

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Labor Series

JOHN T. FISHBURN

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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Fishburn.]

Q: This is Don Kienzle. Today is July 19, 1997. I'm at the beautiful farm of John T. Fishburn out here on the outskirts of Woodstock, Virginia. It's a lovely, lovely spot on the north fork of the Shenandoah River, which sort of curves around in all directions. Thank you very much, John, for being willing to give a supplementary interview. I wonder if we could start off with a little bit about your personal background, your family, your education, and how you got involved in labor issues.

FISHBURN: Well, I'm pleased you start this way. I was born in a very interesting town with a very interesting name: Moscow, Idaho, where my father was in the agricultural department of the University of Idaho doing research work. He had graduated from the University of Virginia with a B.A. in agriculture and economics. He was out there in Idaho for reasons of health, notably asthma and freedom from some of the problems we have in Virginia. Dad, of course, came then from a Virginia family, which had been living in Roanoke and Franklin County for something like 100 years. Mother, on the other hand, came from a family which had come over practically on the Mayflower and had been in this country ever since. They had landed near Cape Cod and worked their way westward to New York with a good long stoppage in both Massachusetts and New York and then Wisconsin, where they had a couple of generations, and then finally to Idaho, where my grandmother with her three children, including the daughter who is my mother, lived at the time she and dad became engaged, and then had three sons of their own, of which I am the oldest. Dad was more of an academic kind of person than a businessman, but he straddled the role between business and that field of education. But it also led to his being influenced, I think, from his wife's family to want to go into business, partly because it paid better. So, our next move was to Casper, Wyoming, which is in about the center of that big state, where Dad was the chief chemist at a refinery of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana at that time.

Q: How old were you when you moved to Casper?

FISHBURN: I was five years old. I had grown to love Moscow and the wooded and mountainous area surrounding it. I grew to like equally Casper, which was five miles on the desert just east of the Rocky Mountain chains, which sort of stopped about five miles away. I got to like almost every kind of place you can live fairly easily as time went on, which helped make me kind of a widely liking naturalist. I've been fond of animals, trees, birds, and all those things ever since early memory.

Q: Did you grow up in Casper then?

FISHBURN: Yes, I stayed in Casper for about nine years until I was 14. Then we moved out because the altitude there, which was over a mile, was too much for mother. So, we moved back to Dad's home for a year in Roanoke, Virginia, and spent my junior high school year there. Then we moved back to Oklahoma, where Dad had obtained a position as the head chemist in a small oil refinery near Cushing, Oklahoma. So, we then had three or four years in Cushing and its high school. That led to four years at the University of Oklahoma, from which I graduated in 1935.

Q: What was your major?

FISHBURN: My majors were government and economics. The branch of economics which most interested me was the labor aspect. So, that started fairly early. That interest really continued all through the rest of my life.

Q: Did your father have any involvement in the labor movement?

FISHBURN: No, not at all, but I had a professor at the University of Oklahoma that was very interested in it also. Of course, he had an influence on me. In fact, I became interested in seeking out some of the old socialists that were around up in Oklahoma City, which wasn't far from Norman, where the university is. So, I went up. I must say, he was a fascinating, really dedicated person, as some of those early socialists in this country were. They were the Norman Thomas variety of socialists, by and large.

Q: What was his name?

FISHBURN: I wish I could remember, but I don't. I think he wrote a book, or a book was written about him, but I don't remember the title of that either. From that day until now, that particular group of socialists attracted me, enough so that in 1936 when I had a chance for my first vote for President, I got in the line not having decided whether I was going to vote for Norman Thomas or Franklin Roosevelt. As I progressed through the line, I decided to vote for somebody that would at least have an influence on the result, and voted for FDR, though I really, I think, would have preferred to vote substantively for Norman Thomas. This connection with Norman Thomas kept on various ways for years, just because I did admire him and like him. He seemed to me a sufficient realist that he slowly changed to almost, except for the role that was very fine that FDR himself developed for the New Deal I must say, I was a strong supporter of FDR and the New Deal. To this day, I'm a great admirer of him.

In college, however, I was not active in the socialist movement or any political party. I let that wait until I had become married. I married my wife with whom I had such a wonderful 51 years, until she died of cancer suddenly one night.

Q: When did you marry approximately?

FISHBURN: 1938.

Q: '38. So, this was after you graduated from the University of Oklahoma?

FISHBURN: Yes. I had gone to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy for three years and had an M.A. in international economics and politics from there.

Q: And then you joined the State Department in 1938?

FISHBURN: I became employed by the State Department. I served under the economic advisor Herbert Weiss, who was sort of an outstanding person in the economics field for his writings and a very, very sharp mind.

Q: Was he Princeton?

FISHBURN: I think he was a Princeton, yes. He had an assistant whose name I should recall, who was equally able and wise. It was a very useful three years I had there.

Q: What issues were you dealing with during that period?

FISHBURN: I was dealing largely with international trade, almost exclusively. I was in those days sort of a free trader and enjoyed working with Weiss and my supervisor under him to help promote the freer trade approach to life.

Q: Was the Roosevelt administration basically free trade oriented?

FISHBURN: Yes, in large measure. Cordell Hull was still the Secretary of State when I went there, but he wasn't very effective under Roosevelt. The two just didn't jibe, though, I think, the President never acted against him the way he might have done earlier. At any rate, there was also an economics section of the State Department, with which we collaborated under Weiss' leadership on these matters. Finally, the war came on and I bought a home in order to have some place to live during what I knew would be the terrific expansion of Washington with that war event coming along.

Q: Where was your home?

FISHBURN: In Chevy Chase. After three years with Weiss and State, I accepted a promotional opportunity with the office of Nelson Rockefeller, Inter-American Affairs. So, I went over there and was occupied there with problems of trade with Latin America during the war. We were trying to get quotas established with the War Production Board and those agencies so that the Latin American nations which needed some types of assistance from us during such a period would be able to do it as well as the American society by and large did. I must say, I think we succeeded somewhat, but of course, with all these things, political influences limit any one person's or small group's influence.

Q: This was to ensure that they were able to import from the United States certain commodities that they needed to maintain their standard of living?

FISHBURN: Right.

Q: How long was Nelson Rockefeller in that position?

FISHBURN: He stayed there about four to five years. It was rather fascinating for me to work there in a non-formal sense also because Nelson had such an interesting staff. Nearly all of his people were businesspeople, the higher ones. A few were bankers and so on. But they went through three formal organizations and all of them were of pure formal action. I don't think they ever amounted to anything. He wasn't a very good administrator at all in the sense of knowing who he was leading and what he was getting from them. He just didn't have the intellectual background to do it.

Q: Did he have the native intellect?

FISHBURN: I didn't think so. I had to admire his courage. He was fighting a lot of feeling in his own family to collaborate with Franklin Roosevelt the way he did. After a few years with them and rather enjoying it, I went over to State. I said, "Look, this is a good opportunity for somebody to join the Foreign Service auxiliary and to get some experience abroad. I have been wanting foreign experience because this was my chosen field of knowledge in State in the past and in Rockefeller's office. Would it be possible for me (Here I have to interpose that I had been given a 4F classification because I had been a diabetic since '39.) They said, 'Sure, we need people and it's hard to get them to come along.'" So, I was sent to Buenos Aires as a Foreign Service auxiliary officer. I worked on economic aspects of Argentine life.

Q: Was this during the period when the Foreign Service exam was not being given?

FISHBURN: Yes. I was not a Foreign Service officer. A Foreign Service auxiliary officer was quite different.

Q: What was the last year that the Foreign Service exam was given before World War II?

FISHBURN: I would guess, and I have several colleagues at the Fletcher School who joined it about that time, it was about '39 itself maybe '40 even.

Q: You didn't take it prior to the war?

FISHBURN: No, never did. I had my M.A. from Fletcher. That was my main, so called, supposed base.

Q: Anyhow, I interrupted you. You were describing your work in Argentina.

FISHBURN: At any rate, after I had been there about six months, I became interested in the labor movement in Argentina. I began to sort of get to know a few of the labor leaders. So, I went to my ambassador and asked if I couldn't be given an economics/labor assignment, rather than just economics. I thought that with the administration of the outgoing president (I forgot his name) [Ramon Castillo or Pedro Ramirez?] and the coup which then later became led by Peron appearing on the scene, that there was going to be political as well as economic aspects that could stand attention in Argentina because the group with which Peron was associated with, a [clandestine faction] of military officers [the United Officers Group-(GOU], but whether were rather inclined to support Germany rather than the United States. So, I was given permission to switch. Then after I had been doing this labor reporting in effect, for about six months or so (I'm not really sure how much).

Q: This was 1943?

FISHBURN: This would have been about '43, yes. There was an announcement that an ILH was established under _____ in Washington and they were interested in labor

attachés. So, I wrote up to the Department and suggested that I would like to be considered for a labor attaché assignment, which was really the work I was doing at any rate. Then very shortly after that, I received word that Dan Horowitz had been appointed as labor attaché in Santiago, Chile, not too far away. So, then I was also appointed formally. At the same time, in that last sort of six months in there, Peron really took over the labor movement of Argentina.

Q: Was there a formal coup actually?

FISHBURN: No, not in the military sense. There was a coup in the real sense, but it wasn't military. The Secretary of Labor when I first started work was very pro-American, very nice. I did remember his name for years, but I don't recall it at the moment. When the coup came, in a sense, the nonmilitary coup, he was of course replaced immediately. Shortly thereafter (It took about a week or so before we even got the name), Peron took over the job as head of the labor section of the Argentine government as the Labor Minister. That caused me to ask for a transfer to Montevideo, where I could work with a government that was friendly. There wouldn't be any point in working the labor field under Peron and trying to report for them. They accepted that, so I transferred to Montevideo as labor attaché.

Q: In Argentina, did Peron basically control the labor movement at that point?

FISHBURN: Oh, yes, he sure as heck did.

Q: So, there was no real free democratic movement at that point?

FISHBURN: That's overstating it because the group with which I had worked was a group which had to work with the commies, which had controlled pretty much up until then on the national scene, but they had taken over the organization which had controlled for the employees of the Buenos Aires government. They had a good, strong local labor movement there. They had a camp out in Salsipuedes, which is to the west of Buenos Aires a good deal, a little north. So, I asked the president of the union if my wife and I couldn't just go out there and enjoy their camp for a week or two. "Sure, we'd be glad to have you." So, we went out and had our week or two weeks, whichever it was, and enjoyed it enormously. He continued indefinitely thereafter to be pro-democratic and against, in effect, both Peron and the communists.

Q: Was he allowed to speak publicly against Peron?

FISHBURN: No, he just quietly had to do this pretty much. When Serafino Romualdi then came on the scene for the AF of L, he came to ask me about (I can't think of the name right now) I said, "Well, he would be a good one for you to work with because he's definitely not a communist, even though he had to work with the communists when they had control over the national movement before Peron and then he's had to work somewhat with Peron since for the same reason, to survive with his better approach, more humane." In effect, Serafino got to know him. They were (inaudible) friends in the Latin

American work and Serafino did and stayed that way to the end at least, at the end I know about. So, the whole thing was kind of fascinating.

Then, in Uruguay, the labor movement had had, again, some communist leadership, but I worked more with the non-communists than them. After a year as a labor attaché in Montevideo, the war end was approaching.

Q: That's World War II?

FISHBURN: Yes. So, I came home. I guess it was '45 when I came home. I joined Pile H. and (Inaudible) Smoke in that organization in charge of Latin American area.

Q: You were the Latin American "advisor," did they call it?

FISHBURN: To Otis, yes.

Q: And where was he in the organization's structure?

FISHBURN: Well, he was the head of, I think it was the Department of Labor and Social Affairs. He was the director of it. He was under the economics Assistant Secretary of State. After I had been there about a year, say, from '45 to '46 or '47, he kept trying to improve the labor attaché selections and group. I thought he did a first rate job of seeking out the so called "academic" groups, people who were interested in and somewhat trained, at least, in American labor. That was a pretty good group, I think. The best I ever knew.

Q: So, the initial group was about 20 or so?

FISHBURN: Yes, it was a good group, including most of our labor attachés in Europe and a few in Latin America. Of course, it included a couple who were, as is apt to be true in any field, simply self-promoters. In one case, a very fine writer in terms of reading him and thinking, "That's wonderful!" Here he was, he went to a country I won't name in Latin America when I had that job in the State Department. His reports came back on the Mexican labor movement that were wonderful reading, yet the trouble was, they were dead wrong on everything. He didn't even know who the leaders were of the labor movement. He had gotten himself involved with an ex-leader who was fighting the new leadership of the [governing] PRI. He was just lost. His reporting was equally lost for any accuracy or use.

Q: Will you keep him nameless?

FISHBURN: Yes, we'll keep him nameless. I had to give him a poor report that year and boy did he try to give me a lashing when he came up. I had to admit, I did, and I told him why. But he continued to be a very able writer. But I always suspected that the stuff he wrote later for the Labor Department, where he did go in his field, was probably equally bad. It reminds me of the real value of our President right now. If you take his speech

editing, one day, it sounds wonderful. He's a very able speaker, Clinton. But, you know, it doesn't jive usually with what he did a week ago or a day ago. Really, I think his foreign policy is miserable and misleading our nation very badly in almost everything, especially in relations with Russia and NATO's expansion.

Q: What about some of the other labor attachés that you dealt with in the early period?

FISHBURN: I really didn't have very close relations with them. Europe was so separate, you know, from Latin America in those days that the connections weren't very close.

Q: Who was it, Val Loren who handled Europe at that time?

FISHBURN: Yes. Well, Val Loren, and you had the one in Paris. You had what's his name in London..

Q: Eldridge and Burger.

FISHBURN: Eldridge and Burger, yes. All of those, yes. They were good, able men, I guess, in their own way, quite nice. Certainly Burger reported to Benson, on England for the election, which threw out Churchill before the event. He turned out to be right, in contrast to what other people were reporting.

Q: So, that made quite an impression on you.

FISHBURN: Sure.

Q: What about Otis Mullikan? Can you describe him and his role?

FISHBURN: Otis was a very dedicated, hardworking person, and very able, both in writing and thinking and talking and so on. But his attempts to promote the labor field, he ran dead into the head of the larger organization which the labor section was in. I'm not sure whether he was Assistant Secretary for Economics or what, but the superior just thought that was wrong and didn't support him on anything. The superior took to trying to dismiss Otis from the job.

Q: Who was his superior at that time?

FISHBURN: I can't remember. [Ed Note: probably Willard Thorp]

Q: But the Assistant Secretary for Economics?

FISHBURN: Yes. At any rate, I thought that was a very unfair thing. He had fine reports. He went by his superior until they ran into a conflict. We all worked with him. We knew he was an able man, honest and forthright. He was one of the early people who thought you really probably ought to shift and have more labor attachés from the Foreign Service staff.

Q: From the Foreign Service?

FISHBURN: Yes. Some of us had doubts about that. I still don't think that we should rely exclusively on them. I think you need some of these independent (inaudible) out of missions who have come up apart from the Foreign Service and the Washington influence.

Q: What about from the labor movement? Did Otis support that?

FISHBURN: No, for labor attachés, he didn't. That didn't really even come up while he was there. I must say, as I looked at it later, it was a great pair, heavens. Phil Delaney let his section be filled by that sort of people. They were absolutely illiterate. Most of them had achieved some leadership of a section of our labor movement, but then lost out and jobs had to be found for them. Several of them got recommended for their Uncle Sam's labor attaché work. They were just totally impossible.

Q: So, the early recruitment from about 1943 through '47 was handled by Otis Mullikan himself pretty much?

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: And it focused largely on academics and other intellectuals rather than the labor movement or the existing government employees?

FISHBURN: Right.

Q: When was Otis Mullikan actually removed from the office?

FISHBURN: Well, it must have been around, I guess, '48 or '49.

Q: When the advisors were sent to the geographic bureaus?

FISHBURN: No, the advisors to the bureaus started, I think, before he was Well, I can't really say when because I don't remember.

Q: But sometime in the '49 period, I guess, the bureaus took over the responsibility of the regional advisors?

FISHBURN: Well, yes, there was, and I would guess that was about '49.

Q: And you moved then to the ARA bureau?

FISHBURN: I had the ARA bureau before that under Otis. I also then had the other arrangement later.

Q: Originally though, your chain of command was through Otis?

FISHBURN: Through Otis, yes.

Q: And then you were moved at some point to the ARA bureau?

FISHBURN: Yes. That was when the other regional advisors were also appointed. That must have been about '49 or '50 or somewhere in there.

Q: At that point, Otis Mullikan maintained the residual office?

FISHBURN: No, he was out by then?

Q: He was moved to the international relations?

FISHBURN: Well, he was given a job somewhere, it's true. He fought the attempt to oust him successfully, but you can win without winning and that was one of those occasions, you know. He was kept on. He was paid and given money. But he didn't have any influence, I think, wherever he was.

Q: But he was totally out of the labor field at that point?

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: Someone named Tom Holland, can you describe what happened there?

FISHBURN: Well, Tom Holland had been a negotiator for the labor movement with industry and so on. That sort of background apparently appealed to somebody and he was the one who did replace Otis.

Q: Do you remember roughly when that happened?

FISHBURN: Let's see... When did I go to Brazil? 1957. I would guess it must have been '51 or '52, something like that.

Q: Where was that office located bureaucratically?

FISHBURN: Which?

Q: The office that Tom Holland headed.

FISHBURN: He was still head of ILH.

Q: ILK. That was in the Economic Bureau?

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: That was in parallel then with the regional bureaus and their advisors?

FISHBURN: In a way, yes, but the regional labor advisors really weren't people who had been labor attachés or anything of that sort. How they really got selected, except for me, I don't know.

Q: You were the only one who had had experience in the field at that time?

FISHBURN: As far as I remember, yes. I know the man who became the advisor on the Far East, Sullivan, he was a very able man at his job, and did well.

Q: He had also been in the ILH office, hadn't he?

FISHBURN: Well, I don't remember that he had, but I'm not sure. I can't be sure of that detail.

Q: Dan Horowitz came back from Chile at some point and joined ILH?

FISHBURN: Dan Horowitz, I think, probably went there from Chile. He was labor attaché in Paris.

Q: Do you have any information on the origins of the Labor Attaché Program, how Otis Mullikan was commissioned to sort of start recruiting? Who came up with the idea initially?

FISHBURN: I think Otis did it from the Agriculture Department, where he had been employed previously. I think he may have recognized the importance of international labor needs. He may have very well gone to people in State who convinced somebody else that he should be the man to do it. I wouldn't be surprised that that might have been it, but I don't know.

Q: I was just wondering. What about the recruitment of labor attachés after the initial phase? You said, in effect, that Otis had done most of the recruitment of the first 20 or so and then there were others involved. Do you want to describe how that process developed?

FISHBURN: The Labor Department came into play about that time. They wanted to control this and use people from the labor movement. They came into it, but I don't remember exactly when or with what degree.

Q: But in the initial phase, it was almost exclusively a State Department effort, rather than

FISHBURN: Yes, as long as Otis was there, it was a State Department effort. There was George Weaver over in the Labor Department. He had a title of Assistant Secretary of

Labor for International Affairs, but he didn't really have much influence on Otis or the Labor Attaché group. Then he started having influence because we didn't have anybody the equivalent of Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Labor Affairs.

Q: Actually, I guess, Morris was the first Assistant Secretary.

FISHBURN: Yes, he was before we—

Q: Succeed in... was he active in?

FISHBURN: I don't know.

Q: I know it's a stretch. I'm interested in what the dynamics were of the expansion of involvement to include

FISHBURN: Phil Gyser was a promoter. That I have as a feeling. How able and so on, or what influence there, or what his history is, I can't say.

Q: Okay. Then there was also Dan Gute. I'm not quite sure in my own mind where Dan Gute fit into this whole process.

FISHBURN: He was in there. I remember him, but very vaguely. I really don't remember at what stage he was there even.

Q: He wasn't one of the early players in ILH or in the first

FISHBURN: No. I don't remember him as such.

Q: And you were in ARA then until 1957, when you went to Rio?

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: Are there things that I've missed that you think we should get on the record?

FISHBURN: No, I think you've got plenty. I'm going to be curious to read this.

Q: Then in Rio, you were there from '57 to '63.

FISHBURN: Right.

Q: What were the main things that you dealt with at that time? That was about the time that A Field was being established.

FISHBURN: That's right, yes, quite so. You mean, what I did in Rio?

Q: What were your main responsibilities or the main issues of the labor movement?

FISHBURN: I think the main thing I had to do first of all was satisfy the ambassador [Ellis Briggs] that I was a competent, reliable person. To be perfectly frank, when I got there, I thought his initial greeting and reaction was "What in the name of God is Labor doing here?" So, I really told him (I was pretty frank always) that what I was trying to do was to develop some influence with the Brazilian labor movement and have them have a friendly attitude toward the United States, but I did not believe that we could tell them how to do it. I thought that was a lost approach. But at any rate, the ambassador and I got on recently good terms shortly. It wasn't any problem that way.

My first requirement in Brazil was to learn Portuguese, as distinct from Spanish. It took me really a year. I gave some talks in Portuguese to, I think, one or two labor groups after about a year in Portuguese.

Q: Oh, that's remarkable.

FISHBURN: No, God, it was pretty awful. At any rate, I enjoyed trying to learn another language. It was kind of fascinating. My daughter seemed to adopt it naturally and speak it almost instinctively overnight. My wife could learn it faster and better with better accents than I could. So, it was kind of fun.

Then gradually, of course, I visited Sao Paolo and other places and tried to find out what it was like there, too, in the labor field. But in Brazil, the communists were again, by and large, there was more labor leadership from them than from any other single group. So, fortunately though for me, all the government officials weren't procommunist, even though from the day of my arrival, Vargas' sponsor What's his name? He's the president. He was a tool of the commies, as well as using them. I find that my memory has sort of deteriorated, I'm sorry to say, considerably within the past three or four months.
[President Juscelino Kubitschek 1956-61]

Q: We can fill that in later.

FISHBURN: Vargas was collaborating with them. The Secretary of Labor, with whom I got to know and like, was not of that ilk. So, my friends had the single most important position in Brazilian labor, as head of the Industrial Workers Confederation, which was many federations.

Well, from then until my departure, it was a constant discouraging business of watching Vargas as the would be president and then president through collaborating with the commies and helping them take over just as I was leaving. [Ed. Note: This passage is unclear. President Vargas died in 1954. Fishburn may have confused him with the leftist President Joao Goulart who was Labor Minister at the time of Vargas' death, elected Vice President in 1960, succeeded to the Presidency in 1961 and was overthrown by the Brazilian military in 1964]

Q: Take over the labor movement?

FISHBURN: Yes, they did.

Q: You mentioned earlier the hard to convince ambassador to which the labor attaché was a useful addition. But there seemed to be a widespread problem with the senior Foreign Service of seeing the utility of the labor movement.

FISHBURN: Oh, yes, sure, this idea of something new like that? It didn't last long though, I think. I think I've already indicated that he came around very quickly and nicely. Over in Uruguay, there was an old timer [William Dawson], too, that was ambassador. Boy, he was as strong a supporter as I could have found from the day I arrived.

Q: What were the reasons that some supported and some didn't? Was it just their personalities?

FISHBURN: Well, the one in Uruguay was an even longer career officer than the one I had in Argentina [Norman Armour], although they were both long. He just had a different mentality. He was completely open to it. He openly told me that he didn't know anything about it, but that he was going to learn from me why I was there. By gosh, it didn't take any time at all. Just plain, good reporting did it.

Q: And providing another perspective on what was going on in the country.

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: Was there any concern about the involvement of the (inaudible)?

FISHBURN: Ambassador Dawson was the one, yes, in Uruguay.

Q: Was there concern in the Foreign Service about the influence of the AF of L and later the AF of L/CIO?

FISHBURN: Oh, I don't think so. I don't think most Foreign Service officers knew enough about labor to even give it a thought.

Q: Is that right?

FISHBURN: Yes. This is why I today feel that you can't recruit from the Foreign Service only for labor attachés if you want a service worth anything.

Q: That gets us really to your role back in the Department in 1963 when you were responsible for recruiting young Foreign Service officers for the labor function. Do you want to describe what you were doing?

FISHBURN: Well, by that time, you see, Phil Delaney was there. I had to work under him.

Q: This was 1963 to '65 that you worked for Phil Delaney?

FISHBURN: Well, I think it was '63 to '65, and then when I went to Geneva, it was '67, I think. At least the last two years, I was under Phil Delaney. Now, maybe for two years, I wasn't. Maybe that was Tom Holland, I don't know. That's vague now for me.

Q: But the recruiting, how did you go about finding people?

FISHBURN: I didn't do any recruiting, you see. I never really did either way. Tom Holland did it for Tom Holland and Phil Delaney did it for Phil Delaney. I didn't have anything to do with it.

Q: What were the criteria that they used?

FISHBURN: Well, they both wanted some people from the labor movement (inaudible). That's true of Phil Delaney. With Tom Holland, I never knew what he really thought. He was a very fascinating person, but what he really thought was known by him.

Q: Tom Holland only?

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: What role did he play in that period?

FISHBURN: I don't think he played a role of any significance. Certainly the influence of selection from the labor movement was still dominant, but I don't know how much was even of it.

Q: What were your general responsibilities when you worked for Phil Delaney?

FISHBURN: Well, I was supposedly, again, concerned with Latin America. That's what I limited myself to. I was forced to act, as so many people knew, at one time or another, in their life, as one who does the best he can in a position which doesn't allow very much leeway.

Q: A "short leash" it's called.

FISHBURN: Exactly.

Q: Were you involved in assistance activities as well as just sort of screening traffic coming from Latin America?

FISHBURN: I kept Phil Delaney fully informed as to what I thought was going on in Latin American labor and Latin America, yes, sure.

Q: Did you deal with Hayfield at all on the Washington side?

FISHBURN: Somewhat. When I helped the most was when Serafino Romualdi was in total charge of it. Then Bill Doherty took over. Thereafter, I had some influence and contact with Bill. He had a group that met over there at Front Royal. They had a place that they used for that. I went over there and talked with some of those people and talked with some of the Brazilians, which was pleasant for me. I used my Portuguese again for an afternoon and so on. But Bill wasn't my type. I don't criticize him because really I don't know enough about what he did. By that time, you see, I had retired and come down here in 1970.

Q: What about Phil Delaney? How would you describe Phil? What type of person was he to work for?

FISHBURN: He's a good bureaucrat, loyal to his bosses and organization.

Q: To the State Department or to the AF of LCIO?

FISHBURN: I carefully avoided that.

Q: Deciding which one?

FISHBURN: Yes.

Q: Because he came with a very strong background from, I guess, the Research Department in the AF of L.

FISHBURN: Yes. Phil got along.

Q: Were there ever problems in the State Department over whether Phil was representing State Department or AF of L policy?

FISHBURN: Well, I don't think there were any problems because he didn't let any problems be developed. He just didn't do anything.

Q: So he avoided problems.

FISHBURN: Yes, sure.

Q: Was the AID office brought into SIL at that time?

FISHBURN: No, not that I know of.

Q: That was a later time?

FISHBURN: Not that I know of.

Q: Are there any other aspects of work in SIL at that time that you'd like to...

FISHBURN: Oh, there probably are, but I don't recall them at the moment.

Q: Okay. Then you went to Geneva as labor attaché. Do you want to describe the things that were going on and the ILO at that time, from '67?

FISHBURN: Well, I went there and I found that the US government was really almost unconcerned with what was happening in the ILO. I found that the communists throughout the undeveloped world were taking full advantage of the fact that they controlled the representatives from a number of countries and they were assisted by their philosophy and organization, political, to take a vigorous stand which is different from that of the United States and everything we stood for. So, I began reporting that, really, as far as I could see, the commies are rapidly taking over the ILO. Dave Morse was sitting up there benignly watching it and not fighting it or seeming to notice it. So, I stayed there for three years. It didn't seem to me that the problem was getting [addressed]. Well, it was getting, for a long period there, steadily worse in terms of more denunciation of what we stood for than anything positive by us or our friends. The people that we collaborated with (and there were other nations certainly) didn't seem to be concerned with it. I'm not even sure they knew about it. The ILO just wasn't considered, I think, by the State Department or most of the leaders of it as a very important institution. So, when I came back, I had a vigorous couple of papers on the problem and recommended that we jolly-well try to get some movement on the other way. But that didn't get anywhere. I tell you, the US government has an awful lot of bureaucracy, too. Oh, boy!

Q: What about George Meany and Irving Brown? Where they supportive of your efforts?

FISHBURN: Oh, yes, of course they were. They did more than we did.

Q: Did they get much of a hearing in the bureaucracy that didn't want to move?

FISHBURN: No, no, gracious no.

Q: Are there any aspects of the ILO that you would like to describe in that period? You mentioned that Dave Morse took a position of benign neglect. Were the Soviets actively involved in, say, the Secretariat at that time?

FISHBURN: Well, as you probably know, the ILO was created by Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George and Clemenceau to fight the communist influence in the labor fields throughout the world. That was his primary objective. He states it clearly. So, what's happening? Through all the period I'm there, the commies have taken over and we don't pay any attention to him or to the ILO, in effect. So, I guess you might say I was a little

bit bitter about that, but it was intellectual bitterness because I knew very well that nobody was going to pay attention to what I wrote at any rate. So, I wrote it. It was pretty clear and pretty strong, but it didn't really lead anywhere.

Q: Actually, only a few years down the pike, we were through from the ILO. In 1975, I think, we sent the notice, and in 1977, we actually withdrew. The basis of that in part was the Soviet penetration of the ILO and the lack of due process.

FISHBURN: I sent a strong letter to the President on that issue when that was up for consideration and mailed it to him. I've never heard what happened.

Q: Did you get a reply?

FISHBURN: Heck, no! But it recommended that we get out of the ILO, at least in time for regrouping and decide what we wanted to do. But I'd become habituated to knowing how effective a substantive person can be.

Q: Do you have any suggestions on how that might be corrected?

FISHBURN: I think it's human nature. Look at the present administration. There's even more of this, you see.

Q: I think one of the hallmarks of a healthy organization is that people at higher levels are prepared to listen to the arguments on the merits that people at lower levels make. If that process of information is cut off.

FISHBURN: Well, to tell you about a series of comments I have heard from some of my friends, having come to Washington when I did from the Fletcher School and other places, I have some friends such as Elmer Statz, who really were in very high positions for many years as Controller General of the United States. Others were similarly high in the Foreign Service and the State Department and occasionally others. Let me get my mind straight here.

Q: You were talking about feedback or information going up from the working world to the (inaudible).

FISHBURN: The comments that came from them were almost universally just one thing. "If you take this position or kind of a position, just remember, there's only one person that's important. Period. And that's the President." In other words, you go there to listen. You don't go there to try to help educate him.

Q: That's sort of a narrow view.

FISHBURN: Of course. It's an awful thing. This isn't what I think democracy should be. But by God, that's what it is from the Foreign Service part of it. That's why our

ambassadors (inaudible) Hell, you get an occasional one who is different, sure you do. You can't help it. We humans are occasionally real individuals.

Q: And innovative.

FISHBURN: Sure.

Q: That sounds like a very pessimistic view of the future of bureaucracy.

FISHBURN: Well, you're asking the question. I'm saying that you're quite right, I think. Unfortunately, it's the bureaucracy of democracy, too. That's what really bothers me about it today. Well, the thing, as I said earlier, that (inaudible) still voting in this country, too. You're quite right, I think, in pointing out that he gets a higher proportion of feminine votes than masculine. But the difference isn't sufficient to make it any better, as far as I can see. You have to admit that each woman has a right to each vote just the way a man does.

Q: I guess that's right.

FISHBURN: Well, do you want to sort of discuss or mention some of the thing you've done since your retirement in 1970? You've been a farmer here. Have you been active in any sort of labor or governmental activities since you retired?

My primary objective as a farmer has been to improve as much as possible the productivity of the soil of this farm. That has succeeded, I think, to such a degree that even I am very pleased. As a result, you would be interested to know that the people in the agricultural bureaucracies of the federal government and the State of Virginia made me the outstanding conservationist farmer twice in 1984 and 1994.

Q: Is that right? Wow, that's quite an achievement. How many acres do you have on the farm here?

FISHBURN: Well, we gave the lot up here to my son in law. So, it's now 92 acres.

Q: And what are your major crops on the farm?

FISHBURN: Pasture land, grasses.

Q: Do you raise livestock?

FISHBURN: Well, I did for 12 years. I had a herd that I started at Foley and developed.

Q: Was this beef cattle?

FISHBURN: Beef cattle. They were Angus for me. I like that breed. So, I developed that for 12 years as I say. I had to face down a bull only once, but I got through that safely.

Q: How do you face down a bull?

FISHBURN: Well, I tell you, I was a little nervous. At any rate, it worked. At any rate, after 12 years of handling the herd, I hurt my lower back. The doctors told me, "The one thing you cannot do is ride on a horse or engage in activities in which you're going to bother that lower back." They did give me exercises to do, which I've done religiously now for 20 years. I must say, I get along very well if I don't forget to do them. After I had quit doing what I was with the animals, which involved bringing the herd in, selecting out those which needed to be treated for illnesses or bad eyes or this and that. I learned to vaccinate them. I learned to cover their eyes with patches, which was in vogue for several years. What I did was sell the herd to my vet. He had been here and he knew it well. He bought it from me at my figure because he knew I would be honest with him and I was. So, he bought it and he's been the owner ever since. We take care of it by keeping up the fences and keeping up the quality of the pastures.

Q: I see. And then they are on your pasture land here?

FISHBURN: Yes, they are. The herd is.

Q: But he does the management of the herd?

FISHBURN: He does the management of the herd, which means really the selections and repurchases and so on. I'm glad to have him do that. It means that he gets most of the profit from the herd, but that's all right. I didn't buy the farm to really make much money at any rate. It's been a hobby which has paid off in terms of the quality of the land and so on, and in other ways, too.

Q: Also, you've been involved in some community activities. Do you want to describe those?

FISHBURN: Yes. In 1973, I took over as volunteer administrator of the Shenandoah Valley Music Festival. That's an organization which you know now promotes both classical music concerts at Orkney Springs, as well as non-classical and other types and respects. For four years, I spent more time than I should have on it in terms of my wife or the farm. It was in debt badly when I took over. But I got it out of debt the first years and got in into better financial shape thereafter. We went through all sorts of basic changes, which was getting the pavilion over there redeveloped properly and building a new stage for the orchestra and so on.

Then I decided that there was a need for a change after four years. Rather than continue as the administrator, I took over the position of president for one who was then leaving. We hired an administrator to replace me. Well, the person selected had all of the musical interest and background that anyone could have ever asked for. Within four or five months after taking office, he resigned in disappointment with the way the president was treating him.

Q: You were the president?

FISHBURN: Sure. He was just running wild as he wanted to, doing things which I thought was not productive of getting this part of our local citizenry the way we needed it. I didn't really try to get rid of him. It's just that on certain specific things, he wanted to be really the administrator without anybody saying "no" to anything. Well, that's understandable. A lot of people are that way. Maybe so was I. I didn't think so, but maybe I was. At any rate, he retired and we got him replaced eventually. We've progressed since. Really, the music festival is now fairly firmly fixed financially and as far as reputation.

Q: It's certainly an institution here in the Shenandoah Valley, well known.

FISHBURN: And I love it because I am very fond of classical music and orchestral parts of it, as well as chamber music and choral music. Of course, this year, on November 2, we get the Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The choral portion of that symphony to me just can't be surpassed. This is about the fourth time we've given it in my 30 years there (or 25, whichever it is now).

Q: Who is performing Beethoven's Ninth?

FISHBURN: Well, it will be the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra.

Q: They're coming out here in November then?

FISHBURN: Did I say November? I'm sorry. It's August 2. It will be the Fairfax Symphony then. Then Bill Hudson, the conductor, will pick the four soloists for the choral section. He does a good job. I must say, the environment, too, with those beautiful trees and the grass around it...

Q: Are you still president?

FISHBURN: Oh, no, I gave that up maybe 10 years ago.

Q: Are you involved in other community initiatives?

FISHBURN: Yes. I am a member of the Woodstock Museum staff. I'm also an ex-president of that. So, I have gone through the development of most of the life of the museum, which was only set up in '69, a year before we retired. So, I've been active in that ever since.

Q: It sounds very busy. Are there other things that you've done that you would like to mention?

FISHBURN: That's enough.

Q: Any other final comments you would like to make?

FISHBURN: No, I don't think so.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much, John, for giving us this supplemental interview. It's been very informative and very pleasant. This is a beautiful spot here.

FISHBURN: I hope there is something useful in it for you. We'll hope that way.

Q: I want to wish you all the best. Thank you very much.

End of interview