But, it actually was more a design question, of trying to bring in new ideas or bring in alternatives views. It strikes me that there are a lot of problems with the UN Charter, but the inclusion from the outset of Article 71 was quite far-sighted, the idea that even within a state-organized intergovernmental organization you could make room for views from NGOs. My sense is that the last two Secretaries-General, in particular, also have been trying to make room for corporate views, which creates perhaps a different set of problems. But this is, listening to you, a very forward-looking idea at the outset. And there are no miracle solutions. But I personally would view this as a sensible way to try to at least broaden the dialogue. Is that correct?

RC: Yes, with qualifications. To go back to the concept of civil society, if you trace it to [Georg] Hegel or Adam Smith, civil society for them was contrasted with political society. Political society was supposed to embody the general interest through law. And civil society was the constellation of particular interests, which in practice in their time meant the bourgeoisie and capitalism. So civil society could then historically be identified with the growth and importance

of capitalism as distinct from the state. Now, I think, it has a very different meaning today. The state and capitalism have become so close, and so interactive, that civil society in the common usage today means the self-consciousness of social groups as distinct from both capital and the state. Now, you mentioned the corporate interests, and this raises the question again of where the United Nations stands on these issues. It is very easy for the United Nations, in introducing more access to corporations, to mirror that development of capital plus state dominance over society. Whereas the concept of civil society, I think, puts the emphasis much more on organizations and groups and social consciousness which is distinct from those two elements. So I see them as in opposition, rather than complementary, when you speak of the introduction of corporate interests.

I have not followed the thing very closely, but it seems to me that Kofi Annan, for example, has encouraged consultative groups of corporations with the United Nations. It seems to me that that is moving in the direction of the Bretton Woods and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations following into that area of being the institutions that embody that alliance of state and capital.

TGW: And, in fact, some NGOs have basically used the term “blue wash” to describe these overtures. In particular, the corporate codes of conduct established to foster sustainability, and the Geneva conference in June, in which the OECD, the World Bank group, the IMF, and the UN published a document, in many ways suggests to me the importance of UN ideas. All of a sudden the OECD, the World Bank group, and the IMF sort of got UN religion, at least rhetorically. The document is about the elimination of poverty, about girls’ having access to schooling, about clean water—the entire litany of *Human Development Report* ideas, seemingly consumed by these organizations. For the NGOs involved, if the IMF, the World Bank, and the

OECD like it, there must be a problem. So, there was almost a rejection out of hand, that somehow this was a charade.

RC: I think when you are speaking of the ideas coming from civil society, the phenomena that I have noted but have not really been in any way involved with is that whenever you have these summit meetings now you have a counter-summit meeting that takes place in the same city. Even with the World Economic Forum in Davos, now you have a counter-forum that is coming together with people like Samir Amin and that organization in France called ATTAC, that is promoting the tax on fund transfers and so forth. You had it in a more violent form in Seattle and in Washington, which was less concerned with ideas as with making a display of protest. But there are these organizations that are beginning to link together to develop a counter set of ideas to those of the IMF and the World Trade Organization. So in that sense there is a movement within civil society that is trying to envisage an alternative. It is a question of who is listening, and what gathering strength is present in those movements.

TGW: Actually, you mentioned the topic that I wanted to come to, which is global conferences organized by the UN, beginning with Stockholm and going through, I suppose, Geneva, which was a follow-up to the Copenhagen summit. As you look back over the last twenty-five years, how important have these been in terms of generating ideas? Some people dismiss them as “jamborees” for elites, and others see them as important moments flagging big issues. How do you look at them?

RC: I am in no position to evaluate what sort of impact they may have had, but I think that firstly the initiatives through the United Nations for convening these conferences has a mobilizing effect. And they do bring together a number of people—as you say, often elite groups within a particular sphere. But at the same time, they stimulate others who may not be on

the invitation list to present their views in some ways. I think even in Río, for the environment and development summit, there was a variety of organizations. I remember news reports about some of the NGOs with business suits and cells phones, and others with sandals and jeans. There were the elite groups, and there were the more sort of grassroots groups, who themselves may have been elite to a certain degree also in relation to the people they were claiming to represent. But you did have very different levels of groups that were involved, some ready to be, if you like, coopted and included into the official program, and others who were there largely to mark their difference from and suspicion of the more official program.

I think some of those things have been taking a more organized form. It seems the internet has been helpful in helping them to work together and to learn to connect with each other. So there is some development of a kind of alternative pattern of thinking. To what degree it has produced a kind of coherent alternative is, I guess, questionable. But, nevertheless, the direction of the movement is there and the possibility of contacts among people across space is there. So, I would say on the whole that it is a positive trend. Even if the UN initiative results in giving a kind of priority or momentum to the more official, more status quo-oriented interests, it does serve as a kind of mobilizing force for the more contrary interests.

TGW: What about research, or policy thinking, that goes around in relation to these conferences, either officially commissioned or not? Every time there is such a conference, it is a kind of hook on which each institution of the system is obliged to put forward its views on women, or the environment, or habitat, or lord knows what. Some of these are real stretches, I would agree. But on institutions that are centrally implicated in an issue area that was discussed, wouldn't you say that are a gimmick, perhaps, to get institutions to do the kinds of research that they might otherwise not have done?

RC: Probably. I think, going back to the Rio Conference, I used to be in a group here called Science for Peace. A few people at the University of Toronto were particularly active in that, and it stretched out to members of the academic community in this area as well. I remember when that Rio conference came about, then there were one or two people who would get together and write a report that they would transmit through the federal government offices related to that. So they would have a sort of voice there. Now, whether that had any impact on the proceedings or had any influence in changing the thoughts of people in the conference, or at the international level, I have absolutely no idea. But I think it did have a stimulus for people locally to begin to think of where they stood on these issues and to begin to get together to think through what sort of a view they would have about policy that would be acceptable for the goals that they would see as being a sustainable ecology. The papers were really quite radical in their thinking. Now, as I say, I don't think those papers had an impact on the decisions taken at the conference immediately, but they did initiate a stream of thinking that was then followed up with further papers that these people wrote in terms of analyzing the effects of the Río conference. I think they did stimulate the process of development of ideas within, to use the broad term, civil society, which was a permanent acquisition, and could become a sort of base for thinking more coherently about future policy. So, the conference itself was a stimulus to a process that went on after the conference.

TGW: It seems to me, and we might even stay with this one issue—the biosphere—that you see as either mobilizing people, or the central threat for the future. Certainly, as I think back over this period, the way the issue was framed by Rachel Carson or Paul Ehrlich in the late 1960s or early 1970s, it was really a western notion of conserving resources. And that was really, I think, the motivation for pushing Stockholm. But in order to get to Stockholm, there

was a huge disparity of views, including that there was no problem or the problem was poverty, not deterioration of the environment. It seems to me that, through this process, everyone's ideas about the nature of the biosphere and the human environment have changed.

RC: One reason why I see it as a key central issue is that I see all of the issues as being interrelated. If you want to take the ultimate, holistic approach to the world, then the biosphere becomes your point of departure. It has a lot of implications. I think one of the implications that I have just been beginning to think about is the effect of monotheism. Monotheism being a way of thinking that separates man from nature, conceived nature as something that was given by God for the use of man, rather than seeing man as part of nature. And I think this notion of, sometimes called "deep ecology" now, of the interdependency of all forms of life and life-sustaining substances becomes a sort of beginning point that leads out to social cleavage, poverty, all of the issues that ultimately link into that. But this is the central point of departure for thinking about the whole.

TGW: One of the notions in the political science literature comes up, linked to conferences—that is technical experts, epistemic communities, people who know more about the issue than other people. Does this notion make sense in both a technical way, but also in a political way? Are these conference a way to ensure that at least some of the knowledge from these experts gets put before a large community?

RC: I don't know how it works in practice. I think if you just address it on the level of epistemology, then I think part of my objection to monotheism is also paralleled by an objection to positivism—in other words, the notion that you can separate knowledge into different spheres and keep them separate. I think you have to separate them in order to perform certain analytic tasks, but in doing that you have to realize that they are all inter-active. I think things are

beginning to be written now about the notion of complexity that are very important to consider in regard to going too far in the direction of specialist conferences and specialist groupings. I think that, in many of the fields of science, this notion of complexity seems to be making some headway. Perhaps cybernetics is one field that tends to draw together people from biology and physics and so forth. The two would be thought of as being separate, or even, in the case of physics, as being this paradigm for knowledge. Yet, now I think the notion that there is a lot of uncertainty, indeterminism, is becoming more current in the fields of physics and biology. It is in the small fields that you can become very precise and definitive in your statements, but as soon as you get into the larger areas, they become much more relative and indeterminate. That sort of concept is important to keep in mind in dealing with your epistemic communities as not people who cut themselves off from other batches of knowledge and just working on their own, but people who may be working on their own as a way of analytically achieving certain results, but at the same time having the awareness that they have got to think in terms of the whole in their relationship to other branches of knowledge as well.

TGW: As part of the process of generating ideas, as we also look back over the last twenty-five or thirty years, one of the devices that's been used is independent commissions—eminent or not-so-eminent people sitting down and flagging an issue. You wrote a piece about the Pearson report. I think that actually was the first of these, followed by Brandt, Palme, Brundtland, and on and on. Do you see these as, once again, perhaps gimmicks, but a way to raise consciousness about ideas that were relatively unknown or needed different kinds of publicity?

RC: Yes, but I think of them as perhaps similar to what we were talking about regarding the role of management consultants the other day. You don't ask a management consultant to

come and tell you what to do; you know what you want to do, you ask them to come in and give a sort of legitimacy to doing what you already decided to do. I think these groups have that function. They can focus attention on a set of ideas or problems that you want to give more display to in terms of the public opinion and in terms of the opinion of the decision-makers that you are dealing with. In that sense, they are a useful political device.

TGW: But in terms of ideas, I was just recalling the other day that the first sentence of the Pearson report talks about the growing number of gaps across the planet. We somehow seem to have forgotten this reality until the last five years, when national statistics or global statistics are astounding in terms of the growing differential. It seems to me that even in that small respect, way back then there was a notion on the table that was ahead of its time.

RC: I think it had a political importance at the time, of trying to create an opinion amongst decision-makers and governments that it was important in the general interest to devote certain resources toward raising the standards of economic performance and social equity in the less developed countries. It had that impact, I think. Of course, now you can go back and find this idea about the gap being even more true today than it was then. So you could say, “well, maybe it didn’t have any effect.” But I think probably its political impact at the time raised awareness about the gap in social conditions. Rather than thinking about what the Pearson report said and whether it was right or whether it was wrong in terms of today, you could mobilize another group if you had a consensus behind the idea of dealing with this—which I don’t think you have now. I think the consensus now is that the market will deal with everything. But if there were such a consensus about the importance of dealing with the “gap,” then you might have a group that would be brought together to try to create a new shift of opinion towards a different set of priorities in public policy.

TGW: Also, it seems to me that perhaps these commission reports are a little bit like reading literature of a particular period. You see preoccupations, and then if you see another one, there definitely is a change between the first and the latter. I, for one, saw the Global Governance Commission—chaired by [Ingvar] Carlsson and [Shridath] Ramphal—as being extraordinarily interesting. A bunch of former government and intergovernmental officials devotes about a third of its report to civil society, the role of business and the market, and the importance of involving other people—things that were never said in earlier reports. I think it is an interesting snapshot over time.

RC: Yes. I think they all have to be looked at—just as any public report has to be looked at—in terms of its political context. These are ways of having a report written in a broad political context, but definitely to be seen within that context and not as a proclamation of some universal truth.

TGW: This is going to seem like a big shift in gears, but in looking at our notes yesterday, we asked a question and we got off on several interesting tracks, but we didn't come back to the question. You had said that the ILO's notions, or ideas related to development, were actually fairly distinct from the UN and the rest of the UN system. We didn't actually specify how they were different, and I suppose, when the ideas came into the ILO and why they were picked up and by whom. So, it would be interesting for us to hear what that ILO conventional wisdom was, and how it entered the ILO and how it stayed around and who supported it.

RC: Initially, the ILO was the creation of the British civil service during World War I. Part of it was written by an Irishman, Edward Phelan, who subsequently became the director-general of the ILO during World War II, and who was a British civil servant. One could say, in terms of the more utopian vision, that it was designed to acknowledge the role that labor had

played in World War I and to promise a better future for labor. From the British point of view, I think there was also the fact that Britain was the leading trading nation, and if other nations had lower labor standards it would be a disadvantage for British trade. So, it was an attempt by Britain to project labor standards that would equalize the opportunities in world trade. And I think that was the rather basic idea, not always articulated as such because it sounds too self-serving. But, nevertheless, it was an important basis for the creation of the ILO. Most of the early conventions, you will see, related to things like working conditions, night work in bakeries, all sorts of things that would be an attempt to remove the cheap labor or abusive labor out of the market. Subsequently, when the United States joined in the 1930s, the United States was in the midst of the New Deal. A new thought then came into it, which was really more in the Keynesian viewpoint, I guess, and that was to expand employment. So, you began to get the conventions dealing with shortening working hours. This was consciously patterned after the New Deal aims and practices, and also to represent the contribution of the United States ideologically to this organization.

Following World War II, you got the move towards, as I said, freedom of association—the idea of the independence of trade unions from external control, and free collective bargaining, and the abolition of various forms of forced labor. You could see these as responses to particular situations in the environment of the world, which was the ILO's world, which was still then initially primarily Europe and America, with a few others tagging along, but not many from Latin America or from Asia. India was in, but India was in only because of being part of the British Empire, up until the independence of India. So you didn't get much exposure to what subsequently became called the Third World until well after World War II. That exposure then began to call into question some of the emphasis that had been placed earlier on conditions that

were conditions of the First World. And the complexity of the global world situation, in terms of labor standards and so forth, began to be more acute in the years, let's say from particularly 1960 on. Does that answer your question at all?

TGW: Yes, but to use your lenses—if they were different from the rest of the UN system—were the ILO's ideas more hegemonic or less hegemonic? In the sense that there was a difference, how do they stack up in terms of keeping together the existing order or trying to change it?

RC: During the Cold War, there were different sets of forces. The World Federation of Trade Unions, which encompassed primarily the communist unions—the Soviet Union and the communist unions in European countries—acted through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, because they were excluded from the ILO. In the European countries, they were excluded because the governments didn't appoint them as labor delegates. The trade union movements were split, and it was the non-communist unions that were appointed by the governments as the labor delegates in the ILO. So you had that sort of differentiation of representation—there was a different balance, let's say, in the Economic and Social Council from what was in the ILO. Now, the Economic and Social Council really couldn't do much, except express opinions. And those opinions were neutralized because of the Cold War split. But it meant that the ILO represented only the western, and particularly European and American, unions. Although, there was a split there between the Europeans and the Americans, because the AFL-CIO was always at loggerheads with the ICFTU that were representative more of European socialist movements. And Meany, who had no time for them, was determined to create his own, in effect his own organization of labor through various other channels, like the movements in Latin America and Asia which were funding and supporting technically the development of trade

union centers in some of those countries. So, that split was reflected in the ILO and the ILO came out on one side of it, but a side that was also divided.

TGW: When ideas arise, let's say in Geneva at the ILO, is there evidence that they move from the ILO to other institutions in Geneva or elsewhere—that they are picked up in some way by other institutions and modified or given a different institutional flavor, or vice versa? I was thinking of, let's say, the Prebisch-Singer thesis about terms of trade and the deteriorating position. When that hit the international scene, what did the ILO do with it? What were the inner institutional dynamics?

RC: Yes, there are. I think the ILO has taken a position of distance from, first of all a sort of critical examination to see what the implications are, and it is not so much the ILO as the workers group and the trade union movement wondering what some of these implications are for their interests in the countries concerned. I think there is always the kind of suspicion that these aren't going to work in favor of the trade union movement, and that they will only take heed of these ideas in so far as they can be insulated against any negative effect on the trade union movement. That spills over into the ILO, because the ILO doesn't want to do something that is going to alienate that vital arm of support for its organization in the trade union movements. Now, those trade union movements are primarily what you might call the elite trade union movements. In other words, those who are entrenched in the richer countries, who have their own interests in developing their own kind of organization in the less-developed countries, but who are rather suspicious of any autonomously developing labor movements, for example in North Africa, in Algeria, where they were much more integrated with the nationalist independence struggle and much less deferential to the international trade union organizations that were dominant within the ILO.

So, there was that sort of conflict that went on within the Third World between the influence coming from the AFL-CIO on one side, the ICFTU on another side, trying to develop their own subsidiaries—and the possibility of a locally autonomous development, which was usually supported by, or fomented by, populist nationalist political parties. That was the nature of the struggle for those years in the 1960s and into the 1970s.

TGW: It seems to me natural that an institution looks at an idea through its own lenses—trade union movement or children in structural adjustment are terms of reference of an international institution. That is the job description, so to speak. However, there is a negative side to all of this, a concern with a share of the pie or turf. To what extent does this actually get in the way of pursuing ideas, or get in the way of coming out with new forms of research that are suppressing things that you don't want to hear?

RC: I think it does slow the development of new initiatives. I would say within the International Labor Office, in other words, the secretariat, there was a kind of ideological struggle going on between what I call the traditionalists—the people who are concerned with the development of the conventions and recommendations and the whole sort of procedure for supervision of those—and the people who, growing perhaps out of technical assistance, were concerned with broader ideas of economic development and economic development as the basis for raising living standards. That was congealed into the notion of promoting employment, and ultimately became the World Employment Programme. But, there was that kind of ideological split that led to it, and I think we were saying yesterday that there were one or two people within, particularly in the economic division, who saw employment creation as a natural, positive role for the ILO, but who were more or less frowned upon by the conventions and recommendations people as leading in a quite different direction, and possibly in conflict, in so far as things like

wage policy and so forth, that might stand in the way of some of the trade union objectives. But from outside, you got some encouragement. I think you mentioned Prebisch and others. I think these influences that came from outside, which were more geared to economic development policy as such, did have some impact on the ILO, but an impact which was perhaps slower than would be the case in the United Nations because of the entrenched position of other kinds of practices and ideas that were the tradition of the organization.

TGW: You have written about it, but how was the report from Sir Robert Jackson received at the ILO and elsewhere?

RC: I think with some horror. This was the specter of some kind of more central control over what the ILO was doing. That would be intolerable, of course. When that specter comes, the tripartite structure gets trotted out as the reason why we can't do it.

TGW: Other institutions—in your observations, how did they react to it? Any less negatively?

RC: No, I think probably more with the idea of the possibility of more funds being available. I think that was probably an attraction that overcame some of the natural defense of the turf attitudes. An organization like UNESCO had such a flexible turf that they could more easily move towards new initiatives of this kind. The ILO was more rigid because of its past and because of its particular practices, and because it felt, I guess honestly, that the whole procedure for the adoption and supervision of conventions was a major achievement, and not to be prejudiced by moving too radically in any other direction.

TGW: In retrospect, virtually nothing of what Jackson proposed actually came to pass. There is nothing like a centralized system of control. In fact, if anything, over the period since 1969, we have moved in the opposite direction of each agency mobilizing its own extra

budgetary resources to do its own thing. In fact, we have mentioned funding on a couple of occasions. What role does funding, either regular budget or extra-budgetary, have in terms of fostering new ideas? My understanding of the World Employment Programme, for example, is that it initially was started with a lot of new monies from donors, as opposed to regular budgetary resources. Is this an important device?

RC: Yes, it makes it a lot easier. I think it is very hard to move within the regular budget, because the whole structure is sort of in place. And if you got increases, they got allocated across the board. But some big reallocation is virtually possible only with some new external sources of funding.

TGW: Do donors within international institutions exert any more control over the ideas than foundations, or external sources for universities do?

RC: I couldn't answer that effectively. I would suspect it's not very much different. You would track the funds because you're prepared to do something and have a program of a certain kind. And in effect, you accept the conditions in advance in order to get the money.

TGW: We spoke a lot about David Morse yesterday. But there are lots of other leaders within international institutions. In terms of ideas, what portion of any of these people's time is spent creating ideas versus basically taking someone else's and trying to promote them or manipulate them for the institution's good?

RC: I would think probably not very much time. I guess my direct experience has been mainly with Morse, but I can think of others as well. I think Prebisch might be a different case, because he is somebody who came out of a background where a lot of his ideas would have been evolved and developed. Then he gets a chance to put them into practice. And he doesn't have to devote a lot of time to rethinking them, except adjusting them to these political opportunities that

arise for him. But he also thinks of how to promote the ideas. And I think one of the interesting things Prebisch did was to create this—I forgot what it's called—sort of an institute where he would bring people from the planning bodies in the different countries to a central point. They would then discuss the ideas that he was concerned with. Then they would go back to their governments as emissaries of his body of ideas so that he had this formula for promoting the idea within the governments, rather than just making reports and speeches to articulate the idea through the institution that he was in charge of.

I think that notion must have been picked up. The IMF has picked that up, too, by training people to work in the finance departments of different countries so that they become the counterparts of the IMF staff. You create your own network, if you like, that stretches into the governments. I think apart from the specific ideas of Prebisch, that sort of technique of promoting the idea was important. I would, as far as I know, credit him with that initiative which has been followed by others.

TGW: It sounds like a very simple-minded question, but what is the scope for leadership within international institutions? At one point in something you wrote, you said that the ILO failed to adequately address the transnational aspects of various aspects of globalization. There is institutional inertia. But could a different leader have done a better job? Could a different head of the World Bank have pushed it in a different direction? How important are the people at the top of institutions, in terms of pushing out the envelope on ideas?

RC: I think they have a very delicate role, and in a sense, leadership suggests sort of striding out in front and promoting things. I think it is less like that than trying to avoid conflict, trying to dress up the ideas for a new program in such a way as not to run into conflict with major interests in countries that can oppose them, or interest groups that have effect in opposing

them. This, I think, was perhaps Morse's major technique—his ability to manage situations, not his creativity and ideas. I don't think he did more than respond to a program idea that he thought would be good, and then try to see how they could be fitted into the work of the organization and build the support from the outside for them. It is that role, I think, that leadership in an international organization can perhaps best perform. It can have very little effect in changing the environment within which the organization works, but it can have some effect in having a sufficient understanding of the environment so as to avoid the institution getting into conflict that is going to be troublesome for it. And the best is being able to use that environment to sort of manipulate a situation so that you do advance your program of ideas a little bit.

TGW: In your twenty-five years at the ILO, or observing lots of institutions subsequently, to what extent has—to use another term from the literature—any “learning” gone on in terms of the way institutions operate and the way leaders operate and the way ideas are employed? Have we learned any lessons?

RC: I don't know. It's hard to say. One of the things that struck me—and this is not quite an answer to that question—is that one can become a victim of illusion. My relationship with Morse—I go back to this because it was my learning experience in many ways—was curious in that I was never sure whether what he said was what he really thought, or what he thought that it would be useful for me to think he thought. When you have that kind of relationship between two people, you don't say rude things to each other. But you approach each other with a certain sort of skepticism. I would write these speeches, and he would make these speeches. And he would think, or feign to think, that these speeches had an important impact. And I who wrote the speeches was perfectly aware that they were just façade. They didn't really have that sort of impact at all, but they passed over what might have been a tricky situation

successfully. But in terms of promoting ideas, I thought, “Let’s not kid ourselves.” So, there is that element in it. Have you learned that you have made an achievement? Or have you learned how to get by a difficult situation? And I think maybe we did a lot of learning about getting by difficult situations because many came up—not only conflicts among trade unions, the problems with the United States, the problem of apartheid in South Africa, which raised a big issue in the conference. That was one of the critical periods in his experience, where the conference was about to explode and we concocted a speech that he gave. He performed very well when he was into that situation, and the speech was immediately a success in terms of getting by that difficult moment in the conference. But to say that it had any long-term impact on the apartheid problem would have been an illusion.

TGW: What role, both when you were in the UN and when you were part of the academy, do you think that outside academic scholars have played in the development of UN ideas? Is it only when they are called in to participate in expert groups, or whatever the appellation is, or in their own research—throwing rocks or whatever they are throwing from the outside—that academics matter?

RC: I think they are a useful adjunct. In some ways, they can perform a role analogous to the management consultant. That is, if you are working up a program, you can go to people who, in the academic community, have become spokesmen for those ideas and bring them in and have them write things and have them endorse and become sort of public statements that your organization is identified with this set of ideas. There again, I think it means a sort of prior commitment to going ahead in that direction and then you reach out for the academics that will help legitimize that and promote the idea. The other role would be to bring them in as managers. Take the case of Emmerij. Now, Emmerij, I guess, I don’t know how you would assess him, but

I would not think of him as being in the nature of the most creative intellectual. But I would think of him as being a very effective manager and organizer of an idea once the idea is there and you bring a group of people to promote it. So that role also, for a certain type of academic, is an important one, because you don't find those people within the staff of the organization very often.

So, there are two types, I guess, in that case—those who already identified with the creation of a new set of ideas. In certain ways, the four horsemen of the Ford Foundation played that role. We had John Dunlop come and stay in the ILO and work with Bert Zoetewij, for example, and others. It gives a kind of support, both because as an American he has certain status in the United States and that gives a kind of American support. And the idea has a certain status within the community of labor economists. So you build that up. But I don't think one could say that John Dunlop came and injected his idea into the ILO. It was the ILO that sort of recognized that something was going on in the Ford Foundation and said, "Well, let's latch on to this and bring these people in and they will help us to gain support for a program and gain support from the United States."

TGW: But before an idea becomes part of the acceptable mainstream, shall we say, do academics matter—I'm trying to think of something like gender in 1970, before, as you mentioned yesterday, the obvious conclusion that there were certain forms of labor that were under-evaluated? Clearly at that moment in time, there were people on the outside talking about this. Or the Club of Rome before Stockholm in 1969 or 1970. These ideas didn't actually fit very neatly with orthodoxy. You have described the role of academics as both reproducing and criticizing the social order. The balance may have not been very good between reproducing and

criticizing, but on occasion the critics don't fit into this institution. Then what happens to an idea? Does it just have to be around for awhile, and then become acceptable?

RC: I think you go back to the civil society idea. The gender question is a very significant one. It took a long time for this to become a matter of very widespread consciousness. All of this time, the ILO had always had a little section on women's work—legislation regarding women at work. Well, some feminists would regard that as being anti-feminist because it was creating a sort of special category for women, and not women as workers like every other worker. So there was that sort of issue within the community of people who were concerned with what subsequently became called "gender." That was not a term that was used in those days. I only learned about it when I was teaching at York, from one of my students who taught me the difference between sex and gender. I don't think in French you have that difference, even now, do you? The word "gender" doesn't really translate, except in a grammatical sense, into French. But now, in the English world, we know that gender is a social construction and sex is biological. So that idea, itself, was something that grew out of civil society. And at a certain point, then international institutions have to respond to it. And they begin to redefine their approach to women's work. In the case of the ILO, because people no longer think about it in the same way they used to. But that comes definitely from outside, but not outside in terms of the thoughts of an individual specialist or expert, but in terms of a movement within the general body of society.

TGW: I don't know that literature well enough to know who was actually speaking about gender way back then. But, so there is the constellation of somebody producing ideas, but there is a reality in civil society that is acting on the idea. Then, at that juncture, you can bring in some erudition.

RC: Exactly. Once there is sort of a social base, then you reach out for somebody who can articulate it in terms that fit with your own program responsibilities.

TGW: Just to return to this project with which you were associated at the UN University—Multilateralism and the UN System (MUNS). It was approved as a kind of replication of the existing set of international institutions and their values, and trying to modify them slightly, as opposed to bringing in any sort of more substantial criticism of that system.

RC: No, I would place it differently, really. The idea came out of a meeting that was convened in Barcelona about 1990, I think. They asked me to write a paper for the meeting. I wrote a short paper, and we had a lot of discussions. It was after that meeting that I was asked if I would lead this program. I had absolutely no idea or thought of it, in the first place. But I thought the meeting might be interesting to get a group of people together to discuss the present position of international institutions and the future. But the approach that I took clearly from the beginning was the one that I carried through to the end. In other words, that we should focus on the changing structure of world society and economy, and from that think back to what could be the role of international institutions and multilateralism. And I feel that I was consistent throughout. But I think what happens when a thing gets into a bureaucratic process, and you have annual allocations of funds and so forth, various bureaucratic viewpoints get injected into it. And I think at that point, I was beginning to be aware that there was some dissonance between the approach that I was taking—which was clearly outlined in documents that were discussed, and reprinted and reproduced by the UNU—and the expectation that what we ought to be doing was thinking how to reform the United Nations as an institution. My whole approach was that that is a later job; let's first of all find out what the state of the world is and what sort of

implications we can draw from that, from multilateralism, and then maybe you can begin to think about reforming or changing or developing new institutions and so forth.

So I think that dissonance was something that grew as the program went forward, not something that was present at the beginning. It didn't surprise me, because I could see there the established institution coming with its own reflexes to a situation which was not the one that some people might have expected.

TGW: I am wondering how you first became associated with ACUNS, and why it was necessary, where it came from, and where it was going.

RC: It came from Gene Lyons. He approached me. I really had very little knowledge or acquaintance with ACUNS. And I was really no longer doing much teaching about international organization at that stage. I had been through that at Columbia, and in the first couple of years that I had been at York I gave a course on international organization. But by that time, I had moved away from that. I think I then re-entitled a course, "International Organization and World Politics," which was the title of a volume that I published in England which was published with another title by the American publisher [Macmillan]. It was much more oriented towards the context of situations and issues in the world economy and society and politics that international organizations coped with.

The next stage was to give a course just on international political economy at different levels. I gave an undergraduate course and a graduate course. I had been through that evolution at the time when Gene Lyons spoke to me, and I said to Gene Lyons, "Quite frankly, there is some difference between what I understand about your goals in ACUNS of promoting teaching about international organization and what I have been doing. I don't want you to be under any illusion as to what my approach has been." But he was very insistent at the same time, and I

could see that there was this opportunity that other people were thinking in the same directions, that they were not just concerned with the nuts and bolts of procedures and organizations. So, he was very persuasive. I would say that I enjoyed that experience. And when we had this meeting here—a sort of executive meeting in Toronto—I managed to organize a little discussion about sub-state international relationships. At that time, even the government of Ontario was involved with three sorts of regions of European countries in what they called the “Four Motors” of Europe. The government of Ontario joined in with that, and the government of Quebec was involved in various relationships outside the boundaries of Canada and Quebec. So one could see that there was some scope for different kinds of initiatives through ACUNS. I enjoyed that, and also the contacts we had in Mexico were very interesting. For me it was a good experience. But as I say, my evolution was already more towards the kind of substantive issues than towards the institutions at that stage.

TGW: Is it indicative of the field that the journal that ACUNS has sponsored is actually called *Global Governance*, not *International Organization*.

RC: Yes, I think that is indicative of the changing perspective and, in a way, sort of taking a distance from being an advocacy group towards being a more analytical perspective on the world.

TGW: Yes, it's not the United Nations Association. If you were providing advice to Sophie, who is at the beginning of her career, what would you see as really the most substantial intellectual challenges for someone who is interested in multilateralism in the short run—ten years, fifteen years, and over the long run of a career of thirty to thirty-five years? What would you see as the most important things to deal with?

RC: I would go back to the civil society factor, and ask the question, “where can the initiatives towards an alternative form of global order be coming from?” And begin to study such movements as you can find. You would have to start with a kind of overview, and maybe even work down to local levels. Maybe a study of Chiapas would be revealing as a kind of piece of research. But you would have to start by asking, “Why Chiapas?”

TGW: Is there something I should have asked you?

RC: Gosh, I hope not. We have covered a lot.

TGW: We have covered the whole territory in the last two days?

RC: I don't know. How about you, have you got any questions we have overlooked?

TGW: Probably tons.

RC: You'll think of them tomorrow.

TGW: Yes, exactly. We'll have to send you an email. But I'd like to thank you kindly for having put up with our interrogation.

RC: It's been interesting. I'm really surprised at how long we have been talking. I thought I wouldn't really have all that much to say.

TGW: I'm sure other people down the line will be pleased that we came to Toronto.
This is the end of Tape Number Four.

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